

## RETROSPECT.

BY ANNA SHIPTON.

Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee — Deut. viii. 2.

Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. Heb. x. 35.

He was better to me than all my hopes,  
He was better to me than all my fears;  
He made a road of my broken works,  
And a rainbow of my tears.  
The billows that guarded my sea-girl path  
But carried my Lord on their crest;  
When I dwell on the days of my wilderness  
march,  
I can lean on his love for the rest.

He emptied my hands of my treasured store,  
And his covenant love revealed.  
There was not a wound in my aching heart  
But the balm of his breath has healed  
O, tender and true was the chastening sore,  
In wisdom, that taught and tried,  
Till the soul that he sought was trusting in him,  
And nothing on earth beside

He guided my paths that I could not see,  
By ways that I have not known —  
The crooked was straight, and the rough was  
made plain,  
As I followed the Lord alone.  
I praise Him still for the pleasant palms,  
And the water-springs by the way;  
For the glowing pillar of flame by night,  
And the sheltering cloud by day.

There is light for me on the trackless wild,  
As the wonders of old I trace,  
When the Lord of the whole earth went before  
To search me a resting-place.  
Has he changed for me? Nay, He changes not,  
He will bring me by some new way,  
Through fire and flood, and each crafty foe  
As safely as yesterday.

And I : the warfare he calls me forth,  
He buckles my armor on.  
He greets me with smiles and a word of cheer  
For battle his sword hath won.  
He wipes my brow as I droop and faint,  
He blesses my hand to toil;  
Faithful he as he washes my feet  
From the traces of earthly sojourn.

Never a watch on the dreariest halt  
But some promise of love endears  
I read from the past that my future shall be  
Far better than all my fears.  
Lace the golden pop of the wilderness bread,  
Laid up with the life-giving rod,  
All safe in the Ark with the law of the Lord  
Is the covenant care of my God.

## "ONLY A DOG."

(Concluded)

One Sunday morning, when the two tinkling bells were ringing from the low balcony, Jock, by some mischance, found himself locked up in the stable, at the hour when, for years past, he had never failed to follow his master's footsteps as far as the grave under the chancel window: there to await his return from the mystery of divine worship, stretched above the spot where his young mistress lay buried. Latimer did not miss him till he was half-way to church, and then Nelly, who had not been well of late, would not let him return to the house. He yielded to her objections; but it cost him something like a pang, as if a slight had been cast upon that first dear love of his. Nelly did not wait for him to walk back with her when the service ended, and he was loitering homewards alone when he met Jock crawling through the long grass, which was now growing high and ripening for the hay-harvest. Jock carried the little Bantam hen in his mouth and laid it at his master's feet with a strange, wild, forlorn expression in his uplifted eyes.

"O Jock, Jock!" asked his master, half-angrily and half-pityingly, "what have you done? How did you come to do such a wicked deed as this?"

Poor Jock! He lay there prostrate, heaving deep sighs, and gazing up into his master's beloved face, with half-human eyes, as if he longed for words in which to utter all his heart. But Latimer could not raise him from his abasement. The crime was too real and too mischievous.

"You have deeply grieved your mistress and me," he said gravely. "My poor Nelly! I don't know what she will say."

He passed on rapidly, leaving Jock alone, stretched across the track his master's feet had made in the long grass. But he did not tell his wife when he reached the vicarage. How to cover Jock's crime and to get her to forgive it, he did not know; for the moment he must put it off until after the evening service.

Jock was nowhere to be seen when they went again to church, and Latimer felt his desertion of the cherished grave more keenly than in the morning. The days were near their longest, and though the sun sank early behind the high horizon, there was a long cool season of evening light before the dusk came. Latimer turned into his study when he reached home, somewhat weary and depressed. He opened the window over the little croft where Nelly's pets had lived, and leaned out to feel the cool, fresh air upon his face. Jock was below, busy. He was filling up a hole he had made, and was scratching the soil into it as quickly as he could; but at the sound of the casement opening he paused, and lay down over the disturbed spot guiltily. His master called him, but Jock did not stir, though his eyes moved and gleamed with a strange light in them. Latimer jumped from the low window sill and drew near to him. It was as he feared; immediately under Jock's outstretched paws was the crimson comb of the Bantam cock, which he had been carefully burying out of sight in the ground. Both of Nelly's pets were gone.

