

The Dog That Took Two Premiums.

(Carroll Watson Rankin, in 'Wellspring.')

Ten minutes after the doors were opened the morning of entry day at the county fair, a boy, leading a large, black and white, shaggy dog, presented himself at the counter of the administration building.

'I want to enter a dog,' said he.

'What kind of a dog?' asked Herbert Wane, who was making entries for all the departments. 'Is he a hound, a spaniel, a poodle, a setter, or a mastiff?'

'I don't know,' said the boy, eyeing his four-footed companion reflectively. 'I guess he does not know himself what kind of a dog he is, but he's a good dog.'

'There doesn't seem to be any prize offered in this book for good dogs,' said Herbert mischievously. 'What's your name?'

'Martin Shepherd.'

'Why, that settles it,' laughed Herbert, running his pencil down the premium list. 'It's a shepherd dog, of course. There's an entry fee of fifty cents. Got the money?'

The boy went down into the depths of his trousers pocket and fished up pennies and also nickels to the extent of forty-nine cents. A second prolonged struggle brought the final reluctant penny to light. The boy, very red as to complexion, tied the entry card to the dog's shabby collar, and departed, with his exhibit trailing after him, to the bench show near the stock yards.

The bench was literally a bench and nothing more. Built of rough boards, it was twenty-five feet long, by three feet wide, with no overhead covering. To the managers of the fair, the bench show was a mere farce, and most of the grown-up patrons scorned this humble section of the exhibition; but to the boy portion of the population it was always deeply interesting, for the dogs were usually personal friends. Some years there were as many as a dozen exhibits; other years there were none. The success of the bench show depended, apparently, upon the size of the huckleberry crop. When that failed, the youthful owners of dogs found the entry fee prohibitive.

For a time it looked as if Martin's dog were to have the long bench all to himself; but before the day was over, other boys appeared with other dogs, until no fewer than seven surprised exhibits sat wagging their tails on the long bench. To keep their exhibits from devouring one another, the exhibitors found it necessary to sit beside them on the bench, and more than one amused spectator asked pertinently: 'Is this a dog show or a boy show?'

By the second day, however, the dogs either discovered that they were on exhibition or else became resigned to the inevitable. At any rate, they snoozed comfortably in unconventional attitudes, in their places on the bench, and appeared to enjoy the sunshine. Relieved of all responsibility, the boys found themselves at liberty to roam where they just pleased. The first use Martin made of his freedom was to apply at the administration building for work.

'I can run errands like anything,' he said by way of recommendation.

'Well, run like anything with this note to the man that's selling tickets down at the east gate,' said Herbert, handing the boy an envelope. 'If you're back inside of fifteen minutes, there'll be something else for you to do.'

After that, when Martin was not running errands or attending to his dog, he was gazing with rapt but silent admiration at Her-

bert. The boy had never known anyone like him. Herbert was tall, broad-shouldered and dark; his brown eyes sparkled with mischief and his hair was black. He was full of fun and never at a loss for something to say. Martin was small, sandy, and freckled, his blue eyes were of almost owl-like solemnity, and his vocabulary was greatly overbalanced by his shyness; nevertheless, so great was his admiration for the older lad, that he promptly resolved to grow up to be precisely like him. Herbert, without in the least suspecting the power of his influence, was amused at Martin's devotion.

Apparently the balloon man, as everyone called the professional aeronaut, shared Martin's opinion of Herbert. At any rate, each day, before he made his thrilling ascension, followed by a parachute drop, the man handed the president's son his watch, his purse, and a letter, all of which were to be mailed to his wife, in case of a fatal termination to his perilous upward journey. Each day Herbert glowed with pride at being so trusted, and Martin's respect increased visibly.

'My!' the boy said, thinking of certain shady transactions in his own past, 'I wish I was as honest as him. I guess his mother ain't much afraid to trust him with the cookies. I guess he never stole his mother's jam.'

Herbert, however, was much overrated by both his admirers, for in reality he was remarkable for nothing but his excessive carelessness.

Thursday was premium day. The judges for the stock department had spent a trying morning among the horses, cows, sheep, and swine. It was two o'clock before, after much discussion, they had selected the prize-winning Durham bull, and the most meritorious Berkshire pig—and they had had no luncheon.

'What's next?' asked one of them, leaning wearily against the sheep pen. 'Hadn't we better leave the rest until we've had dinner?'

