

Strange Pets

(George Bancroft Griffith.)

Almost all great men and women have one or more pets. The late Frank Buckland, the naturalist, when twelve years old, kept a raccoon, an owl or a buzzard in the closet of his bedroom.

The buzzard has been tamed by other naturalists. He is a bird of prey, but so lazy that he makes but a poor living. He is a sort of mongrel—a kind of passive participle in the bird kingdom, between the active verbs of the hawk family and the common nouns of the owl family. The great naturalist, Buffon, gives an account of a buzzard taken in a snare by one of his friends, which was, by great effort, domesticated and taught to know his master. As he tells the anecdote, the bird was at first wild and ferocious, but under a process of starving, became more tame and would take food from his hand.

In six weeks his master allowed him to go out of doors, taking the precaution to have his wings tied. Some time after, his wings were untied, a bell attached to his leg, and a piece of copper marked with his owner's name fastened to his neck. With this full liberty he flew to the woods, but in a few hours returned again, pursued by four other buzzards, which were attempting to chastize him on account of his abnormal condition, and perhaps for his evident tendency to the habits of domestic life. After this insulting treatment he became more tame and familiar, and seemed quite attached to his master.

This bird was a mortal enemy to dogs and cats, but perfectly fearless in their presence. In one instance four large cats were placed in the garden with this buzzard, and a piece of meat thrown to them. A general fight ensued, in which the buzzard came off victor and bore away all the booty. He did not fancy red caps or wigs upon the head, but would pick them off whenever he had the opportunity. He was harmless among the poultry in his master's yard, but a terror to every other rapacious bird that came in sight. This buzzard remained with the family for about a year, performing all manner of tricks, when he disappeared and was never seen afterwards. Whether he escaped to the woods or was killed is not known.

A friend of mine, Lieut. Clark, when he was in the revenue service at Alaska, had a pet bear on the boat and he made things hum. He made a fine pet, however, and the lieutenant named him Wineska. He used to climb to the cross-trees, going up hand over hand by the ratlins. One day he ventured out on the yard-arm, and there he stayed. The crew had to get a rope and haul him down. When the officers were in the cabin, he would back down the companion way and come to them for his mess of grog. He dearly loved rum and molasses. Once he vaulted over the head of their Chinese cook and went into the lockers, where he helped himself to sugar and butter. His master had a tackling made for him, much the same as a harness of a pet pug, and would drop him overboard, with a rope attached, to take his bath. Once he landed in a native boat and nearly frightened the occupants out of their wits. He was as playful as a kitten, and

although sometimes he disobeyed he was never treacherous or unkind. When he was lost or hid himself, as he often did, his human intimates would look in the dark till they saw two little balls of fire. These were his eyes, and gave him away every time.

I once saw at the residence of a gentleman living in my native city, Newburyport, Mass., a funny as well as a troublesome pet. This was a tame woodcock, something exceedingly rare, but one other, that I have heard of, having been tamed, and that one was reported in the 'Forest and Stream,' and thought to be a wonderful case. This bird will only eat what it can take from the earth, and it is a good deal of work to dig the worms and then bury them in the earth for the bird to pierce with its bill, and thus apparently procure its food, as our friend, Mr. Eugene Noyes, soon found. It took a barrel of worms to last the pet bird referred to through a single winter. Of course it was necessary to keep these in earth, which required several cart loads during the cold season, and from this one can form some idea of the trouble to keep such a pet.

It is a popular idea that partridges cannot be tamed, but Mr. Parker, of Coldbrook, another Massachusetts man, offers contrary testimony. A while since he saw a large partridge in the road near his saw mill, which acted strangely, not attempting to hide or get away when approached. He took a fish pole and line and snared the bird with a noose, and handled it quite freely without its attempting to escape. Since then he has kept it about the house, and it comes at his call, alights on his shoulder and hand, and in every way is as docile and domestic in its habits as a pet chicken.

The writer will conclude by briefly referring to an old German farmer, living about ten miles back of Sebawaing, Mich., who has a wildcat for a pet. This animal was caught when very young, but has now been the familiar friend of the farmer for more than eight years. It follows him about like a dog and is truly loyal, with but one exception, and that is that he dotes on chickens. This, however, is slightly offset by the fact that he can kill more rats than a thousand tame cats.

Stirling Harvey's Trust.

(Ida T. Thurston, in the 'Presbyterian Banner.')

The day that Stirling Harvey left school to become the office boy of Lawyer Evans, his mother tacked above the table in his room a little card on which in red ink she had carefully printed the three words, —TRUE—HONEST—FAITHFUL.

The boy—he was not yet sixteen—kept those three words in his heart. He had much of the knightly spirit in his feeling towards his widowed mother and his sister. He was 'the man of the house.' He looked forward to the time when he should be able to provide for these two, and his mother need work no more.

Lawyer Evans soon discovered that this new office boy was unlike his predecessors—he could be trusted and he was not lazy. The lawyer watched him closely, and trusted him. He gave him three dollars a week at first; in three months he doubled

the sum, and Stirling, proud and grateful, thought often of these three words—true, honest, faithful. The money, too, meant a great deal to the little household, for his mother was not able to do as much as she had done; her health was failing, and Ruth and Stirling watched over her anxiously and spared her all possible care.

One dull, chilly November day Mr. Evans called the boy into his private office and handed him a letter.

'I want you to take that to Mr. Gardner's office,' he said, 'and if he should not be there, find out where he is; he will probably have gone home. If they cannot tell you at the office where to find him, go right on to his house, and if he is not there wait there till he comes. You are to put the letter into his own hands, you understand. It is very important, it may be a case of life or death, and I send you, Harvey, because I know I can trust you.'

The boy felt his cheeks flush with pleasure—Mr. Evans did not often say a thing like that; when he did, it meant a deal.

'Yes, sir, you can trust me,' he answered earnestly, and then he put the letter into an inner pocket and went out.

It was after four o'clock and already the dusk of the early twilight was settling down upon the busy streets as Stirling walked briskly towards Mr. Gardner's office. It was perhaps half a dozen blocks away. When he reached it he was told that Mr. Gardner had gone home an hour earlier. He had expected that, and he hurried down the stairs and back over the way he had come. Mr. Gardner lived out in the suburbs, and the street car that Stirling must take passed two or three blocks beyond Mr. Evans's office. The boy glanced up at the familiar office windows as he passed, and wondered if Mr. Evans had gone home yet. He usually left about that time. Then he recalled those words that had sent a warm glow to his heart as well as to his cheeks—'I send you, Harvey, because I know I can trust you.'

'I'd like to have a chance to prove to him that he can trust me—a big chance, I mean, not a little thing like this—just to carry an important letter up on the hill,' he said to himself.

He did not guess how swiftly the chance that he longed for was coming; that it was close at hand, even then. He did not guess that the slender figure hurrying down the street had anything to do with the matter. Indeed, among the many passers-by he did not notice the girl with the white, anxious face and frightened eyes, until she sprang forward and caught his arm, just as he signalled a car for Capital Hill.

'Oh, Stirling; oh, Stirling!' she cried out and then caught her breath with a great choking sob.

'Why, Ruth, what are you here for? What's the matter?' the boy questioned, his voice sharp with anxiety, as he saw the trouble in her face.

'It's mother—she—she's sick, Stirling.' The girl's lips twitched as she made a brave effort at self-control. 'Oh, come quick, come quick! The doctor says—'

She could not put into words the awful fear, but her face told it all. Instinctively the boy turned with her and started towards home, but in a moment he stopped short with a groan.