



# TAG

OR THE  
CHIENT BOULE DOG

BY VALANCE PATRIARCHE

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## CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Trent was a rara avis among landladies, in that she was not suspicious, never poured forth tales of the late Frederick T—, nor sorrowed audibly over the contrast between her former station and present humble circumstances. She subsisted by letting rooms to young girls employed in the city, and among these was one whose small sister earned her board and keep by helping about the house. This was Josephine, a prim, white-faced Miss of twelve, with the skin of her brow drawn taut as a drum-head from the excessive neatness of the braids of hair tied above it, and ill-assorted features which were apt to relax into fearful contortions when she fancied herself unobserved. As far as the household of Mrs. Trent were aware, these grimaces and the singing of "Strangers Yet" were Josephine's sole recreations, for, ready as the widow was to administer to bodily needs, she failed to recognize the universal cry for beauty and pleasure in the young feminine mind. When Josephine, in her funny old-fashioned clothes, was sent forth for her daily walk it was with strict injunctions not to loiter and to speak to no one; while if despatched on an errand, she was given just so much time for its accomplishment. This steadiness of bringing up was advanced by Mrs. Trent as reason why she (Josephine) should become the guardian of Bateese during the absence of his "Pa and Ma." This being arranged, Pat and Patty whirled off in a hansom on the morning after arrival, feeling like scholars out for a half holiday. After their weariness and anxiety they were ready to enjoy everything and quite confident that the problem of Bateese was to be settled—somehow—very shortly. Such a beautiful reckless day they had, lunching at Sherry's; being whirled through the park in an automobile; promenading down Fifth Avenue, gayest of all the laughing strollers; buying a huge box of spring flowers to brighten their humble apartment, dining royally, and finally returning in a hansom, enjoying to the full the cool evening air and rest after the bustle of the day. As they turned into a street near home, they were hailed with shouts from a strange figure on the sidewalk—an animated red dress surmounted, apparently, by the head of Medusa. Their vehicle stopped, and the apparition was discovered to be Josephine with pig-tails flying loose and India rubber countenance working convulsively.

"Get him out," she yelled, "Call him out!"

"Who?" asked they in one breath, and their hearts sank. In the careless joy of the day they had almost forgotten Bateese.

"Your kid," answered Josephine, excitedly. "He ain't hardly got any clothes left on him an' he won't come out." She pointed to a flight of steps leading to the cellar of a deserted house, and, simultaneously, there came a wail therefrom; a long wail as of much pent suffering and sorrow too great to be borne. Pat and Patty alighted and hurried to the spot. Crouching against a cellar door, with tear-stained countenance raised imploringly, was the luckless Bateese; his coat was gone, his little shirt hung in shreds, his "half-long" gray trousers were spattered with mud and torn from hip to ankle on one side, and a much swollen under lip added the finishing touch to his forlorn and battered appearance. At his feet lay the ever-faithful Cairlo, whose sleek complacency was in strong contrast to the condition of his master.

"For Heaven's sake, Bateese!" gasped Patty.

"What under the shining canopy ever struck you?" asked her husband.

"W-wan beeg boy go mak de laf on me," sobbed Bateese, "an' I ponch an' he hit wit de han' an' I cry on de eye an' he say bebel an' I ponch wan more tam—me—an' we go to fall 'roun' an' den Jo'sphine she ponch aussu an' I ron' ere."

"I stuck up for yer. Didn't I, Bateese?" cried Josephine, eagerly. "I whaled that carrot-head good an' hard—Didn't I, Bateese?"

Bateese nodded. He was beyond enthusiasm. His guardians considered a moment and then decided that the small nurse and Bateese be sent home in the hansom, the latter wrapped in Pat's overcoat to protect him from the air, and eyes of a cold world. They were accordingly bundled into the vehicle.

"Here," cried Pat, "take this beast with you," and he thrust Cairlo in after them. "Same address and be quick," he added, counting the fare into the man's hand, and turning to where Patty stood ruefully examining mud stains on her tailor-made.

"I am covered with tangible woe from Bateese," she said, "and my hair is coming down. Let us find a back street. Here is a quiet little place, we'll run up here."

Which they did, and thence made their way with some difficulty and many devious turnings, back to their lodgings; so it happened that when the cabman reached the right street and discovered he had forgotten the number of the house and never known the name of the occupants, he pulled up and looked anxiously but in vain for his former passengers. Then, lifting the trap, he called to Josephine.

