

Man and Beast

by

PHYLLIS BOTTOME

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Title: Man and Beast

Date of first publication: 1953

Author: Phyllis Bottome (1882-1963)

Date first posted: Jan. 26, 2016

Date last updated: Jan. 26, 2016

Faded Page eBook #20160134

This ebook was produced by: Mardi Desjardins, Cindy Beyer & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <http://www.pgdpCanada.net>

Man and Beast

by the same author

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FORTUNE'S FINGER
UNDER THE SKIN
DEVIL'S DUE
INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE
THE LIFELINE
OLD WINE
WITHIN THE CUP
LONDON PRIDE
THE MORTAL STORM
MASKS AND FACES
HEART OF A CHILD
ALFRED ADLER
FROM THE LIFE
SEARCH FOR A SOUL
THE CHALLENGE

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FABER AND FABER

24 Russell Square

London

*First published in mcmliii
by Faber and Faber Limited
24 Russell Square London W.C.1
Printed in Great Britain
at the Bowering Press Plymouth
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I

Caesar's Wife's Ear

Seppel Bergener did not find it altogether easy to be a good American.

He was born ten miles from Budapest; dimly in the overgrown jungle of his restless mind he could still remember that wide yellow worm, the Danube, on whose treacherous marshy banks he had spent the first three years of his life.

Sometimes when he was drunk there spluttered in his ears the dazzling fireworks of Z's and S's which comprised his native tongue.

He could not have spoken Hungarian; but had anyone spoken it to him, his blood would have answered.

As it was, Seppel spoke a clipped fumbling American; and when he listened to the strange flat language now always in his ears, he had to make those piteous efforts to hear made by the deaf in danger.

Seppel lived in the heart of a Californian desert. All day long the hot clean wind whipped his senses.

His mother was dry and bright like a flame. She was a Hungarian gipsy. Some people said she had killed her husband. Others said that the lions had killed him. Seppel's parents bred and trained lions for show.

The police had come out into the desert to investigate the sudden death of Seppel's father. His body had been savaged by the lions, but the lions evaded the third degree and the police could not persuade them to "come clean". The police had the idea that Seppel's father might have been killed first, and then thrown to the beasts. But again the lions foiled them, for they had made the evidence quite inconclusive.

Seppel was five years old at the time; he did not care very much about his father's death. He loved his mother and he loved the lions.

He did not love a young step-father, who was their showman, and who took control of the show shortly after Seppel's father died.

Seppel grew up fast, and took his education as it was forced upon him. A huge grizzly bear caught him once and hugged one shoulder out of shape. A panther clawed his chin, and left very little of it.

Seppel played with lion and tiger cubs as if they were his human contemporaries,

and the marks of his little play-fellows stood out all over his compact, small body.

Seppel never grew to be a tall man, but he was very vigorous and had eyes as clear as flame.

On his sixteenth birthday his mother said to him: "You lion-man now! You mak' lions like dogs! You great little son of mine! You hav' my heart an' my blood! You no mak' showman ever, you no hav' beauty. Pity! But for one maker of lions, there is plenty showmen! Aah! a-plenty!"

His mother must have known what she was talking about, because she had five showmen husbands, one after the other. The last of the five was still living when she died. But she left him nothing. She left every lion, bear, cat and cub to her son Seppel. The whole show—cages; cars; the shack and tents; the hot dog and iced-beer stands—were now Seppel's.

There was no dispute about it either, for Seppel's mother had made her will in Los Angeles itself, assisted by a famous lawyer. It was deposited in the city safe and published in the newspapers. In Caterina Sybylla's life there had been "plenty showmen" but only one son.

Seppel was twenty-three when his mother died. He got rid of his showman step-father at once, and married a desert girl, with dry crinkly hair and a voice like the cracked shriek of a desert wind. Her teeth were bad; but she spoke good American.

"You faithful," Seppel explained to her, "I—kind! You once like other feller—you die! Same as my father feeded by lions. You 'member? I must have showman—see? You better no look at him! Pity if you look at him!"

Carrie Gladys replied raspingly with a string of oaths directed at showmen. She would not look at showmen, she averred, not if Rudolph Valentino or Doug Fairbanks headed the list. Carrie Gladys was not an affectionate woman. She never noticed what anybody else felt about anything, unless she was personally involved. Her real passions were for gin and horses, and she knew that Seppel could give her plenty of both.

For a year after their marriage Seppel tried to do without a showman. He trained and showed his lions single-handed; but the Picture people told him that he was too small and unimpressive-looking to draw a big public and that they could not use him for films. So Seppel set to work to find a suitable showman, without too much charm.

Bert Kimstock was no Valentino; but he was six feet tall, with curly brown hair, the bright eyes of a native Irishman, a long upper lip, nerve, and no money.

Seppel engaged him reluctantly after two or three hours spent with Bert in the cages of the easier lions.

Seppel explained carefully to the new showman how he ran his show. "This I do," he told him; "I mak' lions easy! I mak' 'em tricks! They're my baby-boys! I no hav' children. I hav' lions! You—you can hav' children! An' you can play with my lions—once I mak' 'em easy! I show you how to be safe: you stan' in the big cage where people come—see? I mak' tricks an' you look good! The lions no hurt you! But the lions are mine! You un'erstan' you just showman? I—lion man!"

Bert assented heartily. He did not want to be a lion-man. He was not without a genuine love and knowledge of animals, he even possessed an old tame lioness called Pansy Bell, whom Seppel allowed him to bring into the show; and with Seppel's help he half-tamed a lioness cub called Rosamund—but Bert only half-tamed her. Rosamund had heaps of fun wrestling with Bert in her cage—but there were moments when it looked as if she would have thought it still greater fun to have killed him; and with the male lions Bert had no success whatever.

Lions, however well trained, are never so madly affectionate as lionesses; and Seppel's lions were one-man animals, and refused to extend their patronage to Bert.

Seppel's favourite lion was called Caesar. He was the best trick lion the show had ever possessed. He had a huge brown mane, sleepy yellow eyes, and when he roared, he set the desert quivering.

Seppel told Bert confidentially, "Caesar's safe as houses: houses where no fire comes. Mustn't bring fire near desert houses. No! No! Mustn't bring flame near lions either! Flame to lions, all same flame to mens. Woman—she flame! You understan'—never come between a lion and a lioness—then lions no safe—they kill—all same men in desert!"

Bert saw this point too; and thought that it did not concern him. He had already seen Carrie Gladys and he did not look on her in the light of a flame. Bert was an honest, rather boastful young man without intensity. He soon found that he was quite unable to teach lions tricks. He had not begun young enough nor did he possess the wild hypnotic eye-language and deep creative patience with which Seppel was endowed both by birth and training. Still the audience gave Bert their chief applause, and all he had to do to win it was to stand once a day in the big arena cage and take picturesque attitudes, while Seppel kept the male lions in their proper places.

The animals, let out of their cages by slip-gates, came through a subterranean passage one by one into the big main cage. The lionesses came first; and as they came in Seppel called them each by name to take their places. Their perches were arranged in a ring round the arena, the first seven feet from the ground, the others gradually rising in height to nine feet. The lionesses took the first perch from the top of a tub; and then sprang from perch to perch. It was Bert's business to face the

lionesses, after they were seated, gluing them to their seats with his eyes and flicking them with a whip, if this reminder should be necessary. Venus was the last of the ladies upon the right, Mariposa the last upon the left.

