

THE STROLLER'S DOG.

"They're called the friend of man, and I'm blest if they ain't; they're the faithfulst, cheerfullst, and most unselfish a fellow can have, whether he's jolly or in the blues, with a copper or without. Why, look at Rumelus here; he wags his tail just as readily, when I speak to him, though neither on us hasn't had no dinner, as when we have. But, then, he is a genius; and to think he might have been drowned in puppyhood—it would have been a downright shame!"

It chanced, while making a pedestrian tour through Warwickshire, with sketch-book and pencil, that, towards sunset on an exceedingly hot day, I had come upon the speaker of the above, seated, with the luxurious free-from-care ease of the nomad, on a refreshing patch of mossy grass, under the shade of a wide-spreading beech. He was a stroller of the theatrical profession, and, by his side, sharing his meal, was one of his company—a French poodle, attired in a spangled scarlet jacket, and feathered cockat hat.

The master greeted me with a rough but genial "Good day," which—being an ardent admirer of the study of human nature in all classes—encouraged me to share the soft, green couch, and enter into conversation by requesting him to honour me by partaking of the contents of my well-filled knapsack. He made not the least demur in accepting my overtures, but did so readily; and we had talked of many things, of neighboring bits of lovely English scenery, and the pleasure of the nomad life in summer, when an observation of mine respecting the poodle, who by this time had coiled himself up near his master, and was enjoying a dog's sleep, occasionally waking to lift its eyes with evident love to the rugged face, elicited the above speech.

"Drowned!" I repeated. "Why, how was that?"

"I'll tell yer, sir. But as it ain't how to take anythink on hearsay, and as ye're goin' in a hopposite direction, and can't patronise our show, which stops in the next town westward, I'll let yer see some of Rumelus's tricks gratis."

Taking up a short stick from the grass—at the sight of which Rumulus immediately arose—he held it a good two feet from the ground, saying, "Now, Rumelus, old feller, think as how the audience is afore yer, and jump for the gentlefolks as he got money in their pockets, and spends it to patronise the genius and talent of Bradley's show."

The poodle instantly, with the greatest ease, leaped the stick, leaped back again, wagged his tail, rose on his hind legs, and bowed gracefully.

"Now, Rumelus, jump for them as has money, and is too stingy to spend it."

The dog ran to the stick; then, halting abruptly, turned his back upon it, scratching the ground indignantly with his hind paws; then, getting up, his nose in the air with disgust, walked proudly away, all being performed with such an unmistakable comic humor, that I laughed long and loud.

"Now, lad," continued the showman, "try, if possible, to forget you are General Wolff, with yer scarlet coat and cocked hat. It's Christmas and the pantomime, in which the clown is taken by that most highly talented hantimal of the universe, Master Rumelus."

Again he held the stick, and the poodle immediately went through a series of clownish antics. He ran at the stick, then pretended to fall. Darting at it at full speed, he would stop, and sneak under it, turning over head and heels afterwards. He would pretend his feet slipped from beneath him, and give back-falls. He would simulate death—the old trick—then hurry off at a great rate at the name of a policeman, the whole performed with such marvellous humor, that, in amazement, I confessed Rumelus to be a genius indeed.

Having rewarded him with a wing of my cold fowl, the showman then told me his history, and how he became possessed of him.

"He, this here genius, sir," he began, "was born one of a litter of five. He can't sactly say what his mother was like, as, before his hantimal eyes opened on to the world, the pitiless hand of Fate caused him and three of his brothers and sisters to be flung, with a stone round their little necks, into a stream. But the genius which has made him famous commenced, even so early, to show itself. He managed to get free of the stone, and he washed on to the bank, where, with all his puppy might, he called for aid."

"A company of poor strollers in my own walk of life, happening to pass, was attracted by his heart-rending whines; and the manager's daughter, a pretty little thing, in muslin, and very short petticoats, took him up in her small arms—ugly as he was then—and warmed and fondled him in her affectionate bosom. Yes; she saved the poor pup, and, by her father's permission, the gentlest-hearted feller going, she adopted him. They didn't know which to call him—Rumelus or Moses—'cause of the way he had been found, but they fixed on Rumelus. You see the manager was a scholar, and had an education."

"That saving the poodle was the luxiest piece of business he ever did, for soon Rumelus's genius began to display itself. He took to the tricks they taught him quite nat'ral. He rolled barrels, scaled ladders, jumped through hoops, and clowned to a wonder of perfection: till, after a short time, all the posters in the towns had his name printed in the largest type. Yes; he was the hantimaction which brought the

money in, even more than his young missus's seats on the tight-rope."

