

"All right; send Nero to me."  
 "But I must tell you that Nero is not person."  
 "Not a person!"  
 "No, he is our dog."  
 "What do you mean?"  
 "He will guide you just as well as my husband would. He is accustomed to do it. For years he has accompanied his master; knows all the points of view, and can guide perfectly alone by himself. He often guides parties of travellers, and they always compliment us on his cleverness. You need not fear. He has quite as much intelligence as you or I. All he needs is the gift of speech. That is not necessary in this case, as it would be were he showing a monument where he would have to know dates and relate anecdotes about it. Take Nero. It costs less, too. Only thirty cents for Nero, and he will do as much for you as my husband would for three dollars."

"Well, where is Nero?"  
 "Sleeping outside in the sun. He has already taken a party to the Caldron this morning—Nero! Nero!"  
 He came leaping through the open window, an ugly little black poodle, with long, curly, woolly hair. He certainly was not handsome, but he had a grave, decided, important manner that was most impressive. He looked at me with a searching, comprehensive glance that said:

"You are a stranger, and you want to see the Caldron?"

Not wishing to lose another train, I explained that I had only three hours in which to make the excursion. "Yes, I know," said Mme. Simon, "you want to go by the four o'clock train. Nero will bring you back in time. Now, Nero, be off! be off! do you hear?" But Nero did not move; he stood looking anxiously at his mistress.

"Ah, stupid that I am," he cried. "I had forgotten the sugar."  
 She handed me four lumps that I put into my pocket. "That is why he would not start; it was the sugar. Now off with you, old fellow. To the Caldron! to the Caldron! to the Caldron!"

She repeated this three times slowly and distinctly, and as she did so I watched the effect on Nero. He answered the words of his mistress by wagging his tail; each time more emphatically than the last, as one would say. "Of course I understand. Do you take me for an imbecile? The gentleman has the sugar and wants to see the Caldron." He looked at me gravely, and then trotted on before, I following meekly.

As we crossed the village the children called out: "Hello, Nero; come here, Nero," and tried to frolic with him, but he turned from them disdainfully; he had no time for play now, he was on duty and wished to honestly earn his thirty cents.

"Let him alone; don't you see he is guiding a gentleman to the Caldron," and they screamed with laughter. I laughed too, but somewhat grimly. I felt embarrassed and a little humiliated. I, a man, was being led by a dog. He was for the moment my superior. He knew where we were going. I did not. I hurried from the village, anxious to find myself alone with Nero and those beauties of nature that he was to show me. He walked along the hot and dusty highroad at a pace I found some difficulty in keeping up with. I tried to curb his ardor by calling to him, "Good Nero, not so fast, old fellow," etc., but he took no notice, calmly pursuing his way, even flying into a rage when I ventured to sit down a moment to rest under a forlorn looking tree. He barked angrily and looked at me reproachfully—evidently I was doing something out of the usual routine. Finally his barking became so irritating that I arose and resumed my walk. Nero at once calmed down and sprang gayly on before.

I had obeyed him and he was happy. A few minutes later we entered a delightful woodpath full of flowers, shady and sweet-smelling, with a murmuring brook and bowerlike trees. Nero flew on ahead, and disappeared up a little by-path. I followed breathlessly. When I came up with him I found him awaiting me with sparkling eyes and wagging tail, in a grassy dell made cheerful by the singing of a merry

brook. There was a rustic seat at which he looked, and then at me, as if to say: "Yes, yes; this is the place to rest; how lovely it is; how cool. You were fool enough to wish to rest on the dusty highway. I will allow you to sit down as long as you want to."

I sat down and lit a cigar. I really felt as if I ought to offer one to Nero. He was quite capable of smoking. However, I thought he would prefer a lump of sugar. He caught it cleverly as I tossed it to him, ate it eagerly, curled himself up at my feet, and was soon asleep. As for me, I determined to trust implicitly to Nero, and gave myself up to a comfortable siesta. After ten minutes dose, Nero got up, looked about him, stretched himself, and said, in dog language, "Come now, my friend, we must be moving on." We plodded on together like old friends, taking it easy under the trees, both enjoying the cool quiet of the place. Out on the highway Nero had walked quickly, firmly, steadily; he wished to get out of the dust and heat. Now he strolled along, as if merely for the pleasure of walking in one of the loveliest spots in the Vaud Canton. The road became very steep and rocky, and I had to pick my way with the greatest care. Nero sprang from rock to rock, but always with a watchful eye on me. Presently I began to hear in the distance a sound as of fiercely boiling water. Nero barked loud and joyously.

"Courage, courage," he said. "We are almost there—now you will see the Caldron."

The Caldron turned out to be a small, insignificant stream of water, falling from an insignificant height into a hollow rock—the boiling sound produced by the echoes. It was a pretty sight, but would not have repaid me for such a hard climb had I not had Nero as a guide—he being much more interesting than the celebrated Caldron. On either side of the stream were tiny cottages in which two pretty peasant girls in their national costume sold milk to the weary traveller. One was blonde, the other brunette. I thought the blonde had the prettier eyes, and was approaching her little cottage—looking like a toy cut out with a jig saw—in the door of which she was standing, when Nero planted himself in the path before me and began barking furiously.

What was the matter? Had he preference for the brunette? I turned in the other direction and he quieted down at once. I sat down at a table under the trees and ordered a pitcher of milk. The brunette entered the house, closely followed by Nero. I peeped through the window and watched him, the sinner—he was not above being bribed. I found that he was served before me to a large bowl of cream. He came out presently, the cream dripping from his black moustaches, and watched me earnestly while I drank my milk. I then gave him a lump of sugar, and perfectly satisfied with each other we sat for half an hour enjoying the invigorating breezes that blew on that hilltop twelve hundred feet above the sea level.

Presently Nero began to show signs of restlessness. I got up, paid for the milk, and starting on the same path up which we had come was surprised to see Nero lead over to the left, to the entrance of another path. I had made so much progress in dog language that I understood his eyes to say:

"What do you take me for? Do you think I would take you over the same route twice? No, indeed, I know my business. We will go down by a new road."

The new road was even more beautiful than the old one. Nero, delighted with himself, kept turning towards me with looks of triumph. As we crossed the road on our way to the railway station the dogs of his acquaintance tried to attract his attention, but he repulsed their advances as before. "Do you not see that I am on duty? I am taking this gentleman to the railway station." It was only when I was safely deposited in the waiting-room that he would consent to leave me, having gayly devoured the two last lumps of sugar, and this is the way I interpreted his glances of farewell: "We are twenty minutes too early. You don't catch me losing people's trains for them. Good-by, good luck, good-by."

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