Mariposa was the wife of Caesar. She was above suspicion in every sense of the word; and even if she had not been Caesar would have kept her so.

Venus had the worst temper of all the lionesses, but she was deeply attached to Seppel, who had helped her on one occasion to rear her cubs, when her natural milk supply had given out. Venus looked upon Seppel as a woman and a sister, and treated him accordingly. But as far as other males were concerned, including all lions, she had what is known in psychiatric circles as “a strong masculine protest” and she took every occasion of showing it. She hunched herself up, and spat at the male lions as they entered, and if one of them came within striking distance of her, Venus promptly clawed him.

After the lionesses were seated, Seppel called for the young males.

These were not powerful or excitable lions. They sat on tubs beneath the ladies’ perches, looking a little bored; and the ladies looked well over their heads, towards the hatchway door.

Seppel then called to the attendants: “Bring in my baby-boys!” Seppel’s “baby-boys” were full grown; and the most powerful male lions in the show. When they opened their jaws, if it was only to yawn, their teeth looked like the worst rocks a ship ever split on. If they roared, the cage rocked. Caesar always led them in, and then took his place at the end of the line, farthest from the hatchway, under the perch of Venus. This was intentional because Seppel trusted Caesar the most, and so great was Caesar’s faithfulness to Mariposa that he never increased the masculine protest of Venus by so much as a glance.

Mariposa sat on the perch farthest from Caesar, but she always watched him with her fond lazy yellow eyes.

When the first trick was over, Bert would turn, and stand picturesquely in the centre of any pattern which Seppel had devised. Nobody noticed Seppel very much, except the big male lions whose eyes he always held.

Caesar and Mariposa shared a large cage next to that of a handsome male tiger, the only mature male tiger possessed by the show. His name was Hector and his manners were regrettably Trojan. His mate having been temporarily removed from his society to attend to her maternal duties, Hector became highly envious of the placid domesticity enjoyed by his neighbours. One morning he jumped much higher than he was supposed to be able to jump against the wooden partition, and tore off a large piece of steel netting which separated the two cages, as if it were sponge

cake. He then proceeded to seize Mariposa's ear; and tore that.

Everyone thought there was an earthquake from the noise that followed; and Mariposa thought that she was the earthquake.

More and more tiger got through the steel netting, and Caesar, shaking the desert with his voice, skilfully seized Mariposa by the haunches, and dragged her clear of the tiger, minus half an ear. He then flung himself against the wooden partition and clawed down more netting, in order to get a stronger hold on Hector. By this time Seppel, Bert and two terrified attendants were gathered about the cages.

A glance was enough to show Seppel what had occurred. Half of Mariposa's ear was in the tiger's cage—and a good deal of Tiger was being clawed by Caesar. The partition bulged like a piece of sailcloth caught in a breeze.

It grieved Seppel to interfere with Caesar, but he could not afford the death of his only tiger. He therefore entered Hector's cage from the rear and strikingly diverted his attention. Hector turned on him in a flash; but quicker still, Seppel covered the tiger's head with an enormous sack, and with the nervous help of Bert and the attendants, transferred Hector to a distant cage.

Mariposa yelped for hours, while Caesar lay beside her, licking her torn ear, and administering consolation in low throaty growls.

In the course of a few days Mariposa, except for half an ear, completely recovered. Caesar's temper, however, was desperately ruffled; nor could he ever again feel the same trust in Seppel. "That one lil' tiger!" Seppel told him persuasively, "he no more trouble any lion! He flat skin to walk on—sure enough dead! My wife she step on him in kitchen!" Caesar blinked disdainfully at this tale for cubs. Did he not know the voice of every creature in the show, and was he likely to forget the still audible roar of a tiger that had trifled with Mariposa's ear?

Seppel excused Caesar from the ring for two weeks, though it was both difficult and dangerous to get on without him. At last he said to Bert, "My big baby-boy, he come back to-day. He lead once more. There may be lil' trouble! You look lionesses hard; and if tub fall over—you pick up tub pretty quick: better tub no fall over! Better lionesses come in lil' bit slow—and the young lions lil' bit quick!" Bert agreed, but he did not feel too comfortable. One lioness is one thing, but somehow or other ten lionesses are a good deal more than ten things.

However, the lionesses made a good entry. Venus took some time to settle; but Mariposa leapt to her usual perch like a bird. The young lions were hurried in, to get them out of the way; and then the big male lions, led by Caesar, came in very slowly, and with great dignity. Seppel's flying, intensely beseeching eyes met Caesar's. Caesar turned his heavy head away, but after a moment's perceptible pause, he

obeyed Seppel's pleading will, and took his seat on his tub. The other lions all mounted theirs in turn, while Seppel's earnest, plangent voice told them what good boys they were! What handsome children! What grand lions!

The lionesses remained on their perches, bored, but quiescent. The young males, resentfully expectant, watched their fathers advance slowly, facing Seppel, one by one. Each in his turn; each taking his exact place; following Seppel's high-keyed, imploring voice, his summoning eyes, and the direction of the whiplash, that without touching them showed each his place and warned him to take it.

Unfortunately Caesar declined. He stood at the end of the row, in his accustomed place; but lie down he would not. He snarled; he raised a paw; he lashed an angry yellow tail. His massive benevolent upper lip turned hideous with menace.

Mariposa, watching him intently from her perch, grew larger while she watched.

Seppel beseeched; he coaxed; he flung his heart out at Caesar: his boy—his baby-boy! Surely to please him Caesar *would* lie down?

The whip flickered and flapped in front of Caesar's face. Caesar put his paw on it. He bit it; and wouldn't lie down. He even jerked back a pace or two, nearer Venus's perch. Venus snarled savagely—and in her ill-natured prudery, she clawed at the flank of the lady next to her. Dolores—the lady next to her—swayed, lost her balance and fell into the arena.

Seppel glided away from his big males. He got behind Dolores, who was slinking, perchless and nervous, round the ring, and whipped her up on to a tub. Dolores leapt; missed her footing; and the tub rolled over.

Bert had an uncomfortable feeling that he ought to do something about that fallen tub; but with nine lionesses staring at him—and Mariposa swollen out of all recognition—he knew that turning his back on them, to right the tub, would be a most unpleasant posture.

Seppel gave a whimpering cry like a frightened child. "Will no-one helpa me?" he cried. "Will I be all alone for ever—no-one to helpa—me?" But while he whined and whimpered, he deftly righted the tub; lashed Dolores on to it, and saw her successfully negotiate her perch, before turning back with a bound, to face his baby-boys.

The lions had broken up their row. They stood on the balls of their feet, tense and terrible.

Seppel ran close up to them, calling each by name, meeting their fierce yellow eyes with the quick flame of his own. "Caesar!" he called. "Pompey! Tomboy! Kaiser! Capone! Paasha! Ajax! Lindbergh! Duce! Poppa! There you go! Easy my

fine boys—you lie down! You good boys! You, Caesar! You my pet boy! Oh Kay! Oh Kay! O.K. lions!” One by one they sank back, down on their haunches; into their statuesque row. Only Caesar still stood upright, lashing his tail with disdainful puckered lips. Seppel’s voice cajoled on. His will burned through his eyes. At last Caesar’s head sank; his beautiful lithe flanks closed in. He lay down at the end of his row. Mariposa grew slowly smaller again.