"Jim Royden, the manager, made Rumelus his friend, his companion, just as I do. He went nowhere without him, and he'd began to look for'ard, with brighter 'opes than he'd ever had to the future—for our profession's a hard 'un at times—when, while passing through a town, his wife took ill of a fever; then, his pretty little daughter; then, one or two of his comp'ny; and every one on 'em died, leaving poor Jim Royden crushed, broken-hearted, with only one comfort left him—Rumelus. He declared—and the tears was in his eyes as he said it—that he didn't know who felt their loss most, the dog or him."

"Afterwards, of course, there were the doctor to pay, and the burryin', besides the lodgin'. The doctor, howsomever—they is good chaps in the main—wouldn't take a copper. He was a young man, he was; and, smilin' while he pressed the manager's hand quite kindly when he offered the money, said that 'he allus attended professionals gratis.'"

"But the undertakers nor the burial fees didn't say the same. I'm blest if they did! No, they forced him to sell nearly all his wardrobe—his stock-in-trade—to pay 'em; and that was a crushing down the poor chap never got over. He had been so hopeful before, that it made his ruin worse."

"If he'd been a different man, he might have fought over it; but he was allus depressed and spiritless like. Some said he'd once been a gentleman; and, with his long, thin, 'andsome face, his upright figure, and black slops, when in the ring, he looked every bit a lord, he did."

"But he never had much energy, and his great trouble knocked it all out of him. For some days, almost like one in a sleep, he wandered listless about the town, his hair grayer, his body stooped; then, suddenly, as if he'd come to a resolve, he sold his few remainin' articles, and started to walk to Derby, where I 'spect, though I never know'd, his family lived."

"He'd only a few shillings in his pocket to do it on—a matter of eighty mile. The shillings might have been pounds, if he'd consented to sell Rumelus; but he wouldn't. He swore he'd starve first; that he and the hantimal should never part; and carrying the dog in his arms, as if he feared it might be taken from him, he left the town."

"How he managed to get over sixty miles of the way, he said, he couldn't tell—he was so weak. He fell ill at one place, and that took all his money. Then he had to live by exhibiting Rumelus's tricks at village public-houses; but he found the clod-hoppers awful stingy. They was hard times."

"He succeeded, as I've said, in dragging his poor, feeble body and broken heart over sixty mile; then dropped, exhausted, dying, on the roadside. Rumelus thought he was only resting, and coiled himself up, as usual, by his side."

"But after a while, happening to look in his master's face, he seemed to understand all, like a Christian. First licking tenderly the hands which had so often fondled him, he gave a piteous moan, then darted madly one way and another, filling the air with shrill barks and pleading whines for help."

"It so happened, now, that a dozen yards off I and my troupe were takin' a snack in a meader, and hearin' the dog, curious to know what was up, I went into the road, where I recognised Rumelus and my old friend, which I hadn't seen for years."

"I perceived too well how matters stood—that he had the stamp upon him; but rousin' him, I spoke cheery words to the poor fellow, and callin' some of my people, we carried him to the village inn, and put him to bed."

"Times was good with me at the moment, praise Heaven! and I could purchase the dyin' man some comforts. Rumelus, of course, accompanied us. He walked at the side, in his shabby general's dress, as sedate as a judge, with his head and tail droopin'; and when his master was put in bed, he took his place at the foot, looking at him with such affectionate commiseration and love, that it brought the tears in yer eyes to see the creature."

"Well, I got medeson and I got food for Jim Royden; but it wasn't any good. He couldn't eat; neither could Rumelus, for grief. He knew as well as me that his master was dyin', and never uttered a sound nor moved from his place except to creep softly up at times to lick the beloved hand."

"Jim Royden was aware his fate was sealed as well as either on us, for he allus shook his head with a faint smile when I tried to cheer him by talking of his recovery."

"It was on the evenin' of the day after I had found the poor chap that I was sittin', as usual, at his pillow; a feeble taller candle burnt on the table, and Rumelus was in his old place, his eyes on his master, who for the last hour had been so quiet I thought him asleep."

"How 'andsome he was! His white face was quite delicate and refined. Ah! there was no doubt he was a gentleman. Suddenly, I saw his eyes were fixed, dreamily, yet with a kind of stare, on the wall. His back was to'ards me. Still I distinctly heard the faint words he uttered."

"I wonder whether they would be sorry could they see me now?—whether they would forgive when—too late?"

"After that, he was silent a space. Then, turnin', moved his thin hand, as if in search of some one. I put mine into it."

