"HIS DOG"

The dog had followed Owen Ridley up to the bedroom, and when he turned from the dressing-table he saw that the big Newfoundland was spread out luxuriously on the hearthrug.

"You've no business here, you know, Ruff," he remonstrated, in a tired voice.

Glancing at the clock he noticed that it was earlier than he had thought. He pulled up an armchair.

"You can tell I'm in trouble, can't you?"

He stroked the dog's ear, staring into the fire.

He was glad, in a way, that he had sent his wife to some relations for a fortnight. He knew that lately he had been depressed and irritable, foreseeing the catastrophe ahead. She was returning that night, however, and he would have to break the news.

How Vera would take it he could not guess exactly. He hoped that she would spare him reproaches, for it was through no fault of his own that he was to lose his situation with Danehurst's. He would have to thank Kenneth Frome for that.

Frome had always disliked and rivalled him. When Ridley first made Vera Thornhill's acquaintance, Frome had displayed jealousy. He was penniless then, and unable to support a wife. Ridley remembered his outburst on hearing of their engagement.

"You've persuaded her with your money! She'd have waited for me otherwise. She's only marrying you because her people are poor. She doesn't love you, Ridley, and she never will! But I'll pay you out one day!"

Frome's insinuation was well founded; he realized that now. Although he had been happy enough with Vera during the few months of their life together, he admitted to himself that he had never understood her. One thing was obvious—their marriage had not turned out quite the success he had hoped for. Doubtless she still thought of her other suitor.

She had known genteel poverty all her life, and had been afraid to face more of it with Kenneth Frome. Now she regretted this.

The irony of Fate, too, had made Frome prosper. With an unexpected legacy, he had joined a rival firm, which was now amalgamating with Danehurst & Co. The staff would consequently be reduced. Ridley knew that he would have to go.

On the previous day he had encountered Frome at the office.

"So our positions are reversed!" A triumphant smile had accompanied the words. "I suppose you imagined your job here was permanent—eh?"

His meaning was apparent. He would use his influence to have Ridley included in the list of those to be discharged.

The Newfoundland rubbed his massive body against its master's leg. He stretched out his hand again.

"That's right; make yourself comfortable, Ruff, old boy. You may not be here much longer."

Soon his search for work must begin. He knew how hard it was to find fresh occupation of any sort, especially at the salary he had been obtaining. It might take months, and he had saved very little.

Ridley smoothed his pet's rough coat. Somehow, it comforted him to speak to the dog.

Always fond of animals, he was attached to the Newfoundland for a special reason. It had saved his life that Easter, when he had incautiously bathed alone in a rough sea. Seized with cramp, and carried away by the current, he had shouted despairingly.

Once again he recollected his joyful relief on seeing the dog approach. Clinging to its collar, he had reached shallow water again.

Now his voice shook a little as he patted its head.

"You love me, old boy, if nobody else does."

Presently he got up. There was time for an hour's billiards at his club before Vera returned. Perhaps the game would occupy his mind.

"I'll leave you here, Ruff." The dog was asleep. "Better shut you in, though else you'll prowl all over the house."

Wearily, with shoulders bent, he descended the stairs.

. . . . . .

A gesticulating group covered the pavement near his gate, he noticed when he turned the street corner on his return. He wondered idly what could be their reason for staring up towards the roofs.

"Somebody's chimney has caught," he muttered, catching sight of the smoke.

As he drew nearer a presentiment made him quicken his pace. Reaching the spot, he partly guessed the truth.

Before he could ascend the steps the front door opened, and their servant rushed out. The girl was white and trembling.

"Fire!" she screamed. "Fire!"

Ridley stopped her, and caught her arm.

"What's the matter? What's wrong? Pull yourself together!"

"The house—it's on fire, sir!" she repeated hysterically.

A shout from the watching crowd announced that flames had appeared. Someone was already speeding to the nearest alarm. Ridley turned towards the hall.

"Ought to have gone up to tell him, but I—I couldn't, sir."

"What's that?" he queried sharply, with a stare.