'There's nothing left but the bench show and the poultry,' said the superintendent, consulting his book. 'It wouldn't be worth while to come back here for that. Here, I'll tell you what we'll do; we'll divide forces. You two attend to the dogs and Miller and I will begin with the chickens. Your task will be light—there are so few entries that I guess every dog will take a prize.'

Martin's dog, Sport, was curled in a comfortable heap at the end of the line. He was not as beautiful as he was peculiar, and opinions differed as to whether he was a black-and-white animal or a white-and-black one. If one looked at him squarely from the right, he was a black dog. Viewed from the left, he was a white dog with a black face and a few black blotches. It has been said that the leopard cannot change his spots, neither could Sport change his, but at times, he could, and did, conceal them.

To all intents and purposes, Sport curled in a heap and blinking one eye at the weary judges, was a black dog—the only shepherd dog entered—and, as a black shepherd dog, he was awarded a premium.

When the judges reached the fourth dog, they found it necessary to ask the superintendent a question, so they followed the officer to the poultry sheds. There they met the thoughtful secretary, approaching to regale them with sandwiches and hot coffee, which they disposed of, sitting picnic-fashion on the grass.

During the absence of the judges, Sport discovered that the further end of the bench was flooded with sunshine, while his own resting place was in the shade. The sunny spot had been occupied during the morning by Na-

than Porter's pointer, Bob, but Bob, having an hour previously grown tired of being an exhibit, had gnawed his rope and had unceremoniously departed for home, leaving behind him a large card bearing the word 'Pointer' still nailed to the rail beneath his place on the bench. Martin, having once known a boy whose dog had jumped from a barn window with disastrous results, owing to the shortness of his rope, was taking no such chances with his exhibit. A generous half of Mrs. Shepherd's clothesline connected Sport with the iron ring in the bench. Sport, all innocence, and with no intention to deceive, arose, then stretched himself and strolled leisurely to the farther end of the bench, where he lay down upon the black side of himself. He thus killed two birds with one stone, for with one move he became not only a nearly white dog, but also a pointer, as the card below him testified.

When the judges, refreshed by their coffee, returned, Sport being the only pointer in evidence, went down in the book for another first prize.

The next morning, Martin gazed in bewilderment at the two premium checks handed to him by the superintendent.

'Say,' said Martin, to another youthful exhibitor, 'I don't see how I took two prizes with only one dog, do you? There's some mistake.'

'Sh!' said the other boy. 'You're in luck, you are. Keep still. Go over to the office and get your money. They'll never know you didn't enter two dogs. Go to the chap that didn't do the entering.'

'But I didn't have any pointer,' objected Martin.

'Nate Porter did; but Nate's gone to the Soo to the ball game with his father. The fair'll be over by the time he gets back. You'll have four dollars! I wish't I was you!'

'But it wouldn't be straight, would it?'

'Sure; it ain't your fault if the judges don't look at both sides of your dog. I seen him down at Nate's end of the bench yesterday afternoon and I didn't know him for the same dog until he stood up.'

Martin, tempted, but doubtful, strolled toward the administration building. He was welcomed eagerly by Herbert.

'Say,' said Herbert, 'you saw the balloon man give me his things yesterday, didn't you? Did you notice what I did with them? Did you see a letter among them?'

'Yes,' said Martin. 'He gave you a watch, a pocketbook, and a big, white envelope—kind of dirty on the edges it was. You laid it on that shelf behind you.'

'Exactly,' said Herbert. 'Afterwards I took the watch and the money home for safe keeping, but I can't find the letter. I haven't the faintest notion what I did with it.'

'Maybe the balloon man can write out another.'

'Maybe he can, and maybe he can't,' said Herbert. 'That's just what's worrying me. He hasn't come back.'

It was true. The balloonist had not returned, and the time for his next performance was approaching. The first two days, there had been little or no wind, and the aeronaut had sailed gently to earth only a short distance from the fair grounds. The third day, however, there had been a stiff breeze. The big, grimy, collapsed balloon had been picked up six miles from its starting place, but its owner and his parachute were still missing. The address on the lost letter was Herbert's sole means of finding the balloonists' people in case of a fatality—and it began to look as if the unfortunate man had been carried into the lake.

'I declare,' said Herbert, who, indeed, looked