"Ah! he said, smiling, 'you are here? My sight gets dim. You've a noble heart, Bradley!' Excuse my vanity in mentionin' his words," interrupted the stroller, brushing his

sleeve over his eyes, "but that's what he said. What wonder?—I was the only human friend he had. 'Heaven bless you, Bradley, for what you've done for me!' he went on. Then, after a pause, he added, 'Do you know if it's very expensive to announce a person's death in local papers?'"

"No Jim," I answered as well as I could for my shaking voice; "but—but, if it's dear or cheap, if it would please you, it shall be done, old chap."

"He pressed my hand; and I saw by the tears in his eyes that emotion stopped his speaking."

"Afterwards, trying to blink them away, he remarked, 'It isn't in my power to recompense nor thank you, Bradley; but Heaven will—I know it will! I've put you to much expense,—am I can do nothin' to'ards it, without—without you sell Rumelus.'"

"Sell Rumelus!" I cried; "never! Jim Royden, if he'll only consent to it, he shall be as dear to me as he's been to you!"

"I shan't forget how he looked at me—how his dark eyes sparkled with joy."

"Will you—will you keep the poor little fellow?" he said eagerly. "God bless you, Bradley! and I don't think I've sinned so very much in life that my blessing mayn't be heard."

"I felt the tears trickling down my nose, but it was no good blowing it; it wouldn't pass for cold. So, to turn the subject a bit, I said, 'But about the paragraph, Jim?'"

"Ah, yes; I was forgettin'." He paused, then continued: "If—if it is not very expensive, I'd like to have put in the Derby paper, 'James Trevas died here, at this village, on such a date.'"

"I told him it should be done; when, exhausted by talking, he fell into a doze. It was about a hour after that he awoke, and making a haition as if holdin' up a stick, murmured, 'Now Rumelus, for those who have money in their pockets, and won't spend it!'"

"The poodle moved a step, looked at me, and whined piteously. A brief silence, and the dying man gave a peculiar whistle, low and faint. Rumelus instantly bounded to his side, and crept close to him. Jim Royden's white, worn hand moved caressingly over the dog's coat with an effort, as the pallid lips murmured, 'Brave old fellow! Rumelus, I see them all now;' then fell heavily back on the coverlet."

"It was all over! Jim Royden, or James Trevas—that being his baptism name—was dead. Never shall I forget the heart-rendin' cries this poodle uttered, as, findin' it out, he nestled on the chest of the corpse, and licked its face."

"Well, I buried him. It wasn't a pauper burial; no, not if it had taken my last copper it shouldn't have been that. The chief mourners was me and Rumelus. The poor creature, I thought, was a dying too, he looked so miserable. He waited till the ground was filled in, then he took his place on the top, crouching his nose on the earth, and wouldn't leave the grave for two nights and days, when I had to carry him away, 'cause we were leavin' the village."

"Of course, I had put the announcement of James Trevas's death in the Derby paper. I didn't go near that there place again for nigh on two year, when I missed Rumelus. I tracked him, and I'm blest if I didn't find the poor, faithful creature, in his spangled coat and cocked hat, enterin' the churchyard. I followed him; but, for a moment, couldn't find his old master's grave."

"Not there, old chap," I said to Rumelus, as, after a angry, indignant bark, with a low whine, he crouched down by a 'andsome, big white tomb."

"But he knew better than me—it was there. It had been put over the stroller's grave, and on it was cut, in black letters, 'To the memory of James Trevas, &c. Raised by his afflicted friends.'"

"I preferred the simple stone and bright flowers I had put, to that big bit of ostentation. But I couldn't alter it; only I didn't give much commiseration to his 'afflicted friends.'"

"Rumelus was of my opinion; he didn't like it, neither, for, after about a hour, he consented to come back with me to the show; but while we remained in the village, once a-day, reg'lar, he went to the churchyard, allus givin' an angry bark at the big white thing before he laid down."

"Now, sir, you've got his history, and I must skedaddle, and my company 'I'll think I'm lost.'"

Thanking him for what he had told me, we bade each other farewell; and never did I feel prouder to shake any man's hand than I did that of the warm-hearted showman; while, as a recognition of his genius as well as devotion, I presented Rumelus with an amount which would keep him in new spangled jackets, cocked hats, and fresh-meat bones, for more than a year to come."

MY FIRST GUINEA.

It was my first and my last! How I worshipped that piece of gold! My dear mother gave it to me as a reward for having gained a prize at school—a prize for a copy of Latin verses. Alas! that was forty years ago. You may think perhaps that the Latin was not worth a guinea; or that if it were worth anything, it was worth more than a guinea. Perhaps it was so; but in the pride of her heart, my dear mother robbed that day more than one poor family of its expected soup of charity. Whodares blame her? None: for she stunted the widow

and the orphan to reward and encourage her only son."

