

THE BOYS AND GIRLS

The Story of a Hero

From Harper's Young People

IN 1871 the steamship Swallow left the Cape of Good Hope bound for England. Among the passengers was a child of two years and a nurse. The lady had also brought with her a large, handsome Newfoundland dog, called Nero.

The voyage had lasted about six days. No land was visible and the island of St. Helena was the nearest point. The day was a beautiful one, with a breeze blowing and the sun shining down brightly on the sparkling waters. A large and gay company of the passengers were assembled on deck; merry groups of young men and girls had clustered together; now and then a laugh rang out, or some one sang a gay little snatch of song, when suddenly the mirth of all was silenced by the loud and piercing scream of a woman.

A nurse who had been holding a child in her arms at the side of the vessel had lost her hold of the leaping, restless little one and it had fallen overboard into the sea. The poor woman, in her despair, would have flung herself after her charge had not strong arms held her back. But sooner than that it can be written down something rushed quickly past her; there was a leap over the vessel's side, a splash into the water, and then Nero's black head appeared above the waves holding the child in his mouth.

The engines were stopped as soon as possible, but by that time the dog was far behind in the wake of the vessel. A boat was quickly lowered and the ship's surgeon, taking his place in it, ordered the sailors to pull for their lives. One could just make out on the leaping, dancing waves the dog's black head, holding something scarlet in his mouth. The child had on a little jacket of scarlet cloth and it gleamed like a spark of fire on the dark blue waves.

The mother of the child stood on the deck, her eyes straining anxiously after the boat and the black spot upon the waves still holding firmly to the tiny scarlet spot. The boat seemed fairly to creep, though it sped over the waves as it never sped before.

Sometimes a billow higher than others hid for a moment dog and child. But the boat came nearer and nearer, near enough at last to allow the surgeon to reach over and lift the child out of the dog's mouth, then a sailor's stout arms pulled Nero into the boat and the men rowed swiftly back to the ship.

"Alive?" shouted every lip, as the boat came within hail of the steamer; and, as the answer came back, "alive" a "Thank God!" came from every heart.

Then the boat came to the ship's side. A hundred hands were stretched out to help the brave dog on board, and "Good Nero," "Brave dog," "Good fellow," resounded on every side. The surgeon ignored the praises showered so profusely on him. He trotted sedately up to the child's mother and with a wag of his dripping tail looked up into her face with his big, faithful brown eyes, as if he said, "It is all right; I have brought her back safe."

The mother dropped on her knees on the deck, and, taking his shaggy head in both hands, kissed his wet face again and again, the tears pouring down her face in streams. Indeed, there was not a dry eye on board. One old sailor stood near with the tears running down his weather-beaten brown face, unconscious that he was weeping.

Well, Nero was for the rest of the voyage the pet and hero of the ship and he bore his honors with quiet dignity. It was curious, however, to see how, from that time on, he made himself the sentinel and body-guard of the child. He always placed himself at the side of the chair of any person in whose arms she was, his eyes watching every movement she made. Sometimes she would be laid on the deck, with only Nero to watch her, and if inclined to creep out of bounds, Nero's teeth, fastened firmly in the skirt of her frock, promptly drew her back. It was as though he said, "I have been lucky enough, Miss Baby, to save you once, but as I may not be so lucky again, I shall take care you don't run any such risks in the future."

When the steamer reached her destination, Nero received a regular ovation as he was leaving the vessel. Some one cried, "Three cheers for Nero!" and they were given with a will. And "Good-by, Nero," "Good-by, good dog," responded on every side. Every one crowded around to give a pat on the head as he trotted

down the gang-plank. To all these demonstrations he could only reply with a wag of his tail, and a twinkle of his faithful brown eyes. He kept very close to the nurse's side, and watched anxiously his little charge's arrival on dry land.

He was taken to the home of his little mistress where he lived, loved and honored, until he died of old age, with his shaggy gray head resting on the knee of the child (now a woman) that he had saved. His grave is in an English churchyard, in the burial plot of the family to which he belonged and is marked by a fair white stone, on which is engraved:

"Sacred to the memory of Nero."

His portrait hangs over the chimney-piece of an English drawing room, beneath which sits, in a low arm chair, a fair-haired girl, who often looks up at Nero's portrait as she tells how he sprang into the Atlantic Ocean after her and held her until help came.

He Saw the Finish

Little Leonard, while out walking with his nurse, saw a blacksmith shoeing a horse, and upon returning home said: "Mamma, I saw the man who makes horses today."

"Are you sure you did?" asked mamma.

"Of course I am," replied Leonard.

"He had one nearly finished when I saw him. He was just nailing on his hind feet."

A Correction

In the announcement of the results of our recent prize competition, the third prize was, by mistake, credited to John Hulbert, Kemptville, N.S. It should have been Fanny Burrell, Kemptville, who wrote the essay, as printed, which secured the third prize. We regret the mistake.



Going to the Picnic

The basket was very heavy when our walk to the woods began, And so I ate some cookies and gave some more to Nan. And when we saw the frosted cake, we thought it wouldn't pay To carry it any farther; so we ate it on the way. We felt so very thirsty and tired with our load That we ate some juicy peaches as we rested by the road. We ate more things by and by, and now we rather dread To reach the grove; for how can we have a picnic with only buttered bread