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In nearly every heart, among our great constituency the following lines will strike a responsive cord:—

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES.

BY AVERIC STANDISH FRANCIS.

O day of gladness, day of joy divine,
What part in thee have I, since all my light
Is faded into shadow? Joy is thine,
But mine is sorrow; and too dim my sight
Has grown for Christmas; give to me
But memory
Thoughts dear of other days within my heart
Hold me apart.
I cannot bless this Christmas day, so fast
The tears come—all my blessing is the past.
Poor aching heart, poor tired eyes, that see,
Only the empty chair, the vacant place!
Poor human longing for what cannot be—
The voice grown silent, the beloved face!
Love knows—love knows! but yet, believe me dear
You need not fear
The Christmas brightness; tears but clear the eyes,
And grown more wise,
The soul looks forth with added power to bless—
The power of a deeper tenderness.
Gladness is not the mark of empty hearts,
Nor grief of full ones; Neither is there strife
Twixt joy and sorrow; each to each imparts
New meaning, children of one mother—life.
O troubled soul, unconscious of thy strength
Behold at length,
From out the very depth of shadow shine
This truth divine,
That of one spirit is our loss and gain,
Our deepest comfort and our deepest pain.
The empty joy is that which knows not grief;
The empty grief is that which glances fears;
Of sorrow and of joy is born belief,
And blessed is the smile that breaks through tears.
Then let the holly tingle with the yew,
Dear heart and true,
For unto God there is no first nor last—
Love knows no past.
With steadfast gaze he looks on hopes and fears,
And gathers to his feet the passing years.
—The Outlook

Arty's Guardian.

"So this is the great dog you have told me of in your letters," I said to my friend, Charles Marston, at whose Colorado home I had just arrived; "what a noble fellow he is!"

It was an immense mastiff, with a tread like that of a mountain lion, had approached me where I sat and laid his large head confidently across my knees.

"Yes," was the reply, "he is a noble fellow indeed; noble in character as well as form. Annie and I can bear testimony to that without the least reservation."

"Annie" was my friend's pretty young wife; and her face glowed with feeling as she looked upon the strong, stately creature which appeared so bent upon forming a friendly acquaintance with me.

"He can never be overpraised," she remarked. "We call him Arty's Guardian; for he has twice saved our little boy's life, so he has well earned the title, we think."

"I should say so!" was my answer. "I have had a curiosity to see him ever since learning of his performances."

"He came to us in a singular manner," said her husband. "It was just after a terrible blizzard that we heard a loud scratching at our door. I opened it and in rushed a huge dog. He commenced pulling at my trousers, all the while looking wistfully up in my face. I was a little shy of him at first, he was so large and powerful; but it was soon plain that he wished me to follow him, and I did so. He appeared very impatient running ahead, and often looking back with a short bark as if to encourage me.

"About a mile from the house we came to a spot where a man lay dead in the snow. He was a stranger who has lost his way and been frozen to death in the storm. We discovered afterwards that he was from Boston, and had been prospecting throughout our region. I procured assistance and had the body removed to our house, where the faithful dog continued to watch beside it until it was laid away forever. Then he attached himself to us in the most affectionate manner, and here he has been ever since.

"Brutus" was the name on his collar, and to that he answered eagerly. Our little boy was then two years old, and the great brute appeared to comprehend the child's helplessness as well as a human being could have done.

"The winter passed away, and as the weather became pleasant Arty would sometimes go toddling

about our doors, though of course never very far from the house. One day a couple of horses belonging to a neighbor of ours, while attached to a heavy wagon, took fright and ran. They came in this direction, tearing on at full speed. Arty happened at the moment to be standing right in the wheel-track, and when his mother discovered his danger, the team was almost upon him.

She flew screaming from the door, but she saw that she was too late, as the child was ten or twelve rods off. It was an awful moment; but just then Brutus came bounding to the spot. He had barely time to seize the little fellow in his big jaws, and leap with him out of the path, when the cruel hoofs and wheels went thundering by. Could human intelligence or human courage have done more than this?"

"It was a wonderful act," I said, "and I should hold such a four-footed guardian above all price. But the panther incident about which you have written me—I should like to have you point out the spot where that took place. Yonder I suppose is the pond and that old leaning tree by its bank, I should guess must be the one you described."

The pond was a deep sheet of water of several acres, lying about twenty rods from the house; and the old tree, which I had noticed in particular from its singular position and form, was a gnarled oak, three or four feet in diameter, leaning from the bank in such a manner that a person could have ascended it with very little difficulty. The trunk was short and one huge branch extending from its fork reached out over the pond like a gigantic arm.

"You are right," said my friend; "that is the pond, and that old oak is the very tree. 'Sunny Lake' is the name we give our little basin, because on bright days it so reflects the sunshine. But I tell Annie we ought to call it 'Panther Lake,' though that would be a rather fierce name. I must confess."

