

Ye gods! Did the animal love Florence?

The objections were not based so much on any imaginary claim I had to the girl myself, but more owing to the great gap in the social scale which lay between the two. Still, it was none of my funeral, especially since I recognized the astonishing fact that the father and mother countenanced the thing as though it were a most ordinary occurrence.

Although I had no legitimate cause to complain only on the ground of my responsibility as a man to protect a woman, I schemed to hound the couple, for I was satisfied in my own mind that Florence Agnew would one day require protection from the creature in whom she appeared to place implicit faith. There was little doubt that the Neanderthal man had aspirations covering the person of the fair Florence which could only end in disaster either for one or both of them. The Reeve of the municipality behaved like one who, were he not in love with the girl, had an attachment for her which could only be regarded as a desire for a beautiful female.

Miss Agnew's deference in accepting the unnatural attentions and encouraging them, was like a knife entering the quick of my soul; and whether she received them in a spirit of female adventure or girlish flattery, or through a real devotion, I was not in a position to say. Was this the event in the life of the girl that was of far greater value to her than any wealth of heart I could ever hope to offer?

Florence adjusted the radio again, and a woman's voice filled the atmosphere of the room with those rare tones of human melody which appear only once in a generation.

The Professor and our host began to converse on some private topics which lacked interest for the others. Mrs. Agnew retired to some other part of the house with Mrs. Uumlal, and I engaged Miss Agnew in conversation to pass the time.

Florence told me of the wonderful merits of the Collie dog. He was gifted with almost human intelligence, she told me. When he was told to go outside, he went outside; when told to lie down, he lay down; when told to bark, he barked; when told to sit up, he sat up; when told to fetch an article, he went and fetched it. He would carry packages home and deposit them according to instructions. He understood practically everything that was said to him. He knew the English language like a book. But, like a deaf mute, he would receive thoughts, but could not speak replies. Mr. Uumlal had educated the dog up to its present efficiency. But his ambition was to go further. What Professor Newman had done for the Neolithic, he would do for the dog. If a dog could under-

stand sounds and act intelligently upon given words, there was no reason why, given time, opportunity and training, he could not be educated to talk as well, he argued. This was one great humane task which Mr. Uumlal had set for himself to do.

While Florence was addressing me on the matter, I looked at the dog lying on the mat so cosily, and almost expected him to raise his head and speak to me in his new dog English.

But the rawness of the Neolithic voice across the room rose even above the pleasant voice of my companion and began to jar my nerves in the same manner as might the efforts of a novice on a violin. The guttural tones of his voice seemed to come with such painful efforts that the words appeared almost to strangle him in their struggle to leave the mouth. The discordant syllables escaped from the deep cavity of his throat rather than from the smooth and sensitive tips of the tongue and lips.

I was more than pleased, therefore, when Florence suggested an excursion through the town. I rose eagerly and accompanied her while the father and Uumlal were deeply engaged in some matter with which I had absolutely no sympathy.

In a few moments we were walking playfully hand in hand along the quaint street, she pointing out things of interest as we came across them.

But the most astonishing thing of all to me was the swarms of "children" that littered the street. They were in the trees, on the pavements, in yards and on lawns in countless numbers. They were in all stages of development, and in all conditions of dress.

When I realized that the school must be in session at the time of day, I was overwhelmed with wonder at their numbers.

"Where do all the kids come from?" I questioned Florence.

"Oh, they belong here; the new, rising generation, you know," she replied.

"Gosh!" I cried.

"Families run from about five to fifteen," the girl volunteered. "Some have more than fifteen, but few have less than five."

I remained silent thinking about the new human tide that was about to sweep across the surface of the earth and perhaps swallow up every other living thing in its mad, irresistible rush. What was to become of the more cultured races of men?

The sun was shining with great warmth although some dark and threatening clouds hung like a pall almost directly overhead, as though they would pour down their contents at any moment.

"Do you know, I don't like your friend," I said to Florence candidly as we walked along.

"No? And why not?" she enquired looking around curiously.

"I think he is awful," I replied.

"Awful!" she echoed. "You mean thing! He is so good to me!"

"Yes. I notice that," I replied.

"We have known him so long," evaded the girl.

"But I'm afraid of him."

"You silly person! He's as harmless as a lamb. You must get over that."

"Impossible! I believe the beast loves you," I said, facing her suddenly as though to demand an explanation.

"Beast!" she echoed again. "Sir, you insult him!" she added angrily.

"Oh, I beg pardon," I hastened to apologize, for I was not there to offend one so beautiful and who had been so kind to me. "But, does he really and truly love you?"

"Of course he loves me," she admitted frankly.

"You must feel flattered," I replied with more sarcasm than the occasion perhaps warranted.

"Surely you're not jealous?" she retaliated.

"Jealous? Me?" And I laughed in real mockery.

The frank confession, however, that the Neolithic loved her staggered me. I stood still on the pavement for a few seconds. Could it be possible? The refined and gentle manners of the girl and the apparent pride of her in the love of a creature hopelessly distinct, could not be made to harmonize. I was speechless.

She had gained a few steps while I hesitated in a sort of physical inertia with my brain working overtime. She stamped her foot in mock anger, and I believe I never saw her feminine beauty shine forth as it did at that moment.

"Come!" she called to me. "What are you standing there for?"

"Are you not mistaken?" I inquired, stepping forward.

"Mistaken nothing! It is straight goods. You should see him sometimes."

"And do you love him?"

This was a bird of a different color. It made Florence blush. But my curiosity was not to be satisfied, for the elements came to the girl's rescue.

"Oh, rain!" she cried, placing both hands over her wealth of hair as though to protect its delicacy. "Let's beat it!"

They were the first warning drops of a great thunder storm. We hastened forward and dashed under the sheltering branches of a huge elm which was one of a grove that lined the street. Here for a time we would be protected.

We leaned against a picket fence dividing the pavement from the garden grounds of a home some distance back. Roses and other flowers were blooming beautifully near to us. Playfully I pilfered a pink rose, and, with nervous fing-