My poor mother, thou wast not rich; yet thy generous heart opened at the attempts of thy beloved son, the only hope of thy venerable age! Thou gavest into his hands, thy little—little savings!

How did he requite thee? Woe, woe to him who gives a trembling answer to that awful question! Yet, trembling, he replies, "Mother, my more than mother, I squandered away thy money, and by my follies hurried thee prematurely to thy grave?" Silence, reader; hast thou no sin wherewith to reproach thyself?"

But my first and my last guinea—one of my poor mother's last bright remnants of happy and prosperous days! What did I do with thee? I looked at it long before I would change it; but love of gold on the one hand was no match for love of cakes and fireworks on the other, and the bright piece was changed at last. I did not hesitate from avarice; it is not often that a boy at seventeen entertains feelings of avarice; yet I grudged to change it, because the sight of it recalled my victory over my competitors to my recollection: and when I looked on it, I thought of the pleasure that warmed in my dear mother's eyes as she gave it into my hand as the reward of my successes."

But before I changed my guinea, I determined to mark it, with a faint hope than in happier days it might come again into my hands. I took my penknife and engraved my initials on the coin; under them I scratched as well as I could those of my beloved mother. Four-and-twenty hours afterwards, I had sold my guinea, and spent all the change I had received out of it."

I went to college, but my mother was not rich, as I have said before: she fell lower and lower in the scale of pecuniary respectability—she could no longer maintain me at the University. I was therefore obliged to quit it, abandon all hopes of distinguishing myself there, and take a situation as a merchant's clerk."

I soon found one, for, owing to my knowledge of accounts and my handwriting, I easily obtained a place at a pound a week. A pound a week was not much; but I gave all I received to my mother, and we lived."

I had not been long in my situation when, one day, as I was settling the account of money due to me from my employers, I perceived among the pieces, which he counted out to me, my guinea—that guinea which I had welcomed with so much joy, which I had let out of my hands with so much regret, and on which I had imprinted a mark not to be mistaken."

I kissed the coin—I could not help doing so; it brought consolation to my thoughts, when it was really welcome, for my master, as he paid it to me, told me that he had no farther need of my services."

I left his house, thinking how I should break these distressing tidings to my mother. As I walked along with my guinea in one hand, keeping it apart from my other money as a talisman, I passed a lottery office. Guineas and lottery offices existed in those days! An evil genius prompted me, I believe, to risk my beloved piece of gold. I entered. "There is the price of a sixteenth," said I telling down my money on the counter; "but do me the favour to put that guinea on one side, because, whether I win or lose, I will come back and redeem that guinea to-morrow." The office keeper laughed at the singularity of the request, but promised to attend to it. I went home, but said nothing to my mother."

The next morning I returned to the lottery office, and found myself the gainer of a sixteenth of £20,000! I received back my guinea with joy indescribable. I was so foolishly attached to it that I had a small morocco case made for it, in which I enclosed it; and I swore that it and I should never part again."

With my gains in the lottery, I embarked in sundry commercial speculations. I was lucky, and at the end of two or three years was worth twenty thousand pounds. My mother—my ever kind, provident mother, begged me to invest this sum, and live upon the interest of it, with her and a wife of my own choosing. But, no; all her advice was useless; fortune had turned my brain—I thought myself doomed to be lucky—I entered into larger speculations; they failed, and I was ruined!"

On the receipt of this intelligence, my dear mother was seized with an apoplectic stroke; her life was saved by her medical attendants, but she remained a paralytic—living only in mind and sensibility. Her body was dead."

All my household goods were sold by my creditors: I had not a sou left. As I could no longer support my poor mother, I used the little remaining influence I had with my friends, and got her admitted as a patient in a hospital. The ticket of admission arrived; but how to get her conveyed thither—there was the difficulty! I had not a farthing! I had nothing left me in the world but my mother's love—a sorry coin to give to those sordid beings who knew not its value. In this agony of despair, I tore open drawer after drawer in an old desk which the mercy of my creditors had left me; and on opening the last, I saw my cherished guinea, which had escaped their Argus eyes."

I descended the staircase three stairs at a time; do not know how I got to the bottom, but when I was there, I sent for a hackney-coach. I assisted my poor mother, my revered mother, into it: my last guinea, that guinea which she had given me in her pride and in her joy, served to convey her to her death-bed in a hospital, in her humiliation, in her sorrow."

My poor mother!