The hatch door reopened, and the lions filed out in turn.

Then Seppel faced Bert in the empty cage, while the audience still applauded.

He called out in his fierce high voice: “Why you no helpa me, showman? Why you stan’ there—you great ape? You fat stuck pig! You no helpa me put tub straight! I say one momen’ more, one lil’ insta’ all those lions go wild! Go mad! We get feeded by lions! I no can nothing save! I hold ’em with my eyes! I turn my back they loose—they no hold! They go pieces! They no more my children! You no un’erstan’! You only showman. Oh, my God! Only showman! One day all dead for nothing! And my poor baby-boys all shotted up and cursed! An’ all your fault! You stupid—you God-damn stupid showman!” and Seppel tore open the cage door and ran sobbing, through the astonished audience, to find his wife.

Some women would have comforted Seppel and taken the bitterness out of his heart, by their fears for his safety; but Carrie Gladys was no comforter. Her ideal was a cave man; and she did not know that courage can be fed by tears.

Behind Seppel stood Bert; tall, handsome, and cheerfully explanatory. It was all right! The Boss had had an upset! Not an animal damaged, though—and a good audience! Plenty of money!

Carrie Gladys took Bert’s explanations down like gin. She said derisively to Seppel: “Go on—and get in there—cry-baby!” She said to Bert: “Have a drink!” They had a drink and Carrie Gladys laughed. She may not have laughed at her husband; but he heard her laugh. Carrie Gladys had a good deal to learn from lionesses.

Night fell. Towards morning a lion roared. His hollow, hungry voice shattered the desert stillness into harsh, dry flakes of sound.

Seppel lay awake, brooding and resentful, by his wife’s side. “My boy—my baby-boy!” he whispered to himself. He knew it was Caesar roaring. Caesar was roaring because he felt defeated. Hector was still alive; and Caesar had obeyed Seppel—who was no longer to be trusted, since he kept Hector alive.

Seppel, too, felt defeated. He had cried; and Carrie Gladys had laughed at him with his showman.

The morning broke hotter than the day before. The desert wind came in long

burning puffs as if the earth had opened a secret chimney and was sighing out fire.

Mariposa and Venus, who were lying side by side on a rock in the middle of the yard, looked as if they were made of the same yellow stone that they were lying on. Nothing moved about them except their tawny eyes. The mountains hung like jagged sheets of cardboard against a brazen sky.

There was an ominous rasping quality in the day. Men's tempers were short and uncertain. The animals were inert and unresponsive. Even the tiger cubs were less playful than usual. They bit and scratched mechanically and fell asleep while doing it.

Seppel went the round of the cages muttering to himself. The polar bear lay prostrate in his pool, with only the top of his head and one irritated red eye showing. The monkeys were beating their wives and the wives were screaming like mad.

Seppel watched them for a time, but thought there was not much harm being done, and that it would be a pity to interfere with a male prerogative.

At last he came to Caesar's cage. Caesar was in a very low frame of mind. He refused even to come forward and speak to Seppel.

Seppel pleaded for a long time with Caesar; but Caesar only sat on his haunches and blinked. Once, he even put his paw on the bars, and shook them.

Seppel took this very much to heart; but Bert, standing good-naturedly beside him, thought the whole affair rather a joke. "You no un'erstan' lions," Seppel said bitterly. "They gotta strong feelin's, lions! They no get over things! Once you hurt a lion—you hurt a heart!"

"Well—what you goin' ter do about it?" Bert asked him; "if Caesar's so damn hurt—how you going ter manage? Goin' ter give another lion the lead? Caesar held you up yesterday! And ter-day's Sunday! We'll have a swell audience, maybe! They won't want ter wait half an hour, while you baby Caesar into lying down, will they?"

Seppel shook his head gloomily. "Caesar my stunt lion," he said sadly, "I no give up my stunt lion! Not for no Sunday audience! No! Caesar *mus'* come in! Only to-day I feed him myself—*first* I mak' him more fren'ly. I talk him alone! She very fine lioness, Caesar's wife—she better'n a woman! But half an ear—that not enough to break a show down! No, sir. Caesar—he learn understand' 'bout his wife's ear!"

It was stupid of Bert to neglect Seppel's instructions. He forgot to tell the attendants not to feed Caesar with the other lions. When Seppel came from his Sunday dinner, with a handsome meal for Caesar, it was to find that he had been already fed; nor did Bert attach any very great importance to Seppel's sudden burst of maniacal rage, when he found that he was too late to feed his pet. Like Carrie Gladys, Bert was untroubled by the feelings of others. He was a good-natured fellow, accustomed to getting his own way; and winning applause for it.

Still, he went so far as to suggest that perhaps it would be better for Caesar to remain in his cage and not take the lead in the afternoon performance. Seppel, who was just about to give this order, immediately reversed it, and told the attendant to let Caesar start the line of male lions as usual.

There was a large Sunday audience. The animals came in nicely and without confusion.

The first two tricks ran as smooth as cream.

Bert had a fine easy wrestling match with his pet lioness. Pansy Bell gave him a showy struggle and never forgot herself, for a moment. When she withdrew, Bert stood every inch a lion-tamer in front of his circle of lionesses, while Seppel inconspicuously in the back of the cage engaged the attention of the male lions.

Suddenly a blanched darkness swept over the faces of the audience. It was like a cloud crossing the sun. Bert saw rows of mouths open suddenly and eyes pricked wide with horror. Something had happened behind him, which he could not see.

Caesar had suddenly decided that if he couldn't kill Hector, the nearest male lion might do instead.

With one bound he had launched himself on Poppa and tore half his flank open. All the lions grew tense and crouched for a charge. Seppel stood alone in the middle of a ring of lions—calling—calling.

Bert looked behind him. There was just one chance in a million. Anything he did might tell now. A sudden noise might hold the lions. If he jumped through the ring and stood by Seppel, there might be a chance for their lives. A moment later, nothing could stop the lions from charging. Bert stood close to the hatchways. Once inside them he would be safe. Venus chose that moment of his conflict to leap down from her perch. The chance was over. Bert jumped for the hatchway. A terrific roar crashed behind him. He ran through the smelly passage, hot and flurried, asking himself over and over again how he could have saved Seppel.

The first cage door closed safely behind him. He was free now. He reminded himself that Seppel too had a door at his back. If Seppel broke through the ring of lions—if he risked the danger to the audience by opening the cage door that faced them—if that roar had not meant the lions were already on him—then perhaps he was safe!

The whole, hot empty yard rocked with sound. Bert found a gun, and ran through the yard towards the arena cage. It would look more like a rescue than an escape if he came back with a gun.

As he came within sight of the cage, he heard high above the pulverizing roar of the lions Seppel's voice, shrill—plangent—strained but curiously without fear or

anger. "My boys! My baby-boys! Caesar! Poppa! Paasha!" Seppel was calling them still. He was down under them; but they hadn't quite killed him.

The terror-stricken audience pushed each other aside, to let Bert through. He steadied his gun against the steel rims of the cage, and shot Caesar through the heart. With a roar that drowned the shrieks of the crowd and the clamour of the other animals, Mariposa flung herself from her perch on to the body of Caesar.