"Yes, much too fierce for my liking," observed Mrs. Marston. "We shall let that old tree stand as a memorial of what has occurred there; and yet at times I almost shudder when I look at it from my window here, it makes me so realize that dreadful scene."

"One of these days it will fall into the water of itself," said her husband, "it seems as if almost ready to do so now. But meanwhile you shall hear the story from Annie's own lips. She can tell it better than I can; for it was an adventure all of which she saw and in part of which she was. Brutus was a part of it too; and see how he pricks up his ears as if he knew what we were talking about. I wish he had the power of speech!"

"Poor Brutus!" said Mrs. Marston, you should have seen him after that struggle; he was torn in every part of his body, and must have suffered dreadfully.

"We heard that a panther had been seen a mile or two from here, but it did not seem very probable that he would venture near the house, especially in the daytime, and so the rumor did not prevent me from going about the premises as usual, though I knew that a strip of thick woods, reached from the main forest which you can see yonder, to the very margin of the pond. I did not think that a wild beast would be tempted to follow such a narrow line of thicket, with open fields on both sides of it; but the event showed how little I knew of the creature's habits.

"One afternoon my husband had gone away to the village, seven miles from here, leaving me alone with Arty and old Brutus. Toward evening I went out to gather some beautiful lilies, which grew in the water at the edge of the pond. I had seen them the day before but some of the buds were not then sufficiently opened.

"I took Arty with me, and put him down near the bank, where he at once began a chase of the yellow butterflies that were winging their way about him and lying among the high grass. Brutus we had left in the house enjoying a comfortable nap. I found some difficulty in getting at the lilies, and so a considerable time was occupied in gathering them; but all the while I kept Arty in call, and could hear his baby voice talking now to me and now to the butterflies.

At length I was startled by a peculiar sound as of some heavy animal rushing with a springy motion over the grass; and this was immediately followed by a cry of terror, and a plaintive call of 'mamma, mamma!'

"Springing quickly up the bank, I saw a sight that even now it frightens me to think of. Before me stood a large fierce creature, with flaming eyes and waving tail, apparently just ready to leap away with the prize he had snatched up—and that prize was my own little boy!

"With outstretched arms and a scream that I think could have been heard for more than a mile, I rushed straight toward the savage beast, which seemed startled and confused by such an unexpected act. He bounded a few feet, then stopped for a moment, looking about him with those glaring eyes and finally sprang directly upon the trunk of the old oak, still holding Arty in his mouth.

"He ran up the leaning body of the tree, and upon reaching its fork went out like a great cat upon the long branch, which, as you can see from here, stretches so far out over the pond.

"It was plain that the fearful enemy could be nothing less than a panther; and even in my terror and confusion I realized that it was only my unlooked-for presence between him and the thicket from which he had come which prevented him from taking to the woods. For an instant the thought of Brutus crossed my mind; but should I run to the house to let him out, would not the savage beast leap down and escape, taking Arty with him?

"Mamma, mamma!" cried my poor little darling, stretching out his dear baby hands for me to help him. If I hesitated as to my course, it was but for an instant. The next moment I was climbing the leaning trunk, using both hands and feet to assist me.

"The panther growled frightfully as I stepped from the fork out upon the large limb where he crouched; but I went forward as fast as possible, balancing myself as I did so with all the skill I possessed.

"At first it seemed as if the beast had no thought of retreating, for his whole attitude was one of defiance. His back was rounded, and the hair upon it stood up in a bristling line. But as I advanced his tactics changed. He looked first one way, then another, and presently leaped down into the water. Yet his hold of the child was never for a moment relaxed, and with Arty still in his mouth, he struck out for the opposite bank.

"I leaped frantically after him, and in fact almost upon him, so that he but just avoided me as he swam. But the water was up to my shoulders, and I knew that it would deepen at every step. The horror of that moment I cannot describe. I floundered on for a few yards, thinking only that I would die with my child. The panther would quickly accomplish the crossing, and then farewell to all hope.

"Oh, Arty! Arty!" I cried in agony as the water rose to my very neck, and I saw that with another step my footing would be wholly lost.

"Just as the words escaped me there was a heavy swashing plunge beside the bank, and looking around I saw the head of a great dog pushing out into the pond, while the strong paws were tearing through the water with a prodigious force.

"Brutus, Brutus!" I exclaimed; "O, quick, quick, good dog! Seek him, seek him!"

"But the noble animal needed no urging. He had leaped through a window—taking nash and all! And now, with every sweep of those broad paws, he was gaining on the enemy, encumbered as that enemy was with living prey.

"The two animals landed almost at the same moment on the opposite shore; and dropping his prize on the grass of the bank, the panther bounded fiercely upon his pursuer.

"I flew, rather than ran, around the end of the lake, a distance, as you may see from here, of about forty rods; the yells of the panther and the hoarse growls of Brutus all the while filling the air.

"Arty lay on the ground so close beside them that he was every moment in danger of being tran-