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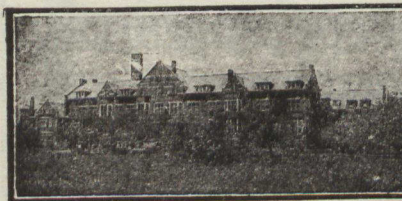
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## The Watch Dog

(Continued from page 5.)

"That I will leave your lordship to decide. The hanimal his now asleep on the porch."

He led the way to where a brown heap lay in the sunshine. His lordship followed with some diffidence.

"A extraordinary likeness, your lordship."

Lord Bertie put up his eyeglass.

"By Jove, I should say it was. Do you mean to tell me—?"

"If your lordship will step forward and prod the hanimal—"

"Prod him yourself," said Lord Bertie.

Keggs did so. The slumberer raised his head dreamily, and rolled over again. Lord Bertie was satisfied. He came forward and took a prod. With Reuben, this would have led to a scene of extreme activity. The excellent substitute merely flopped back on his side again.

"By Jove, it's wonderful," he said.

"And if your lordship 'appens to 'ave a check-book 'andy—"

"You're in a bally hurry," said Lord Bertie complainingly.

"It's Roberts, your lordship," sighed Keggs. "E is a poor man, hand 'e 'as a wife and children."

After lunch Aline was plaintive.

"I can't make out," she said, "what is the matter with Reuben. He doesn't seem to care for me any more. He won't come when I call. He wants to sleep all the time."

"Oh, he'll get used—I mean," added Lord Bertie, hastily, "he'll soon get over it. I expect he's been in the sun too much, don't you know."

The substitute's lethargy continued during the rest of that day, but on the following morning after breakfast Lord Bertie observed him rolling along the terrace behind Aline. Presently the two settled themselves under the big sycamore tree, and his lordship sallied forth.

"And how is Reuben this morning?" he inquired brightly.

"He's not very well, poor old thing," said Aline. "He was rather sick in the night."

"No, by Jove, really?"

"I think he must have eaten something that disagreed with him. That's why he was so quiet yesterday."

LORD BERTIE glanced sympathetically at the brown mass on the ground. How wary one should be of judging by looks. To all appearances that dog there was Reuben, his foe. But beneath that Reubenlike exterior beat the gentle heart of the milk-coloured substitute, with whom he was on terms of easy friendship. "Poor old fellow," he said. He bent down and gave the animal's ear a playful tweak. . .

It was a simple action, an action from which one would hardly have expected anything in the nature of interesting by-products; yet it undoubtedly produced them. What exactly occurred Lord Bertie could not have said. There was a sort of explosion. The sleeping dog seemed to uncurl like a released watch-spring and the air became "all of a curious blend of sniff and snarl. An eminent general has said that the science of war lies in knowing when to fall back. Something, some instinct, seemed to tell Lord Bertie that the moment was ripe for falling back; and he did so, over a chair.

He rose, with a scraped shin, to find Aline holding the dog's collar with both hands, her face flushed with the combination of wrath and muscular effort.

"What did you do that for?" she demanded fiercely. "I told you he was ill."

"I—I—I—" stammered his lordship. The thing had been so sudden. The animal had gone off like a bomb.

"I—I—I—"

"Run"—she panted. "I can't hold him. Run—RUN!"

Lord Bertie cast one look at the bristling animal, and decided that her advice was good, and should be followed.

He had reached the road before he slowed to a walk. Then, feeling safe, he was about to light a cigarette when

the match fell from his fingers and he stood gaping.

Round the bend of the road, from the direction of Roberts' cottage, there had appeared a large bulldog of a dingy white colour.

Keggs, swathed in a green-baize apron, was meditatively polishing Mr. Keith's silver in his own private pantry, humming an air as he worked, when Frederick, the footman, came to him. Frederick was a supercilious young man with long legs and a receding chin.

"Polishing the silver, old top?" he inquired genially.

"In answer to your question, Frederick," replied Keggs with dignity, "I am polishing the silver."

Frederick, in Keggs' opinion, needed to be kept in his place.

"His nibs is asking for you," said Frederick.

"You hallude to—?"

"Bertie," said Frederick definitely.

"If," said Keggs, "Lord Herbert Fen-dall desires to see me, I will go to 'im at once."

"Another bit of luck for 'Erbert," said Frederick cordially. "E's in the smoking room."

"Your lordship wished to see me?"

LORD BERTIE, who was rubbing his shin reflectively with his back to the door, wheeled and glared banefully at the saintly figure before him.

"You bally old swindler!" he cried.

"Your lordship."

"Don't stand there pretending not to know what I mean."

"If your lordship would hexplain, I 'ave no doubt—"

"Explain! By Jove, I'll explain, if that's what you want. What do you mean by dopping Reuben and palming him off on me as another dog? Is that plain enough?"

"The words is hintelligible," conceded Keggs, "but the haccusation is how-erwhelming."

"Do you deny it?"

"Your lordship," said Keggs soothingly, "ave been deceived, has I predicted, by the reely hextraordinary likeness. Roberts 'as hundoubtedly eclipsed 'imself."

"Do you mean to tell me that dog is the one you showed me in the road? Then how do you account for this? I saw that milk-coloured brute of Roberts' out walking only a moment ago."

"Roberts 'as two, your lordship."

"What!"

"The himage of one another, your lordship."

"What!"

"Twins, your lordship," added the butler softly.

Lord Bertie upset a chair.

"Your lordship," said Keggs, "if I may say so, 'as halways from boy'ood up been a little too 'asty at jumping to conclusions. If your lordship's 'asty collect, it was your Lordship's 'asty hassertion, as a boy, that you 'ad seen me hoccupied in purloining 'is lordship your father's port wine that led to my losing the excellent situation, which I might be still 'olding, of butler at Stockleigh Castle."

Lord Bertie stared.

"So that was why?" he said. "Been trying to get a bit of your own back, what?"

"Your lordship! I 'ave done nothing. 'Apply I can prove it."

"Prove it?"

The butler bowed.

"The resemblance between the two hanimals is hextraordinary, but not habsolutely complete. Reuben 'as a full set of teeth, but Roberts' dog miss the last tooth but one at the back missing. If your lordship," he went on with the dignity that makes the good man, wronged, so impressive, "wishes to disprove my hassertions, the modus hoperandi is puctly simple. All your lordship 'as to do is to hopen the hanimals' mouth and submit 'is back teeth to a pussonal hinspection."

John Barton alighted from the automobile, and, in answer to Keggs' respectful inquiry, replied that he was quite well.

"Where is everybody?" he asked.