

# Bob, Son of Battle

By Alfred Ollivant

A good serial story is worthy of generous space. You will agree after reading the three opening chapters of "Bob, Son of Battle," that we have been just rather than generous.

(Continued from issue of October 17.)

The two men finished their colloquy. The matter was concluded peacefully, mainly owing to the pacifying influence of Mrs. Moore. Together the three went into the yard; Mrs. Moore seizing the opportunity to shyly speak on David's behalf.

"He's such a good little lad, I do think," she was saying.

"Ye should ken, Mrs. Moore," the little man answered, a thought bitterly; "ye see enough of him."

"Yo' mun be ain proud of un, mester," the woman continued, heedless of the sneer; "an' 'im growin' such a gradely lad."

M'Adam shrugged his shoulders.

"I barely ken the lad," he said. "By sight I know him, of course, but barely to speak to. He's but seldom at hame."

"An' hoo proud his mother'd be if she could see him," the woman continued, well aware of his one tender place. "Eh, but she was fond o' him, so she was."

An angry flush stole over the little man's face. Well he understood the implied rebuke; and it hurt him like a knife.

"Ay, ay, Mrs. Moore," he began. Then breaking off, and looking about him—"Where's ma Wullie?" he cried excitedly, "James Moore!" whipping round on the Master, "ma Wullie's gone—gone, I say!"

Elizabeth Moore turned away indignantly.

"I do declar' he tak's more fash after yon little yaller beastie than iver he does after his own flesh," she muttered.

"Wullie, ma wee doggie! Wullie, where are ye? James Moore, he's gone—ma Wullie's gone!" cried the little man, running about the yard, searching everywhere.

"Cannot 'a' gotten far," said the Master, reassuringly, looking about him.

"Niver no tellin'," said Sam'l, appearing on the scene, pig-bucket in hand. "I misdoot yo'll iver see your dog agin, mister." He turned sorrowfully to M'Adam.

That little man, all dishevelled, and with the perspiration standing on his face, came hurrying out of the cowshed and danced up to the Master.

"It's robbed I am—robbed, I tell ye!" he cried recklessly. "Ma wee Wull's bin stolen while I was ben your hoose, James Moore!"

"Yo' munna say that, ma mon. No robbin' at Kenmuir," the Master answered sternly.

"Then where is he? It's for you to say."

"I've ma own idee, I ave," Sam'l announced opportunely, pig-bucket uplifted.

M'Adam turned on him.

"What, man? What is it?"

"I misdoot yo'll iver see your dog agin, mister," Sam'l repeated, as if he was supplying the key to the mystery.

"Noo, Sam'l, if yo' know owt tell it," ordered his master.

Sam'l grunted sulkily.

"Wheer's oor Bob, then?" he asked.

At that M'Adam turned on the Master.

"'Tis that, nae doot. It's yer gray dog, James Moore, yer dog. I might ha' kent it," and he loosed off a volley of foul words.

"Sweerin' will no find him," said the Master coldly. "Noo, Sam'l."

The big man shifted his feet, and looked mournfully at M'Adam.

"Twas 'appen' all an' hour ago, when I sees oor Bob goin' oot o' yard wi' little yaller tyke in his mouth. In a minnit I looks agin— and there' little yaller 'un was gone, and oor Bob a-sittin' a-lickin' his chops. Gone for iver, I do reck'n. Ah, yo' may well take on, Tammass Thornton!" For the old man was rolling about the yard, bent double with merriment.

M'Adam turned on the Master with the resignation of despair.

"Man, Moore," he cried piteously, "it's yer gray dog has murdered ma wee

Wull! Ye have it from yer ain man."

"Nonsense," said the Master encouragingly. "'Tis but yon girt oof."

Sam'l tossed his head and snorted.

"Coom, then, and I'll show yo'," he said, and led the way out of the yard. And there below them on the slope to the stream, sitting like Justice at the Courts of Law, was Owd Bob.

Straightway Sam'l, whose humor was something of the calibre of old Ross's, the sexton, burst into horse-merriment. "Why's he sittin' so still, think 'ee? Ho! ho! See un lickin' his chops—ha! ha!"—and he roared afresh. While from afar you could hear the distant rumbling of 'Enry and oor Job.

At the sight, M'Adam burst into a storm of passionate invective, and would have rushed on the dog had not James Moore forcibly restrained him.

"Bob, lad," called the Master, "coom here!"