The rest of the lions drew back, crouched and growling; but it was not Bert's shot that controlled them. It was Seppel's voice; he lay in the centre of the ring, incredibly mauled, a mere mask of blood.

"Back—back, my beauties!" he cried beseechingly, and then one by one he called their names.

The attendant opened the hatchway door. The lions withdrew sullenly, but in their usual order. The lionesses left their perches.

Mariposa never moved, nor after that one roar, did she make a sound. She lay across the body of Caesar so still that you could not tell which of them was dead.

Venus, too, refused to follow her sisters. She leapt from her perch, and crouched, swaying, across the bloody floor to Seppel's side. "God! she'll finish him!" shrieked Carrie Gladys, her white papery face pressed against the bars; but she was judging Venus by her own standard.

"Is that Venus? Is that my darling?" Seppel called faintly. The lioness crouched low beside him—and with a sigh Seppel leaned his bleeding head against her flank. She licked his wounds with low caressing growls, nor would she let anyone approach him, until she knew that he was safely dead.

II

Pink Medicine

Lena Schultz was a peasant woman, who pulled a carrier's cart with a large, nondescript dog by her side, to and fro from the station to a mountain village in the Austrian Tyrol. She had a husband; and she had lost three children; but if you really came right down to it, Lena's dog Luchs was the most important thing in Lena's life except her religion.

Lena had been glad to lose her children, because she would not have had enough bread to give them if they had lived; and she supposed the Virgin Mary would have more time on her hands to look after children than Lena had, as well as a better-stocked cupboard.

The love Lena had had for her babies had been very sharp and short. It wrung her heart to think of them on All Souls' Day, when she went, like everyone else, to the cemetery. She took with her, year by year, a few autumn crocuses and pretty-coloured leaves to place on their tiny graves. There was no danger that any thrifty, lately bereaved peasant would steal her little offering to lay on his more substantial dead. She had that comfort, for her flowers were not good enough. They could lie there and fade, undisturbed, just as her children had faded, undisturbed, in her small chalet under the Three Crosses.

But if Lena had known none of the astonishment of Love's rapture, she had known for many years now the solid comfort of a good companionship. Every day, beside her, through deep snow or in thick summer dust, pulling against his collar with sober fairness, Luchs her dog plodded by her side.

Theirs was a covenant of friendship, for he too knew that the tough little wizened woman by his side would pull as fairly and as faithfully as he did. She would not walk unevenly, or slack on the hills, however many parcels they gathered from the village to take to the station; or however many more they must take back. They had three miles to go each way, though it always seemed longer on their return journey. Sometimes snow blinded them, or the harsh frost pinched their throats and started tears in their eyes. Foolish foreign visitors travelled hundreds of miles from warm firesides to greet the frost. "How pretty!" they cried when ice fitted the bare trees like fine armour, and sparkled at the moon. But Luchs and Lena, fighting side by side

with their weak breath in the bitter air, were only glad of moonlight because it showed them their path.

When Lena and Luchs reached the station for the midday train, the restaurant-keeper's wife always said, "Give the poor old thing some scraps!" with the easy compassion through which people, who have more than they need, share what they do not want.

Lena was always very grateful to the restaurant-keeper's wife; she used to pray for her three times a day; when she woke first in the morning; when the noon-bell filled the valley with its deep sound; and at the Angelus, when she and Luchs started out for their second trip to meet the evening train. "God give her a long life," Lena prayed, "and keep her heart warm for me and my dog."

When they reached the station, however exhausted Lena was, she would unloosen Luchs' harness before she sat down, sweep the snow off his back, and make him as comfortable as she could with one piece of sacking over him and another piece to lie on under the cart.

When they had both rested a little, she went to the door of the restaurant and received her scraps nicely wrapped in a piece of old newspaper. She gave exactly half of them to Luchs. He never snatched nor even looked wistfully at the other half. He took what belonged to him, wagged his tail, and lay down again under his cart. He only growled if anyone came too near his cart, and after he had growled it was never necessary for him to bite.

As long as he was attached to his cart other dogs had no existence for him, but when he was off duty, he was like anyone else.

"If many of the dogs in the village bear his likeness," Lena would say to herself, "what is that to me? My man never did his work as well as Luchs does, but did I ask him where he went when we were both young? It may be, as he says, that a worm inside him ate up all his strength; but it is good that some men, and some dogs also, have not got that kind of worm!"

Lena shivered sometimes while she sat waiting in the snow for the train to arrive, but when the restaurant-keeper's wife asked her if she wouldn't like to come inside the kitchen and sit in a warm room on a chair, Lena refused. She knew that not even an angel of God could be expected to permit so large a dog as Luchs, with steaming hair, to enter a restaurant kitchen; and Lena could not leave Luchs all by himself under his cart in the snow.

"He would be sad," she explained to the restaurant-keeper's wife. "We have many hard moments together, why should we spend our one good moment in the day separate?"

The restaurant-keeper's wife was so much touched by their mutual fidelity that she gave Luchs a larger bone than usual. She thought to herself, as Lena blessed her with dramatic fervour, "After all, that little affair with the postman isn't going to keep me out of heaven!"

"There is no one who has such a good heart as you, no one in the world!" cried Lena passionately.

"Well, well," said the restaurant-keeper's wife, "when I have quite finished with my old fur coat you shall have that too, it already has a hole in it."

Lena went back to the cart and felt as warm after that promise as if she were already dressed in fur.

The way home seemed quite short and the snow no colder than sugar. The great flakes fell into the trees and clustered there like the soft feathers birds wear on their breasts. The slopes of the hills were wrapped deep in snow. The sky was as grey as the wool of unwashed sheep, and the mountains soaring away on each side of the valley were as white as bride-cake. Nothing moved on all the visible earth except the gently turning flakes in the still air, and Luchs and Lena, straining their backs and their thighs as they pulled the cart away from the station towards the village, thanked God that it grew lighter at each customer's house, until they were too tired even for prayer, and just pulled a little easier for each relief.

When they reached the Three Crosses, they both knew it, without raising their heads. The dog and Lena stopped simultaneously with a little jerk in front of their chalet. The chalet had only one room, with a loft above it, which had been used for hay until the meadow and the two cows had to be sold because Seppel couldn't work any more, couldn't even cut wood or lead the cows up to the *Alpe* in the spring. He could only lie in bed and grumble.

The moment the door opened he began grumbling afresh. "So you're there at last!" he said. "I dare say it was a glass of beer that you will pretend was a parcel, which has kept you beyond your time! Pleasant for me it is, isn't it, to have a wife out all day, and me lying here, unable to get up and put a log on the fire! It's gone out again, and I'm near freezing. You know well enough the doctor said cold was my worst enemy. But as long as you and that lazy overfed dog keep warm, what do you care what happens to your poor sick husband?"

Lena knew the answer to this question. She hurried out again into the pine wood, which was fortunately quite near, and brought home enough brushwood on her back to keep the fire in all night. Of course it was wet, but how lucky she was to find any at all, since in another hour or so the snow would have covered it.