"Jock!" he said in a terrible and threatening voice, "you, a clergyman's dog, have broken two of the great commandments! You have been guilty of murder, and you have murdered on the Sabbath day! Go out of my sight! I do not wish to see you again."

So slowly Jock crawled away, with drooping head and almost closed eyes, that Latimer could hardly keep himself from relenting and calling him back. But there was Nelly, who was so ailing just now, and so capricious in her temper, so unlike herself. And Jock had killed both of her new treasures. No; he must say nothing to console Jock, or to raise him from his evident despair. Never had he been guilty of any crime like this before; and he must bear his punishment. Yet it was plain that it was jealousy alone, which is but the dark shadow of every earthly love, that had driven him into this transgression.

Latimer went away to seek his wife, sadly troubled. He had to start early in the morning to a town twenty miles distant, where a visitation was to be held, and he would be absent all week if nothing went amiss at home. It was necessary, therefore, to tell Nelly this evening, and to make Jock's peace with her before he left. He sat down at her side and put his arm tenderly around her.

"My darling," he said, "I'm very grieved to grieve you—I'm vexed at heart about it—but poor Jock has been jealous of your Bantams, I'm afraid."

"What has he done?" asked Nelly, suddenly alert and all alive with jealousy herself.

"I'm sorry to tell you he killed the little hen this morning while we were in church," he answered reluctantly. "I wish I had turned back to look for him."

"Oh, Latimer!" she cried, "what shall you do to him? He must be severely punished, or the other will not be safe."

"My love," he said, "the other was not safe. He has killed it this evening. I found him burying it when I came in from church."

"He ought to be sent away," she exclaimed; "you must part with him, Latimer."

"I could not do that," he said absently; "he was my poor little girl's dog, and I promised her never to part with him."

Nelly did not utter a word in answer. The smouldering fire of jealousy, so long burning in her heart, shot out a swift and hot flame. But she kept silent. She was jealous of what? of the dead. She said

to herself she knew now what she had long suspected, that her husband's love for her was nothing as compared with his love for his first wife. She was very quiet for the rest of the evening, and so was he, each brooding over their own thoughts. When the morning came there was little time for conversation; for Latimer had to be away early, and Nelly did not get up to see him start. He gave her a hurried farewell kiss, and his last words were, "Take care of yourself, my dear wife; and forgive poor Jock for my sake."

## CHAPTER III.

NEVER before had the vicar started from home without Jock's attendance, if not for the whole journey, at least as far as Jock himself pleased to accompany him, before turning back to take care of the vicarage and his new mistress. But this morning he was nowhere to be seen; and Latimer would not whistle for him. It had been his habit to tell Jock where he was going, showing to him the extra official clerical garb he was wearing, and telling him which day he would return; and Jock had always seemed to comprehend him fully, and to be satisfied with the explanation. But Latimer drove away along the road through the meadows without catching a glimpse of his dog.

No one ever knew whether poor Jock had strayed away the evening before, and passed the night on the hills in a strange, unfamiliar misery of guilt and shame, so utterly new in his happy existence, or whether he was blinded and deafened by his profound and bitter sense of banishment from his master's face. It is certain he could not have known of Latimer's departure. Towards the evening, twenty-four long and dreary hours since the commission of his last and crowning transgression, a sad, shrinking, trembling culprit, most abject and most wretched, crept fearsomely through the open door of the hall, and stole to the mat on the threshold of the study. There was not a sound within, not the rustling of a leaf as it was turned over, or the scratching of a pen. Jock must have felt that the place was empty, yet he lay there listening, almost heart broken, till it was quite dark. Then under cover of the night, he crawled stealthily about the house in search of his master, but shunning the spot where his mistress might have been found. Poor Jock! everybody in his once happy home was against him. The maid-servants scouted him the instant he showed his drooping head round the kitchen-door. There was a chorus of accusing voices.

"Who killed poor missis's chickens?" they cried—"yah! out with you!"