"Gentleman came to see you," the maid faltered. "He's in the sitting-room. Didn't answer when I tried to make him hear just now."

The lower staircase he scaled at a run. Dense smoke met him on the landing. Bending low, he stumbled on.

Instantly there flashed into his mind the fact that Ruff was a prisoner at the top of the house. Apprehension caught him by the throat.

He was fighting for breath by the time he reached the sitting-room door. Crawling in, he dimly discerned a prostrate figure. Next moment he had lifted the man's head.

He gave a choking cry of amazement. It was Kenneth Frome.

Temptation came to him. He drew back in an agony of indecision. Perhaps there was time to scale the upper flight, and unlatch the bed-room door. This was his enemy. He owed Frome nothing, and the dog so much.

Certainly, if he had carried Frome to the street, it would be impossible to return, whereas now he might release the Newfoundland if he acted at once. A few seconds' delay, and the chance might be gone.

"Ruff!" he murmured hoarsely. "Ruff, old boy!"

Others were coming up the stairs. He could hear them calling wildly. He seized Frome almost roughly.

It must be done. His decision was made. He must first save the human life. But he stifled a sob as he struggled down to safety with his burden; and when he would have swung round again, many hands restrained him by force. He fought with them frantically.

"Can't be done," a fireman insisted, after a vain attempt to ascend. He signalled to a comrade. "All safe; only a dog."

Ridley tried to speak, but could not manage to utter the retort which came to his lips.

"Let me go," he said, with an effort, to the men who gripped his arms. "You needn't hold me now."

He brushed a hand across his eyes. They pointed to the others who were carrying Frome. He followed blindly.

An approaching cab stopped a short distance away.

"Let the lady pass. She lives there. Tell her it's all right!"

They led her in Kenneth Frome's direction, telling the story of his rescue. At that moment Ridley recognized who it was. Then they came face to face.

"This is the gentleman who saved him, ma'am."

Agitatedly she caught his sleeve, but before she could speak Ridley indicated Frome's unconscious figure.

"Don't be afraid, Vera. He'll soon revive."

He laughed harshly.

"You went—went in for him?"

"That's true. Foolish thing to do, wasn't it? And I had to leave Ruff behind. Yet, the dog—the dog was upstairs——"

She laid a hand gently on his shoulder, and he walked mechanically towards a neighbor's house.

. . . . . .

She sat with her hand in his, bending close.

"We must look on the bright side of things, Owen. Everything was insured."

He would not meet her gaze.

"The bright side!"

"Ah, you must try to forget poor Ruff! It's difficult, I know; but—"

"And I ought to rejoice over Frome; is that what you mean? Oh, I'll leave that to you!"

"I don't understand, dear. Mr. Frome has never been anything to me. I'm glad he escaped, of course, but I'd have felt practically the same for any stranger."

She dropped his fingers, and turned away.

"It was you I was anxious about. It's always been you I've loved. Not so much, perhaps, when we were first married; but since then—oh, I've longed for you to see it—to know it! But you never would!"

He looked up; then suddenly put his arm around her and pulled her close.

"How foolish I've been!"

For a while they sat in silence, rejoicing in their newly-found happiness. Presently Ridley began to speak of his impending trouble.

"Yes, he's going to have me turned out of the office. And that's the man I had to rescue!"

He did not mention the dog again, but she guessed what was in his mind, and kissed him sympathetically.

"As for Mr. Frome, he can't really injure us. We'll be poor, perhaps, but we're everything to each other, Owen. Nothing matters but that!"

Someone rapped on the door, and Frome himself entered, moving shakily.

"The doctor expected me to lie down for an hour more; but I was worrying. I couldn't rest till I'd seen you both. The people of the house said you were here."

He leaned against the table, and continued in a hesitating fashion:

"First, I'll confess why I'd called on you, Ridley. It was to tell you that Danehurst's—Thorpe & Danehurst now—wouldn't require your services any longer. I wanted to watch your face when you heard the news. I wanted to laugh at your dismay—gloat over it——"

They stood up and faced him.