She lit a fire as quickly as she could, and took some crusts of bread, a handful of

potatoes and a little milk, which made a very good soup for the invalid—who left nothing for either of the others. “Since”, he said, “you live like fighting cocks at your restaurant, you can hardly expect to feed at home as well. . . . I think I am worse this evening,” he added, after he had finished the last mouthful of the soup. “In fact, I have been getting steadily worse all the week, only you are so stupid, you never notice anything. This next Sunday you must take my nail-parings and some of my urine to the Wise Man of Obendorf, and ask him what can be done for me. I won’t have the doctor again, for he can do nothing but tell me that I need an operation. Well, it is his living, of course, to cut people up like a butcher cuts beasts! But I am not a beast, am I—to go to a hospital and be cut up?”

This was not a question which demanded any answer from Lena beyond a sympathetic grunt; so she got near the stove in the next-warmest corner to Seppel’s, while Luchs got under it. It was like heaven to Lena and Luchs to feel the warmth. They went to sleep directly and dreamed respectively of fur coats and bones. But Seppel lay awake for a long time, wondering what the Wise Man of Obendorf would say about his illness on Sunday.

On Sunday Lena cleaned the house and brushed Luchs. He had his own affairs to see to in the village, where it would be quite easy for a big dog, who worked for his people, to snatch from small dogs, whose people worked for them, any bones which happened to be about.

Lena set out alone for Obendorf to see the Wise Man. He was a holy man too, as well as wise, and had a little house called the “*Einsiedelei*” on the top of the hill. You had only to ring the bell and the Wise Man came out. If you were poor, he charged you a shilling, whatever was the matter with you, and if you were rich and had the same disease, three shillings, and rich or poor you could talk as long as you liked.

The *Heiliger* knew Lena, and asked her to come inside the *Einsiedelei*; he even gave her a chair to sit on.

Lena was so flustered, what with sitting on a chair and looking about her at the Hermit’s riches, that she nearly forgot to show him Seppel’s nail-parings. However, he soon brought her back to herself by asking her what she wanted; and she told him how ill Seppel was, and repeated all the symptoms which Seppel had retailed to her at great length while she was eating her breakfast.

“Yes, yes!” said the Hermit, when at last she had reached the end of them, “I know all about your husband. First he was too merry, then he was too lazy, and now he is too ill to work! Well, the world is like this, my daughter; you must suffer in one way or you must suffer in another. Seppel has chosen his way, and as far as I can

see, he is going to die of it, and that mightn't be such a bad thing, after all! On the other hand, you are his wife and it is your duty to keep him alive as long as you can. What you have come to ask me is how to do it, isn't it?"

Lena nodded and the Wise Man was silent for quite a long time, gazing at the snow-peaks which they could both see through the window, shining very hard and cold against blue air.

"What is cold is dead, isn't it?" the Wise Man said at last. "You can see that for yourself. Flowers and fruit don't grow in the snow, do they? Warm your husband and he may live a little longer. How shall you warm him? Well, that you must do from the inside out, not from the outside in. Feed him with strong food, fresh butcher's meat and soup made from it, and you may get him through this winter's cold."

"But Holy Wise Man!" Lena cried, "how can I buy butcher's meat? There is nothing good enough in the house left to pay the butcher for his meat!"

"There is your dog," said the *Heiliger*. "He is very big, is he not? In this cold, his flesh would last a good fortnight or more and make fine soup."

A curious thing happened to Lena's heart; although she sat in a room as warm as the restaurant kitchen, it suddenly grew quite cold. It was as if she had swallowed by mistake one of the snow-peaks which she could see so plainly from the *Heiliger's* window, and found it standing all cold and still in the place of her heart. She said at last:

"But, *Heiliger*, then we couldn't live at all, because I cannot pull the cart full of packages to the station and back alone, twice every day."

"Well, well!" said the *Heiliger*. "All these questions are very difficult, my daughter. Perhaps it is better that your husband should die, after all—or perhaps you could take in washing?"

"If I could buy tubs and soap, perhaps I could," said Lena painfully; "but everyone in the village works for himself; only the visitors, poor people, don't know how to wash, and they come for only a few months in the year."

"Well, well!" said the Wise Man. "Take the dog to the butcher if you wish Seppel to live through the winter, and, if not, give him this bottle of pink medicine. It will not do him any harm; it will quiet his nerves to give him something, and that is always worth a shilling. But as yours is really a hard case, I will give it you for nothing—the medicine, that is—but when he has drunk it you will return the bottle; or, if you should decide not to give it to him, then let me have it back just as it is, for another patient. It will do equally well for almost anything; and if you go to the butcher you can use the shilling you should have paid me to give him for killing your dog."

The *Heiliger* could not have been kinder, but Lena forgot even to thank him properly. She stumbled from his doorstep into the deep snow clasping the bottle of pink medicine close to her breast, in case she should let it fall.

It was harder to go down the steep hill from the *Einsiedelei* than it had been to climb up it, because now she had that cold peak in her breast where her warm heart had been. If she let Luchs be killed, nothing would grow in her heart any more, it would always be as cold as the snow out of which no fruit or flowers came. Only graves are alike in the snow or in the sun, for they are closed, and nothing can open them any more, nor let what is in them out. Which was Lena to put into a grave—her husband—or her dog?

She had a free choice, for the Wise Man would neither tell on her nor blame her, whichever she did. He would not even care greatly whether she returned the bottle to him with the pink medicine in it—or empty.

It was no use asking God, because God, although you could say all the prayers you liked to Him, never said anything back. Nor was she going to ask the village priest, because once, in a sermon a long while ago when Luchs was only a puppy but had already learned how to draw the cart, the priest had said dogs had no souls and could not go to heaven when they died. He had, of course, never been licked by a dog, who looked at you with more soul in his eyes than Lena had ever seen in any man's. Men did not wag all over when she went up to speak to them, nor whine with joy when she patted their heads. Her husband had never pulled hard at anything beside her in the snow, nor staunchly persevered when the sweat streamed off them on August days and the sky beat down on them till their heads cracked.

Nor would the restaurant-keeper's wife be much help in a case like Lena's. She was too rich; she had a good husband who got drunk only on Saints' days, and never even beat her when he was drunk. She could hardly be supposed to guess what a dog meant to a less protected woman.

But Seppel was Lena's husband, and out of their marriage had come those three little thin babies which dragged at her heart even now, though they had lain for so long deep in the earth. She must not forget Seppel had given her those three babies! It was all he had ever given her, except hard words and, when he was strong enough, blows.

But one had to be fair; he was a man, Luchs was only a dog.

Lena could see the Three Crosses above the chalet now, and the smoke from her chimney rising in the pure evening light. With the money she and Luchs had earned they could all three have *Nudelsuppe*. Surely that was nourishment enough for any man? She looked at the pink medicine: it was a lovely colour, like the last

light of sunset over the snows. But her husband would expect a rather larger bottle. He would grumble as usual, and if he ate Luchs, for the rest of Seppel's life there would only be grumbling; and when the grumbling stopped, as it might next winter when there was no dog left to eat, there would not even be grumbling—no sound at all; just like to-day, when all the earth was thickly muffled in snow. You could hear nothing stir, nothing whisper, nothing creep—only from time to time the snow itself fell from the trees with a soft, thunderous crash, and the boughs, with a faint whine of release, sprang back into the air.

“Well! it is high time you were home,” Seppel exclaimed as Lena threw open the door. “Dawdling away the time as usual, talking to the Holy Man who has something better to do than to listen to your twaddle! I hope you showed him everything I sent with you, and remember exactly what he said about it.”

“Yes, I remembered,” said Lena, going over to the stove and putting on the soup.

