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## The Prisoner.

ALMOST any one would naturally stop and look over the twig fence at the farmhouse behind the row of Lombardy poplars and the pink azaleas. There was a neatness about the furrows, a fat, sleek contentment about the cattle in the pasture, and the brook under the willows was so pretty. Nevertheless, Adam Hull would have hurried past—for he was expecting to meet his wife at the station two miles away—had not a dog's howls smote his ears. He was a tender-hearted man with animals, and he stopped. His handsome, fair face darkened.

"Well, he is a mean man," he muttered; "if he ain't beating that dog I gave Aggie!"

But he reflected that the train would be due in half an hour, and shutting his ears he lifted the reins. Yet he didn't go on. Instead, with a flushed and knitted brow, he sprang out of the wagon and ran into the yard. The dog's sharp yelps had trailed off into whimpering cries. He lay on the ground, and over him stood a man with a whip, who, in turn, was clasped in the arms of a young woman. She thrust her slight figure between the man and the trembling beast.

"Whip us both, then!" she cried.

"Let go that dog!" the man said, not loudly, but with concentrated passion in his tones.

"I won't!"

"Then I'll make you."

"You coward?" sobbed the woman. "Oh, you mean, cruel coward!"

The man straightened himself up, and as he did so, shifted his whip from one hand to the other. Something flashed silver white when the right hand appeared again. "If you don't let go that dog and let me lick him for chasing chickens, I'll kill him!" said he.

The woman lifted her white face. "It isn't because he chased chickens that you want to kill him; it's because he loves me and I love him. You torment him to hurt me."

The man stood looking at her darkly. Adam hesitated. There were stories afloat about Ned Bruce's temper and his furious disregard of consequences when in a passion. "If he strikes her I'll interfere, gun or no gun!" thought Adam, lingering in the shadow of the poplars.

He did not strike her; he flung out his arms in a gesture of anguish, of anger, of rage dumb and impotent; then he strode away.

Only the sound of the woman's weeping and her broken words of pity and caressing to the dog were heard. "I shall have to, poor Jump," she sobbed; "I can't bear to see him abuse you so, day after day! There's where he threw the hot water on you just because you came into the kitchen. Poor Jump, good Jump! O, Jump, it won't hurt you if I kill you! It would be

"Don't feel so bad, Aggie," cried he, "Give me the dog; I'll take care of it!"

The woman lifted her pretty, tear-stained face and made a piteous effort at composure. "I am just as silly as I can be," she said. "Mr. Bruce wanted to whip him for chasing chickens, but I can't bear to have him punished, he howls so!" She rose to her feet as she

spoke and arranged her disordered dress. Very pretty she looked as she stood there, in her thin gown with its crumpled roses, and her cheeks the color of the printed flowers. But Adam Hull was not thinking of her beauty. Rather ruefully he asked; "Does he chase chickens bad, Aggie?"

"No, he never chased them before to-day," answered she. And he did not notice that her tone had changed; it was colder and quieter. "I think it was a mistake and just for fun to-day, for he went around the yard with me every day and he never bothered anything. But he is just young and playful."

"I guess he won't bother the chickens," Adam nodded, as if reassured. "He's the kind of dog a lady would get fond of, don't you think?" There was a note of irresolution in his voice masked by cheerfulness.

"Oh, yes," said Aggie, eagerly, "she couldn't help it. He knows tricks!"

Adam nodded again. "I guess you better let me take him home. I guess he sorter bothers Bruce."

Bruce, for his better convenience in thrashing the dog, had tied a rope to his collar; by that same rope Jump was led away, to be finally hoisted into Adam's wagon. Neither Adam nor Mrs. Bruce noticed that Bruce, behind the grape vines, directed a burning gaze on every motion.

Adam was now in a desperate hurry, and Agnes Bruce had no

time for more than a single glance at the wistful eyes of the hound.

"Thank you, Adam," was all she said, to which Adam responded in an embarrassed way, "Oh, that's all right, Aggie. Ella will drop in some time and tell you how he gets along!"

Then she was watching the dust and the whirling wheel spokes. Very soon she returned. There was supper to get in the house. The burden of her daily life sank more heavily,



me, no that it will hurt!" The tears were flowing unrestrained while the dog strove to comfort a grief he did not comprehend by wagging his tail and licking her face. Adam Hull stepped hastily forward. His wife afterward told him that he ought to have pretended to come from outside, after a decent interval and plenty of warning noise; but he blundered in, choking with sympathy.