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TAG

OR THE
CHIEF BOULE DOG

BY VALANCE PATRIARCHE

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"Mr.—er—ah—Will you kindly—" A hand was laid upon his arm. "Scuse me, sir," said a porter, politely struggling to hide his grin, "You've forgotten your dog."

Mr. Patterson's hand instinctively sought his change pocket, but the authorities were too near. Assuming a stony countenance, he turned and called Cairlo; low at first, then in tones of sharp command. The graven image of a dog never stirred. Every occupant of the large and busy rotunda was now deeply engrossed in watching the scene. Bets were laid on the outcome, but the determined set of Cairlo's jaw did not invite interference. The courteous porter barred the way; evidently if the dog stayed the master did likewise. The situation grew desperate. At any moment Patty and Bateese might appear, the former he knew would take in the situation and laugh, and all those darned idiots of men would laugh with her, while Bateese would divine treachery and shriek for his "chien boule dog."

Heroic measures were necessary, so retracing his steps to the side of the scowling animal, Pat gave a quick movement of muscular shoulder and raised the stubborn bulk in his arms. The dazed beast offered no resistance, and as the bridegroom stalked off with the dog's delicate reticence countenance nodding over one shoulder a shout of hilarious mirth went up from the bystanders and his exit was made under a fire of raillery. "Cries of 'Love me, love my dog!' 'Where was your pup raised?' 'Is that what you call the dog tax?'" pursued him to the steps, where he dropped the now submissive Cairlo with unnecessary violence, and, later, threw him into the cab with no gentle hand. Patty had heard the roars of laughter and caught a glimpse of the sudden descent of the bulldog, but a look at her husband's face decided her that silence was golden—a decision wondrous wise for a bride of ten days. They visited many, many hotels after this, working their way down from palaces to quiet hostels in side streets, and though, in one or two instances, Bateese and the pup were concealed until rooms had been secured, yet, when the inevitable moment arrived that they must be produced, a miraculous slip of memory smote the conscience of the clerk. Those apartments (the only vacant ones in the house) were already engaged. Astounding thing how he could have forgotten; he was profusely apologetic but would have to keep to his original agreement. Cairlo's cannibal visage was too much for them all. Hours passed, miles were traversed, and in proportion as the spirits of the occupants of the cab dropped did the complacency of the driver increase. He whistled with a very insolence of joy when given the tenth address, and, at the eleventh, broke into song. Once the bridegroom grimly remarked that the Pound or Home for Lost Dogs seemed to be the only remaining institution to be visited, and that, on promise of good behavior, they might be accommodated there to keep Cairlo company. At length, upon Patty's suggestion, they were driven to the sober precincts of the Y.W.C.T.U., where they fondly hoped to hear of some respectable Christian family which would gather weary wanderers to its bosom. The now white and anxious bride told the secretary how she, her husband, one little boy—very well-behaved—and a small dog were looking for quiet temporary lodgings. The secretary was grave over the dog. Of course most landladies objected to children too, but she would look over her list. Patty sank into a chair feeling as if her life were at stake. The reprieve came. The secretary looked up with a beaming

smile. She had the very thing. A widow, quiet house and locality, two front rooms with breakfast if desired. After a short conference over the telephone she confirmed the good news. "Mrs. Trent will be glad to rent the apartments, won't object to the little dog if kept in the basement and is fond of children." The secretary smiled as she added: "She helps us with our work when she has time, and is a nice, motherly woman with strong views against race-suicide."

"Bless her heart!" exclaimed Patty, as she took the address. She almost danced out to the cab, and Pat promised to add a half-dollar to the driver's already swollen tariff if he took them to this last address in half an hour.

"She has strong anti-race-suicide views, Pat," quoted his wife, laughing. "Darling," he rejoined with solemnity, "Bateese is the child of our tenderest care. All our hopes are centred in his plump carcass and our only aim in life is to rear him to noble manhood." He winked at Bateese, who screwed up his black eyes and chuckled sleepily as if he were privy to the jest. Now that lodgings were in sight Bateese and the chien boule dog assumed the aspect of a huge joke; a Frenchy joke; a sort of "double entendre."

It seemed too marvellous to be true when they actually obtained admittance to the widow's abode. It was a beautiful home to them, a very nest of peace and a haven from the cruel, jostling world which loves not little boys and bulldogs. The door closed on sounds of a rollicking song from the enriched cabman and they were led to the first floor front by a neat and smiling landlady, who, before leaving, stooped to pat the head of Bateese.

"And how old might he be, ma'am?" she asked.

Patty hesitated and then came a dual answer.

"Five," said Patty.

"Seven," said Pat.

They paused in confusion and the landlady came to the rescue, saying with a nod at Pat, "Now ain't that just like these men; their heads is so full of business they don't even remember the ages of their own children. So he is five. He is fine an' fleshy for his age; a healthy one, I guess."

"Yes, indeed," said Patty, looking out of the window.

"What is your name, my little man?" But Bateese was yawning and speechless.

"He is called Baptiste," said Patty, "a French name, you know."

"Well now!" exclaimed the well-meaning landlady, "you don't look like French folk."

"He was called after a relative," said Patty, faintly, adding in firmer but sweet tones, "Thank you so much, Mrs. Trent, we won't want anything more just now."

The widow took her dismissal with good grace, and left the room. A few moments later one might have seen a small boy sleeping obliviously on a couch while two dishevelled young people danced noiselessly round the room, stopping only when weak with laughter to throw themselves on the nearest chairs, wipe their eyes and chokingly recount some experience of that seemingly interminable day.

And Cairlo? He brooded darkly in solitary confinement in the basement and remorse gnawed at his vitals as he thought of the pick-me-up he had accepted at the "Everleigh," which was the cause of this base ignominy.

(To be continued)

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