“It would be just like you to go and forget, after having spent a shilling on his advice. And me, left here alone on the only day in the week when I have a soul to speak to! Ah! do you hear? There's that cursed dog scratching at the door! Why isn't he satisfied with the bones he finds in the village? No! not he! He must come back, punctual for once in his life, to eat my Sunday soup!”

“There is plenty for all three of us to-day,” said Lena, and she went to the door and lifted the latch.

Luchs flung back his head and howled with joy when he saw her. Then he came in sedately and curled himself up at her feet. He did not even smell the air, so good with *Nudelsuppe*, so delicate was he of her feelings, so anxious not to show his eagerness, lest there might not be enough for him to share.

It seemed to Lena that he looked to see if her soup-plate was full before he would begin to lap his own.

“Well, are you dumb as a two-days' calf, as well as stupid as an owl?” demanded Seppel impatiently. “What did the *Heiliger* say would help me?”

Lena stopped in the act of putting her soup-spoon into her mouth. It looked as if she were not hungry, though this was hardly possible. She glanced from her husband's irritably impatient eyes to Luchs' tail quivering with satisfaction. Even his tail had a response in it; it was not for himself he wagged it, but to show her how well she had made his soup.

“The *Heiliger* said the cold does you harm,” Lena stammered.

“You showed him my nail-parings and my urine—and he said only that about them? Come, you are joking! The village idiot could tell me more than that!”

“I showed him everything,” Lena said desperately. “The doctor also said the same, but the *Heiliger* said as well, you were too ill now to work.”

“Well, if I am too ill to move, he might well say I am too ill to work!” growled Seppel. “When was I ever anything else but too ill to work? What I want to know is, not rubbish like that, but whether I shall get well or die, and how to avoid dying, for no one wants to die if they can help it.”

Luchs finished his soup and crept gently back to Lena’s feet. He put his head on one and wagged his great plumed tail as if he were saying grace to his God.

“A dog may not go to heaven when he dies, but he loves God while he lives,” Lena thought to herself. She raised her eyes fearfully to Seppel’s.

“But will it not be very nice in heaven?” she demanded. “Always sunshine, and no hunger. Will it be so bad to die, Seppel? Life is hard, I do not think death can be any harder.”

“Hard or soft, you know what it is,” Seppel said crossly. “How do I know that I shall get to heaven when I die either, even if I want to be there—and I don’t particularly. I have never liked priests or psalm-singing women. If I want company, it is in a *Weinstube* that I look for it!”

Lena sighed; she knew that this was true, and she wished—for Seppel’s sake—that there would be a *Weinstube* in heaven.

“Did the Wise Man say I was going to die?” asked Seppel fearfully.

Lena heard the fear in his voice and it softened her heart towards him. Very gently she dislodged the faithful head that rested on her foot.

“All men must die,” she said. “The Holy Man did not say you need die at once—nor perhaps soon—nor perhaps this winter at all.”

“That’s something, at any rate,” growled Seppel. “Kick that lump of a dog away from the fire, Lena—he takes up too much room.”

Luchs had put his head back again on her foot; she stooped to pat him and he licked her hand as she bent over him. She met his faithful amber eyes, and what she saw in them was a trust so inexhaustible that it shook her heart.

“I dare say you want to get rid of me!” went on Seppel suspiciously. “Then you could have the warmest corner by the stove, and you and the dog would have everything, and I—nothing!”

“No, I don’t want you to die!” said Lena, with frightened emphasis. “I don’t want you to have nothing!”

“Well, you don’t seem to want me to have very much,” said Seppel. “Haven’t you even brought me back a bottle of medicine from that old dunderhead on the hill?”

Lena was silent for quite a long while; so long that Luchs thought it safe to shut his eyes for a brief moment, and Seppel, enraged by her silence, took up a jagged piece of stick which had fallen near him, and threw it at the dog.

Luchs started up with a whine and faced towards Seppel. He knew well enough the stick could only come from there.

Then Lena made up her mind. If Seppel had not thrown the stick, she had meant to let him live; but men who throw sticks at sleeping dogs, for spite, need not live.

“Yes,” she said quickly, “the *Heiliger* gave me a bottle of pink medicine for you, he thinks it will do you good; and he didn’t even make me pay a shilling—but I’m to take back the bottle afterwards.”

“Well, we’ll see about that when the time comes,” growled Seppel; “the medicine can’t be good for much if you didn’t have to pay for it. Nevertheless, let’s have a look at the bottle; and give me back the shilling! It’s not likely I’m going to let you squander it on yourself or that cursed animal, so you needn’t think it! Why don’t you hurry up, and give me the bottle? It’s *my* medicine, isn’t it, not yours?”

“Yes, it’s *your* medicine,” said Lena, leaving her soup unfinished, “not mine.” She poured out the first dose of the pink medicine and gave it to her husband.

III

Dark Blue

Jim Mason looked uncomfortably at his boss. He was a very good boss; that was the trouble. Lying is easy to an enemy; but no man likes to lie to his friend. Mr. Ballard returned his cowman's uneasy glance, with the look of a man who has risked much for his opinion and expects to see it upheld. He had bought—or thought that he had bought—the best bull on the market. The specimen was there before them, or, to be exact, the loose-box into which both men gazed was now filled with a horned cylinder of leaping, bellowing, bounding murder. A nose-ring, attached to a staple in the wall, just—and only just—kept the bull from forcing open the bolt-guarded, stout oak door. Since it was a divided door, with a top that could be opened separately, the two men could watch Dark Blue at his demoniac gambols in chastened security. Dark Blue sensed this fact; and it was upsetting his equilibrium still further.

“We'd better shut him up in the dark,” Jim Mason said quietly. “He'll calm down when there's nobody to look at him. Bulls feel moving into new quarters. The world's no friend to this guy—better shut it out for a while and let him forget it.”

They closed the upper door and the trappings and bellowings of Dark Blue, alone, in his self-made nightmare, grew muffled. “He *is* a beauty, isn't he?” Mr. Ballard anxiously. “He is all of that,” Jim Mason guardedly admitted; “but we may as well face it, Boss—Dark Blue, though he *is* the best Jersey bull on the market, is no better than an earthquake. He gets good calves, and any amount of them—but he's a killer. He's *the* killer—that's why you got him comparatively cheap.” “Cheap!” groaned Mr. Ballard. “You don't call three thousand pounds *cheap*, do you?” “Was that what they rooked you for?” Jim demanded. “Well—never mind. In a sense he's worth it. He *is* a first-class sire—only—. Well, knowing what you feel about killers, and yet freeing your animals up all you can, on account of kindness, I'm sorta sorry, Boss, you had to horn in on this particular proposition! Besides, I'm rattled—I'm God-damned rattled about the children! They're in and out of this yard all day long—they haven't seen an animal yet they couldn't treat as a friend; they don't know what being careful means—or what doing what they're told means, either. It gives me the jitters thinking of them kids—I'll say it does!”

In some remote and inaccessible part of his youth, Jim had been a Texas cowboy. He had tried other less reputable careers, finally, as he had once explained to Mr. Ballard, “Things scrambled up on me so tight I had to light out—the sea looked kinda good to me, so I took to being a cattleman on boats, till I got here!” Why, how, or when, he had reached a model farm in Sussex remained almost as vague in Jim’s mind as in his employer’s. Sometimes he believed he had lived all his life in fruit orchards, with thick, woolly sheep dotted about on neat, green fields, until his long-distance eyes rebelled against them and he saw, instead, the open deserts of his youth.