"Wait, please!" He made a gesture. "Now, of course, I—I've given up all such ideas. While I was waiting for you to return, Ridley, I was taken ill. When I realized the house was on fire I tried to leave, but I—I couldn't. I slipped down, and gradually the smoke stifled me!"

He paused for a second or two.

"I have to thank you for saving my life, Ridley. I'm hoping you'll forget the past, too, because I want to be friends."

He eyed them appealingly.

"Please stay with the firm at your own salary. There may be a better opening soon, and then I'll recommend you for promotion. This isn't only gratitude. I owe it to myself."

Ridley hung back, but his wife gently pushed him forward. The two men were shaking hands when a ring sounded at the front door, and excited voices were raised in the passage.

The owner of the house bustled in.

"Great news!" he exclaimed. "You'll be so very pleased to hear it! Your maid's just come to tell you——"

The servant-girl pushed past him in her eagerness. She was panting for breath.

"Ran all the way, I did, directly I heard. Old Ruff—the dog, sir—"

Ridley gave a start, and a stifled exclamation.

"The bed-room window was open, very likely——"

"It was—it was!"

"And he must have jumped out, frightened, on to the top of the scullery, then over to the roof of the one next door, sir, and along over more houses the same way, trying to find a place to get down. Do you think he started it all, sir—knocked over the towel-horse into the fire I'd lighted for the missis?"

Ridley gasped.

"The question is——"

"Oh, he's all right, sir, if you mean that! I've seen him myself. Just a ladder it wants to reach him, up against the corner house, sir—"

"By Jove, I'm very glad!" said Kenneth Frome, whole-heartedly.

But Ridley and his wife did not hear. They were already in the hall.—London Answers.

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Two Recipes for Sponge Cake.

Two cupfuls sugar, six eggs, leaving out the whites of three; one cupful boiling hot water, two and a half cupfuls flour, one tablespoonful baking powder in the flour. Beat the yolks a little, add the sugar and beat fifteen minutes; add the three beaten whites and the cupful of boiling water just before the flour, flavor with a teaspoonful of lemon extract and bake in three layers. Put icing between them, made by adding to the three whites, beaten to a stiff froth, six dessert spoonfuls of pulverized sugar to each egg. Flavor with lemon to taste.

Best Sponge Cake.—Four eggs, two cupfuls sugar, two cupfuls flour, three level teaspoonfuls baking powder, one level teaspoonful cornstarch. Add sugar to the eggs and beat thoroughly, then the flour with the baking powder and cornstarch, sifted together, and last three-quarters of a cupful of boiling water and one teaspoonful of lemon juice. Bake in a quick oven and it is delicious.

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HOME

Recipes for the Sick.

Sippets with Milk.—One slice dry toast, one tablespoonful butter, three-fourths cup scalded milk, one-eighth teaspoonful salt. Cut toast in small pieces of uniform size. Put remaining ingredients in small heated bowl, add toast and serve at once.

Oatmeal Jelly.—One-third cup rolled oats, few grains salt, one and a half cups boiling water. Add oats mixed with salt to boiling water gradually. Boil two minutes, then steam in double boiler 45 minutes to one hour. Force through a fine strainer, mold, chill and serve with sugar and cream.

Oatmeal Gruel.—Three tablespoonfuls rolled oats, one-fourth teaspoonful salt, two cups water. Add rolled oats to boiling salted water, cook until thickened over direct heat, then place over boiling water and cook 1½ hours; strain and season to taste.

Cornmeal Gruel.—Two tablespoonfuls cornmeal, one-fourth teaspoonful salt, two cups boiling water, three tablespoonfuls cold water. Add meal and salt to cold water; stir to a paste. Add to boiling water; stir constantly until it thickens and let boil one hour. Add milk or cream according to the needs of the patient.

Rice Gruel.—One tablespoonful rice, one cup milk. Wash rice, add to milk and cook for 1½ hours in a double boiler, covered; strain, season and serve hot or cold.

Cracker Gruel.—One tablespoonful cracker crumbs, a few grains salt, three-fourths milk. Scald the milk, add the cracker crumbs and cook over boiling water for about ten minutes, season to taste.