But even as he spoke, the gray dog cocked his ears, listened a moment, and then shot down the slope. At the same moment Tammass hallooed: "Theer he be! yon's yaller un coomin' oot o' drain! La, Sam'l!" And there, indeed, on the slope below them, a little angry, smutty-faced figure was crawling out of a rabbit-burrow.

"Ye murderin' devil, wad ye daur touch ma Wullie?" yelled M'Adam, and breaking away, pursued hotly down the hill; for the gray dog had picked up the puppy, like a lancer a tent-peg, and was sweeping on, his captive in his mouth, toward the stream.

Behind, hurried James Moore and Sam'l, wondering what the issue of the comedy would be. After them toddled old Tammass, chuckling. While over the yard-wall was now a little cluster of heads: 'Enry, oor Job, Maggie and David, and Vi'let Thornton, the dairy-maid.

Straight on to the plank-bridge galloped Owd Bob. In the middle he halted, leant over, and dropped his prisoner, who fell with a cool plop into the running water beneath.

Another moment and M'Adam had reached the bank of the stream. In he plunged, splashing and cursing, and seized the struggling puppy; then waded back, the waters surging about his waist, and Red Wull, limp as a wet rag, in his hand. The little man's hair was dripping, for his cap was gone; his clothes clung to him, exposing the miserableness of his figure; and his eyes blazed like hot ashes in his wet face.

He sprang on to the bank, and, beside himself with passion, rushed at Owd Bob.

"Curse ye for a—"

"Stan' back, or yo'll have him at your throat!" shouted the Master, thundering up. "Stan' back, I say, yo' fule!" And, as the little man still came madly on, he reached forth his hand and hurled him back; at the same moment, bending, he buried the other hand deep in Owd Bob's shaggy neck. It was but just in time; for if ever the fierce desire of battle gleamed in gray eyes, it did in the young dog's as M'Adam came down on him.

The little man staggered, tottered, and fell heavily. At the shock, the blood gushed from his nose, and, mixing with the water on his face, ran down in vague red streams, dripping off his chin; while Red Wull, jerked from his grasp, was thrown afar, and lay motionless.

"Curse ye!" M'Adam screamed, his face dead-white save for the running red about his jaw. "Curse ye for a cowardly Englishman!" and, struggling to his feet, he made at the Master.

But Sam'l interposed his great bulk between the two.

"Easy, little mon," he said leisurely, regarding the small fury before him with mournful interest. "Oh, but thee be a little spit-ut, sam'l."

James Moore stood, leaning deep, his hand still buried in Owd Bob's coat.

"If yo'd touched him," he explained, "I couldn'a' ha' stopped him. He'd

ha' mauled yo' afore iver I could ha' had him off. They're bad to hold, the Gray Dogs, when they're roosed."

"Ay, ma word, that they are!" corroborated Tammass, speaking from the experience of sixty years. "Once on, yo' canna get 'em off."

The little man turned away.

"Ye're all agin me," he said, and his voice shook. A pitiful figure he made, standing there with the water drippin' from him. A red stream was running slowly from his chin; his head was bare, and face working.

James Moore stood eyeing him with some pity and some contempt. Behind was Tammass, enjoying the scene. While Sam'l regarded them all with an impassive melancholy.

M'Adam turned and bent over Red Wull, who still lay like a dead thing. As his master handled him, the button-tail quivered feebly; he opened his eyes, looked about him, snarled faintly, and glared with devilish hate at the gray dog and the group with him.

The little man picked him up, stroking him tenderly. Then he turned away and on to the bridge. Half-way across he stopped. It rattled feverishly beneath him, for he still trembled like a palsied man.

"Man, Moore!" he called, striving to quell the agitation in his voice—"I wad shoot yon dog."

Across the bridge he turned again. "Man, Moore!" he called and paused. "Ye'll not forget this day." And with that the blood flared up a dull crimson into his white face.

## CHAPTER V.

### A MAN'S SON.

The storm, long threatened, having once burst, M'Adam allowed looser rein to his bitter animosity against James Moore.

The two often met. For the little man frequently returned home from the village by the footpath across Kenmuir. It was out of his way, but he preferred it in order to annoy his enemy and keep a watch upon his doings.

