

distaff, or peel the onions; that will suit him best, little stay-at-home Fichu!"

The old woman bade farewell to her big son, who stooped to kiss her on both cheeks. She stood watching his boat, her hand shading her eyes, as far as she could make it out. Then she turned to speak a kindly word to the boy, whom she believed to be beside her.

But he was gone.

Far away up on the cliffs Dieudonné sat staring after the boat, till it dwindled to a speck on the horizon and vanished utterly. Then he laid himself down, his face to the earth, silent.

Neither that day, nor the next, nor indeed for several days after, was anything seen of the poor foundling on the harbour. At first it was supposed that Jean Pitou had been as good as his word, and that the boy had really sailed with him.

Madame Pitou was no gossip, and her house stood so far apart from the rest that only one or two had witnessed the departure of big Jean. Then another subject of interest arose, which occupied the minds of the small community.

Out at the far end of the western side of the harbour, well away from the dwellings, was a cave in the rock, closed in by rough wooden doors, where the old worn-out horses were taken to be killed. It was a gloomy spot, viewed with awe by the youngsters, and very seldom approached in their sports or rambles. Here were now in course of erection a number of rude palings, enclosing a piece of land, divided again into small portions, each having at the farthest corner a low shed, or "den," as the boys would persist in calling them, they having an idea that a wild beast show was in course of preparation.

One morning the mystery was made clear. A painted board appeared, setting forth "One Hundred and Fifty Dogs on Show here," and then came the wonderful news that the guardian of the canine hostelry was no other than "Little Fichu."

"He has a big whip," said one.

"And a new blouse," cried another.

True enough. Poor Dieudonné, having betaken himself to the spot least frequented by his old companions, had fallen in with the men at work upon the kennels. In his usual helpful way he had made himself useful to them, and they had fed him, and let him sleep on some shavings. The projector of the scheme, coming round to view the progress of his work and noticing the boy, discovered he was so very low in the world as to be willing to accept a post which had little, indeed, attractive in it.

"I'll find you in bed and board, youngster," he said. "You can show the animals, you know, if any care to see them, and what folks give you may keep."

"Keep! *All!*" exclaimed Dieudonné, amazed.

"Ay. It won't be so much that you'll need go often to bank it, I fancy," said the speculator. "You must have a new blouse, too, or the dogs will fly at your rags. I'll get you that."

So Dieudonné was installed. Food and lodging, and pocket-money! A new blouse, and something of real importance to do. Here was a rise in the world for a poor wail who had never known anything better than the crust given in charity, and the cast-off rags of those only less poverty-stricken than himself.

His food was coarse, but there was plenty. His bed was only clean straw, his companions were chiefly the dogs, and he worked hard, sweeping out the kennels, and feeding and littering down the animals. He was bound early and late to be at his post. Yet in all his short life poor Dondon was never happier than now.

True enough the visitors were not many. For the

first few days curiosity brought some of the dwellers on the quay. The boys, too, came, to be sure, but these were mostly indebted to the kindness of Dieudonné who, as the entrance fee was to be his own, was not exacting, until his patron found it out, and positively forbade any gratuitous admission.

"They may give what they like," said he, "but something they must give."

Then the boys ceased to come, save those who got surreptitious peeps, and jeered at the young custodian. But the long whip inspired respect. They did not venture to call him "Little Fichu," at least in his hearing.

The announcement on the board was visible on the other side of the quay. Visitors were occasionally attracted by it, and strolled round to see what it meant.

In the brown twilight one autumn evening a gentleman and his little daughter so came. Dondon sat as usual on the big stone beside the gate.

"Why, there is no one here!" he heard a sweet, soft voice say, and he rose.

"Yes; here is a lad," the gentleman said.

"Why, my boy, are there really dogs here? *Live* dogs?"

"Yes, sir, one hundred and fifty."

"And so quiet! Can we enter?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the payment?"

"You give what you please, sir."

The gentleman gave Dondon a small silver coin, and they entered.

No doubt about the life in the dogs now! They bounded, yelped, howled, barked, whined.

From the deep mouthed hound to the tiniest pup, a chorus of canine exclamations rose on the air.

The little girl laughed at first, but she shrank back timidly when some of the big dogs leaped up to the fence, hearing voices.

Seeing this, Dondon went before, and with a shake of his whip, and a word or two he enforced silence.

Then he lifted up two of the prettiest pups for the child to fondle.

"They seem fond of you," said the gentleman.

"I feed them," said the lad.

"You do not beat them, or they would be afraid of you," said the little girl; "I am glad of that."

She went on to ask of her father, "Could we buy one of these little dogs?"

"They are not to be sold," Dieudonné made answer; "they are only boarded here while their owners are absent; they are mostly hunting dogs, and when the season begins they are fetched away."

They had strolled almost to the end of the enclosure, nearly to the great black gates which shut in the cavern.

"There are no more to see," said Dieudonné, stopping short, as if to lead the way back.

"What are those that run there?" and the child pointed towards the big dark doors. "Are those more tiny puppies?"

"No," said Dondon, hesitating, "they are rats."

"*Rats!*" The little girl started, and shrank back.

Then the gentleman, raising his eyes, saw the board above the doors with the word *Abattoir*. He glanced at the dark and sodden ground beneath. The rats darted to and fro silently from under those doors which the poor worn-out horses passed through and were seen no more.

The father drew his child's arm within his own, and they retraced their steps.

A small shed, filled with clean straw, caught the eye of the elder visitor.

(To be continued.)