Baked Apple Sauce.—Two apples (cored, pared and cut in eighths), one tablespoonful water, two tablespoonfuls brown sugar, one teaspoonful lemon juice. Put alternate layers of apples, sugar, and seasoning in a small baking dish, cover and bake in a slow oven for one hour. A little grated nutmeg may be added, if desired. Serve hot or cold.

Apple Snow.—Wipe, pare, core and quarter one sour apple. Put in small strainer, place over boiling water, cover and let steam until apple is soft, then rub through a sieve. There should be one quarter cup of apple sauce. Beat white of one egg until stiff. Sweeten apple pulp to taste and add gradually to beaten white of egg. Pile lightly on glass serving dish, chill and serve with steamed custard or cream.

Baked Banana.—Wipe banana and loosen one section of skin, then replace, put in shallow pan, when banana should be soft. Remove from skin, sprinkle with powdered sugar and serve at once.

French Dressing.—Three tablespoonfuls olive oil, one-fourth tablespoonful salt, one tablespoonful lemon juice or vinegar, pepper. Mix ingredients and stir until well blended. French dressing should be added to salad greens just before serving. If allowed to stand in dressing they will quickly wilt.

Boiled Salad Dressing.—Yolk of one egg, one tablespoonful butter melted, one-half cup cream, few grains cayenne, three-fourths teaspoonful salt, three-fourths teaspoonful mustard, one tablespoonful vinegar. Mix ingredients in order given, add vinegar very slowly. Cook over boiling water, stir constantly until mixture thickens, strain and cool.

Hints for the Home.

It is never economy to buy cheap eggs.

Cook carrots and beets whole, then skin and slice.

Sweet potatoes should always be boiled with their skins on and pared after.

A good dish drier can be made of a big roasting pan with a cake rack set into it.

Golden yellow Chinese silk curtains are relightful in a room with a cool north light.

Mission furniture of the good, not heavy, type is excellent for a simple dining room.

An excellent gift for a friend living in the country is a small table—for tea or sewing or writing.

One of the best darning baskets imaginable is made of strong reed and raffia worked in a simple stitch.

An aluminum strainer that stands on its own feet in the sink is a handy thing to have for washing lettuce, etc.

In making gingerbread, the butter, sugar, milk and molasses should be melted together, then added to the dry ingredients.

A wide-mouthed thermos bottle is excellent for cooking cereals. Boil the cereal a few minutes the night before it is to be used, then put it in the bottle and cork tightly. It will be ready for breakfast.

The lids of saucepans often need to be raised while cooking—and a clothes peg with a tack in its top will answer the purpose. Fix the peg on the edge of the saucepan as if it were a line, and rest the lid on the tack.

A little vinegar kept boiling on the stove while onions or cabbage are cooking will prevent the disagreeable odor from going through the house.

Old, soft, woollen articles—blankets, dressing gowns, worn shawls—should be beautifully cleaned and mended, then put away for use in an emergency. They are much more comfortable than new ones when sickness comes.

Never hurry the baking of a cake—the oven should be steady, but slow. If the door must be opened, close it very gently or the cake will fall.

It saves time to cut the dough for baking powder biscuit with a sharp knife. The biscuits will be in pretty squares and there is no waste.

Good light is necessary for the person pressing men's clothes. Also the irons should be very hot, and a piece of cotton cloth should be handy.

To save time in cleaning windows, let a kettle of water boil in a room till the windows are covered with steam. Then wipe with a dry cloth.

After making a hairbow work a small thread eye on the inside of each loop. Slip a hairpin through each eye and fasten to the braid of hair with its help.

A good pearl button sewed to the back of a boy's collar band will do the same work as the regular collar button, and he will always know where to find it.

Test potatoes by cutting in two and rubbing the cut surfaces together. Then press the two parts together. If they stick, the potatoes are good.

A table made on a gocart frame is a handy thing for an invalid. Attach it to the bed with a ribbon, and the invalid can push it away when through with it.

A clothes basket with two parts is convenient for keeping white and colored clothes separately. Or the division may be made small and used for clothes pins.

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