Never, never before had it been like this. The awful, inexplicable disappearance of the one being whom Jock worshipped was crushing him down; and this sense of universal execration, in a world that had been so blissful to him, added to the burden of his misery. He was seen no more that night.

The second day was worse. Jock crawled about the forsaken house, shivering, and hiding into corners at the least sound of a footstep or a voice, and still he could see and hear nothing of his lost lord, whom he had offended, and who had bid him begone out of his sight. On the third day, with a fierce, wild howl of desperation, Jock burst into the closed study, and tearing down a coat from where it hung against the wall, stretched himself upon it with his head uplifted in despair, whilst he whined and moaned with half-human cries of distress. The sorrowful lamenting filled the whole house. "I can not bear it any longer," said Nelly to herself.

She made her way to the threshold of the study and stood there looking at him. Jock was silent in an instant, only his dull bloodshot eyes were fastened upon her, as if imploring some word about his master. The soft silken hair was bedraggled with mud and matted into knots, the bones showed plainly through the skin, the beautiful head was covered with dust. But beneath all this evident wretchedness

there was something wild about Jock that frightened her, and checked the feeling of pity that was beginning to melt her heart towards him.

"Jock," she said, "follow me." There was no tenderness or compassion in her hard voice of command; but Jock's old compliant nature asserted itself, and he lifted himself up feebly and shivering to obey. He dragged his trembling limbs after her to an old out-house at some distance from the vicarage—a wooden shed put up in a corner of a meadow to shelter the cattle in the heat of the day; and there she left him, fastening the door with a padlock, and going away without a word. All was lost to him now; and he was cast out from his old home.

Cast out from Paradise, forsaken by the master he worshipped, with a sense of mysterious wrong-doing upon him. It was three days since that terrible transgression of his own had wrought this change, three days since his master's voice had uttered his doom, "Go out of my sight! I do not wish to see you again!" Out of his sight he was; and Jock lay still where his mistress had left him, motionless and heart-broken.

Latimer Churchill did not reach home till Saturday. Nelly had said nothing in her letters to him of Jock's utter misery, hardly caring and hardly daring to do so; but she met him at the gate into the garden, where he alighted from his dog-cart, sending it round to the stables, and there was an expression on her face which startled him.

"Anything amiss, my darling!" he asked hastily.

"Oh, Latimer!" she said, half-crying, "it's Jock. They all say Jock is gone mad."

"Mad!" he repeated.

"He's never eaten or drunk anything since you went away," she faltered, "and nobody dare go near him. He's like a skeleton, they say—Hush! listen!"

And Latimer, listening, heard a low, long-drawn cry of utter anguish, which made his heart ache with dread and sympathy. Nelly pointed to the shed in the corner of the meadow from which the miserable moaning came, and he strode away, followed by her and the servants, remonstrating with him, and beseeching him not to let Jock out, or to venture himself to go near him.

"Go back, every one of you," he said sternly; "go back into the house, and leave me alone."

But at the first sound of his voice the desolate, forsaken cry ceased. The servants had hurried back to seek for safety, but Nelly was beside her husband still.

"Go back," he said, as he turned the key in the padlock of the door.

"No, Latimer, no," she answered; "if there's no danger for you, there's no danger for me. But he's mad, Latimer; see—look through this hole. Oh, he's quite mad!"

"Jock! my poor old Jock!" cried his master in a voice full of love and grief.

There was a low, soft, piteous moan for answer.

Latimer opened the door and let the broad light of the summer's day into the shed. Jock was cowering down in the farthest corner, a very skeleton for thinness, with bloodshot, unsteady eyes, and with his parched, swollen tongue lolling out of his mouth. He gazed straight at his master, quivering and sobbing, yet controlling himself with evident self-restraint. The poor creature was mad; there was no doubt of it.

"Come to me, Jock!" cried Latimer.

Jock crawled towards him, not lifting himself up on his feet, and laid his poor head between his master's knees, as if seeking forgiveness and comfort. Latimer lifted him up in his arms with a grief that knew no words.

"Jock, my man," he said at last with a heavy sob, "there's no saving you. Good-bye, my poor little girl's own dog. Good-bye, my old friend. You would never hurt me; I've no fear of you."