The slow-witted, silent, kind, and unspectacular human beings that surrounded Jim were still strangers to him; but the beasts—their morals and their manners—were the same.

“It was most unfair of them to sell me a killer without letting me know,” Mr. Ballard said distressfully. “I didn’t know that they ever kept bulls that had killed human beings!”

Jim smiled apologetically. “I guess”, he explained, “there’s too much money in a bull for people to act particular; besides, it’s his nature. You can’t blame him or change him—if he *can* kill, he wants to; and if he sees a chance, he’ll just naturally take it. This bull is quicker than most, and nobody has to give him a chance twice. All we’ve got to do, now you’ve bought him, is to see that he gets no chances. But, Mr. Ballard, Prue and Jack have just *got* to be kept out of the yard.”

Mr. Ballard nodded. Prue and Jack were his children. Jack was eight years old and Prue was five. They were being brought up without undue control, to use their own initiative—and they had already developed a great deal of initiative. But surely Katherine, his wife, would agree that, about the bull, control—even strict control—was necessary?

“The yard gate next to the garden can be kept locked,” Mr. Ballard said, after a pause. “There’s the garidge and the kitchen door,” Jim reminded him, “and there’s the gate into the fields. The children—if they felt thwarted—might get out of the garden and into the fields and in through the yard door.” “Well, I’ll go and have a talk with them,” Mr. Ballard said without eagerness. “We’ll do the best we can, and I’ll get rid of the bull as soon as we can sell him; but, Jim—children apart—it’s *your* life I’m thinking of!” “You needn’t,” Jim told him, with a faint flicker of amusement in his clear brown eyes. “I’m kinda spry, and I’m tough, or I wouldn’t be here now. That Dark Blue can’t put the stopper on me. I’ll get to studying him; that’s all that’s needed. He’s no man’s friend, that’s his trouble. All bulls is up against it, but this one’s worse than the others. When you come to think of it, it ain’t so surprisin’.

What they want, they know how to get, and they feel they had oughta have their chance of getting it. Well—we shut 'em up, and how are they to know some other bull isn't beating them to it? Kinda human, that's all a bull is! You can't explain to him, either, that lockin' him up with a ring through his nose is a friendly act, can you?"

Mr. Ballard looked still more distressed. It is doubtful if a humanitarian of the first water should try to be a model farmer. In every way that lay in his power, Mr. Ballard saw that on his property the quality of mercy was not strained. He used only humane killers; he would have no unnecessary roughness. He knew that Jim would do the right thing, even by a killer bull; whether the right thing could be made sufficiently agreeable for the bull, was still a problem. There are disagreeable necessities, and no humanitarian up to now has discovered how to avoid them.

It seemed to Mr. Ballard, as he once more passed Dark Blue's shut loose-box, that its inhabitant let out a more blood-curdling bellow than any he had yet heard. Perhaps Dark Blue particularly resented a humanitarian owner. Mr. Ballard spoke to his wife immediately. He took her into his study and barricaded the door so that the children could not get in and yet would not have to be forbidden their right of entry.

Katherine, as he had feared, took what he had to say rather badly. She didn't, she explained, *like* killer bulls, and she thought they ought not to keep one. She didn't think the children ought to be ordered about, and she resented their being in danger if they disobeyed orders. In the end, as she was a good wife and saw that her husband was greatly upset, Katherine agreed to his doing whatever he felt was best, but she left him under the impression that his best would probably be bad.

As this was what he felt himself, Mr. Ballard set about his task with increased uneasiness. He found his son first. It was Jack's bedtime, and he had decided *not* to go to bed. He was under the drawing-room sofa, teasing the kitten. When the kitten seized the opportunity of Mr. Ballard's entrance to escape through his legs and a crack in the door, Jack was naturally annoyed, but after a time he came out from under the sofa and the negotiations about Dark Blue were entered upon, in comparative amity.

Mr. Ballard made a very good, man-to-man appeal, owned up to his mistake in having bought Dark Blue; and stated his dependence upon his son's loyalty to help him avoid any disagreeable consequences. Jack was accustomed to the fact that bulls have to be let alone, and have to be shut up; but he had hitherto felt that they could, and should, be teased, if circumstances permitted. You could at least make faces at them, over the half door. But now, apparently, even this mild form of sport must be given up. Jack must promise never to enter the yard without Jim or one of

his parents.

This revolting exclusiveness was hard to accept. Still, Jack was attached both to his father and to Jim. If they felt that their entire peace of mind depended upon this promise, he must make it; but obviously, not for nothing. Children are hard bargainers. This was a moment to ask for fresh rabbit-hutches and more rabbits. Both his pigeons and his rabbits could no longer be kept in the yard; a new place must, logically, be found for them. A demand for a pigeon-house followed, and more pigeons; but when Jack excitedly launched into more pigeons, his father brought up the hackneyed subject of bed. The deal closed on two new rabbits, a fresh hutch, and an extra half-hour of freedom; in return, Jack gave his promise never to enter the yard alone. Mr. Ballard was relieved. Jack was seldom asked to give his word; and still more seldom—if ever—had he been known to break it.

Prue was the next problem. Prue was already in bed. She was saying her prayers into the neck of her Teddy bear; but she willingly relinquished bear and the Deity together, in order to hurl herself upon her father's answering chest. She was *not* his favourite child. He often said so; he had no favourites; but the fact remained that Prue knew she could do what she liked with her father, whereas Jack was not quite so sure.

Prue seemed to be listening attentively to what her father told her about Dark Blue. She said: "Pore Bull!" at intervals, and once, in a dreamy manner, "Pore deah Bull!"

Her father asked for no promises from Prue. He merely very gravely and firmly told her that she must not go into the farm-yard by herself, not for any reason whatever! She could go with Jim, with her mother, or with her father—did she understand? It was impossible to say. Prue was all smiles. She seemed to think they had started a new and amusing kind of game. Could she go into the yard with Cook? With Flint, the fox terrier? With the kitten? No—she couldn't! Then could she go with the Teddy bear? No, certainly not! Might she say a prayer for Dark Blue? Yes, of course she might. "God bless Dark Blue and make him sweet to me!" Was it likely that God would answer this prayer? Not very likely, her father had to admit; he would have preferred, "Please God, make Prue a good girl and remember never to go into the yard alone", and offered this aloud as his own contribution.

The door opened and Katherine stood before them; her grave, blue eyes were reproachful. She seemed to think Mr. Ballard's prayer was propaganda; and Mr. Ballard knew what his wife thought about propaganda. Prue, however, said "Amen!" with complete abandon. *She* did not mind being made a good girl. It lifted a certain load from her mind. It was now God's business whether she went into the yard or

not; and Prue intended to leave it to Him, to mind it.

For a whole week everything went well. Jack kept his word and got the rabbits and the new hutch. Dark Blue calmed down—that is to say, he bellowed furiously at every footstep that approached his loose-box, except Jim's. He had, however, his favourite dislikes; the person he most passionately loathed was Mrs. Ballard. She was quick, and had a voice that got on his nerves; besides, he saw more of her. She kept coming in and out of the garage, which was next to his stall, and actually connected with it, since Dark Blue's stone feeding trough was part of an opening between the loose-box and the garage. The opening was high and small enough for there to be no danger of Dark Blue's attempting to get through it, but he could quite well see what was going on in the garage; and it had the advantage that he could be fed from there without anyone's being forced to enter his loose-box.