He haunted Kenmuir like an evil genius. His sallow face was perpetually turning up at inopportune moments. When Kenmuir Queen, the prize short-horn heifer calved, unexpectedly and unattended in the dip by the lane, Tammass and the Master, summoned hurriedly by Owd Bob, came running up to find the little man leaning against the stile, and shaking with silent merriment. Again, poor old Staggy, daring still in his dotage, took a fall while scrambling on the steep banks of the Stony Bottom. There he lay for hours, unnoticed and kicking, until James Moore and Owd Bob came upon him at length, nearly exhausted. But M'Adam was before them. Standing on the far bank with Red Wull by his side, he called across the gulf with apparent concern: "He's bin so sin' yesternight." Often James Moore, with all his strength of character, could barely control himself.

There were two attempts to patch up the feud. Jim Mason, who went about the world seeking to do good, tried in his shy way to set things right. But M'Adam and his Red Wull between them soon shut him and Betsy up.

"You mind your letters and your wires, Mr. Poacher-Postman. Ay, I saw 'em baith; th' ain doon by the Haughs, t'ither in the Bottom. And there's Wullie, the humorsome chiel, havin' a rare game wi' Betsy." There indeed lay the faithful Betsy, suppliant on her back, paws up, throat exposed, while Red Wull, now a great grown puppy, stood over her, his habitually evil expression intensified into a fiendish grin, as with wrinkled muzzle and savage wheeze he waited for a moment as a pretext to paw Wullie, let the kiddy te' ye've had yer dinner."

Person Lecky was the other would-be mediator; for he hated to see the two principle pariahs of his tiny

cure at enmity. First he tackled James Moore on the subject; but that larconic person cut him short with, "I've nowt agin the little mon," and would say no more. And, indeed, the quarrel was none of his making.

Of the parson's interview with M'Adam, it is enough to say here that in the end, the angry old minister would of a surety have assaulted his mocking adversary had not Cyril Gilbraith forcibly withheld him.

And after that the vendetta must take its course unchecked.

David was now the only link between the two farms. Despite his father's angry commands, the boy clung to his intimacy with the Moores with a doggedness that no thrashing could overcome. Not a minute of the day when out of school, holidays and Sundays included, but was passed at Kenmuir. It was not till late at night that he would sneak back to the Grange, and creep quietly up to his tiny bare room in the roof—not supperless, indeed, motherly Mrs. Moore had seen to that. And there he would lie awake and listen with a fierce contempt as his father, hours later, lurched into the kitchen below, liltin' liquorishly:

"We are na fou, we're nae that fou,

But just a drappie in our e'e;

The cock may craw, the day may daw'

And ay we'll taste the barley bree!"

And in the morning the boy would slip quietly out of the house while his father still slept; only Red Wull would thrust out his savage head as he passed, and snarl hungrily.

Sometimes father and son would go thus for weeks without sight of one another. And that was David's aim—to escape attention. It was only his cunning at this game of evasion that saved him many a thrashing.

The little man seemed devoid of all natural affection for his son. He lavished the whole fondness of which his small nature appeared capable on the Tailless Tyke, for so the Dalesmen called Red Wull. And the dog he treated with a careful tenderness that made David smile bitterly.

The little man and his dog were alike morally as physically they were contrasted. Each owed a grudge against the world and was determined to pay it. Each was an Ishmael among his kind.

You saw them thus, standing apart, leperlike, in the turmoil of life; and it came quite as a revelation to happen upon them in some quiet spot of nights, playing together, each wrapped in the game, innocent, tender, forgetful of the hostile world.

The two were never separated except only when M'Adam came home by the path across Kenmuir. After that first misadventure he never allowed his friend to accompany him on the journey through the enemy's country; for well he knew that sheep dogs have long memories.

To the stile in the lane, then, Red Wull would follow him. There he would stand, his great head poked through the bars, watching his master out of sight; and then would turn and trot, self-reliant and defiant, sturdy and surely, down the very center of the road through the village—no playing, no enticing away, and woe to that man or dog who tried to stay him in his course! And so on, past Mother Ross's shop, past the Sylvester Arms, to the right by Kirby's smithy, over the Wastrel by the Haughs, to await his master at the edge of the Stony Bottom.

The little man, when thus crossing Kenmuir, often met Owd Bob, who had the free run of the farm. On these occasions he passed discreetly by; for, though he was no coward, yet it is bad, single-handed to attack a Gray Dog of Kenmuir; while the dog trotted soberly on his way, only a steely glint in the big gray eyes betraying his knowledge of the presence of his foe. As surely, however, as the little man, in his desire to spy out the nakedness

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