"What's the number of the house youse is bound fer?"

And Josephine answered promptly and primly that she did not know, which was true, but she failed to add that she could point out the house, which was then in sight. For Bateese's nurse had black sins on her conscience, and—weighing against the bliss of her

first carriage ride—was the fear of Mrs. Trent's wrath. It seemed a simple and exciting thing to go on driving indefinitely, a childish version of "eat, drink and be merry"; so she held the fat hand of Bateese, put her feet on Cairlo's back and, sitting very straight, thought of the lovely ladies she had seen in the course of her walks, who did nothing all day but drive around and wear flowers.

Presently the cabman's face appeared from above the second time and, after eyeing his small and dirty fares, with much disapprobation, he said:

"Say, you girl! Wot's the name of the folks wot live in the house you was goin' to?"

"Don't know!" answered Josephine, haughtily.

"Well, wot am I going to do wid youse anyhow?" the man asked with irritation.

Whereupon the emboldened Josephine, not deigning to look at him, waved a dirty paw airily and cried:

"Drive round the park, James!" in a tone which she flattered herself was the counterpart of that once heard from the lips of her heroine of the stone house on Riverside Drive.

The man's jaw dropped for a second with astonishment, then leaning over, he made a monacle of thumb and forefinger, the better to examine this prodigy.

"Crazy as a loon," he muttered. "Drive round the park, James!" Oh, Lord! oh, Lord!

He slammed down the trap, chuckled grimly and, wheeling his horse about, started to retrace his route in the hope of meeting the guardians of this lunatic. At intervals he repeated "Drive round the park, James!" in mincing undertones and with renewed chucklings, but even the delicious humor of that speech failed to buoy up his spirits when it became apparent that they who had saddled him with his burden had vanished. He returned to the street he had left and inquired imploringly of maids and landladies if they "knew anything about that outfit" (indicating his passengers), even inducing one or two females to go out and examine his charges at short range. But Josephine had never played on the street, and her sedate walks were pursued on more fashionable thoroughfares, so that she met with no recognition. One woman, indeed, who had turned her kitchen apron to the rear of her person on descending to the street, as if putting household cares behind her for the nonce, gave it as her opinion that Josephine was "Mis' Blundell, the milliner's little girl, who run away once before." The hansom

accordingly moved to the milliner's shop, its driver much cheered in aspect, but when Mrs. Blundell appeared she looked at the lost pair with that complacent sympathy which is purely external, and positively declined to be a mother to either of the stray-aways, presenting a plump girl of eleven with sausage curls as her only effort in the maternal line. The cabman was dejected but persistent, and urged her "to knock up her thinker an' see if she couldn't place 'em as hers," and on this being received with indignation he suggested she might like to "adopt 'em for company." Here the door was slammed violently in his face, leaving him to return with scowling countenance to Josephine, who was just then happily engaged in sticking out her tongue at plump little Miss Blundell.

"I know what I'll do with youse now, my lady," he said, darkly, as he climbed to his post and drove off with decision. His purpose became apparent when he drew up before a police station and ordered his fares to descend. "Instantly—and haul out that pup. I ain't going to touch him."

The heart of Josephine thrilled. It was a wonderful adventure. Here was a palace or something, and who knows what glorious things might be inside; she light-heartedly kicked Cairlo to facilitate his descent, and followed with Bateese. The cabman pushed them on before him, and even the captain of the precinct, yawning at his desk, and the two policemen swapping yarns on a bench by the door, accustomed as they were to strange sights, sat up straight when they beheld the trio.

Josephine entered first, dragging after her the rotund form of Bateese, the tense expression of her face being in contrast to the appealing smile of the small boy, who beamed impartially on all as he stumbled in, tripping alike over his voluminous trailing overcoat and the bulldog slinking at his heels. Suddenly Josephine's eye was arrested by the uniforms before her and an agony of fear pierced her soul. With a shriek she dropped the hand of Bateese and rushed for the door, but the cabby was too quick for her.

"No you don't, duchess!" he said, as he gripped her arm. "Sorry to interrupt you but we are going to pay a call—"

"What's the matter there?" asked the captain, leaning forward.

"Lost," answered the Jehu, laconically, "an' she, (jerking his thumb at the struggling Josephine) has bats in her belfry."

(To be Continued.)



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