Prue had been, at her special request, taken into the garage to see Dark Blue through the hole in the wall. When he bellowed at her, she said, "Pretty noise!" and asked to be allowed to stroke his nose. She was whisked out of the garage by her mother, and the door locked behind her. Still it occurred to Prue that the door might not always be locked.

An idea in a child's mind is like an idea in an animal's: neither knows how to set about putting it into shape, but neither gives it up. It remains an enchanting possibility, ready to spring into active life at the first opportunity.

The chance came to Prue when Jack had croup. He had it very badly, and Katherine, hearing that the doctor's car was being repaired, dashed to the garage to fetch him back in her own. For the first time since Dark Blue's arrival, Katherine left the garage door unlocked behind her. No one but Prue grasped this fact, but Prue, lying under a gooseberry bush in the vicinity, spotted the omission and promptly slipped through the door into the garage. There was Dark Blue, gazing at her across his stone trough.

He was not really dark blue; his thick-set, cylinder-shaped body was a deep, yellowing cream, but his heavy neck and great furrowed brow were a heather-red that held the bare suggestion of blue. His wild, tragic eyes rested with their usual pointless rage upon the child. "Deah Dark Blue!" chanted Prue benevolently. "Pore deah Blue!" and she began to climb upwards into the stone trough. Fortunately, it was a long and arduous process and gave Dark Blue plenty of time to investigate what was coming over into his stall. He sniffed and glared, glared and sniffed, over and over again, without discovering any hostility in Prue. The creature was young, innocuous, and without the faintest whiff of that odious male element, which all bulls feel a direct provocation. Prue could, as far as Dark Blue was concerned, come

over; and she came. The fall on the other side was steeper than the climb up, but there was plenty of straw to break it; and Prue, looking up out of the straw at the stout form of Dark Blue towering above her, felt that she was cheek by jowl with an enormous friend. “*Not a lelefant!*” she told him casually, but firmly, just to keep him in his place.

Jim, stepping lightly and silently about the yard, discovered Prue at the moment when she had definitely failed to climb back into the garage and was wondering whether Dark Blue could not be drawn into assisting her.

For a moment Jim’s heart performed that evolution known as “stopping”—that is to say, it jerked forward viciously, hesitated, and went on harder than ever. Jim made no bones about the fact that Prue was *his* favourite of the two children; and he knew that she was at the mercy of a bestial rage or an equally cruel blunder. He must get her out without disturbing or frightening Dark Blue; and he must do it quickly, before the situation could worsen.

He, therefore, after a moment’s complete and shadowy stillness, vaulted the lower door, seized Prue, and tossed her lightly over into the yard. Vaulting back was the trouble, and Dark Blue’s horns caught him, but fortunately his trousers tore, and the wound made was slight. Dark Blue had been taken so completely by surprise that his technique faltered; besides it *was* Jim. The thrust of his horn hardly amounted to ill-will on Dark Blue’s part; it was simply reflex action. A liberty had been taken with him in his own stall and Jim had paid for this liberty. That was not the proper way of entering anyone’s loose-box, but now that Dark Blue had displaced the offender, the incident could be considered closed.

Jim shared this feeling, but he made the most of the accident to Prue. She was a little shaken and sobered by her sudden flight through the air; still she thought the whole business was Jim’s fault rather than Dark Blue’s. *He* had not thrown Prue out of his stall upon the hard cobblestones of the yard. Prue was a faithful soul; she loved and forgave Jim, merely making a mental note that he was at times, unlike Dark Blue, a little rough to play with.

Only her parents were struck to the heart’s core, as the parents of young children must be frequently. In one wild and agonizing hour their beloved Jack had been at death’s door with croup, and their beloved Prue at the mercy of a killer bull. Nothing had happened to either child; nor did they ever know what that hour meant in the lives of their parents, or that a cracked rib—where Dark Blue’s horn had caught him—pained Jim whenever he lifted anything, to his last day.

Dark Blue remained obdurately resentful and unattached; the months slipped by, and at length the moment came when the world once more opened its doors to him.

He was to be led into the fields, to set free his powers. A pole was fastened to his nose-ring, with Jim at one end of it, and Mr. Ballard at the other. The pole was further attached by cable to a lorry. The lorry gently but firmly pulled the whole cortège slowly forward through the big yard gates out into the fields. Here, Dark Blue was tethered—the lorry cautiously letting out rope, as it withdrew backwards—from Dark Blue's increasing freedom. Finally the pole was unhooked; and Dark Blue—frightened, humiliated, and in the worst possible of tempers—found himself comparatively free. The men scrambled safely into the lorry while Dark Blue gazed menacingly about him at the empty field, into which the ameliorating influence of the cows had not yet been introduced. He snorted loudly, pawed up a good piece of earth, and charged the retreating lorry.

It was a good charge, and anything less stout than a lorry would have been overwhelmed by; it as it was, Dark Blue succeeded in getting half of his enormous frame on to the back of the lorry—and stuck there. It took more than an hour to swing him off, exhausted twelve strong men, and put an edge on Dark Blue's lust for murder. He had now enlarged his list; not only must *men* be killed, but lorries.

Towards evening, the cows were driven in to him, and Dark Blue spent a long and profitable week in comparative freedom.

It was an uneasy, watchful week for Jim and Mr. Ballard. Katherine said firmly, at the breakfast table on the last day of Dark Blue's freedom: "You see how good that poor bull is—when he is in the open air with his own kind!" "He hasn't got any kind," replied Mr. Ballard a little grimly, for he was remembering Prue's danger.

Prue, at that moment, was chasing a small escaped piece of bread and honey that had fallen into the milk jug. Prue had not pushed it in—no, she had merely rested it on the rim of the jug and watched it take an unhindered dive.

Miss Walker, the children's governess, came from the other end of the village, and usually crossed the fields to reach the farm. She knew all about the bull, and into which field she must not go. Unfortunately, although Miss Walker could be trusted with the dates of history, she had one of those minds that is apt to be less accurate about to-day than about yesterday.

Dark Blue, the whole neighbourhood knew, was to be returned to his loose-box on Thursday evening. Miss Walker had pushed Thursday aside; she was already living in Friday. Dark Blue, as far as her mind was concerned, was safely in his loose-box. She started cheerfully across the field that held the incubating shed, a few chickens in a fenced space, and—hidden from Miss Walker's eyes by the incubating shed—Dark Blue.

Strictly speaking, Miss Walker was still in the right. The chickens' field was

untenanted by a single cow. Dark Blue had only a few minutes earlier found a gap in the hedge and succeeded in loosening himself from his picket in order to stroll through it.

There were white, fluttering chickens scattered about a green expanse, but Dark Blue was indifferent to chickens. He might not have created them, perhaps, had they been left to him to create; but as long as they kept their distance, he was prepared to allow them to go on living.

It is an undeniable fact that Miss Walker was no chicken. She interfered with the landscape. The moment Dark Blue saw her, he stiffened, let out a bellow of disgust, and tore up a handsome piece of meadow grass. Miss Walker had got quite far into the field by this time, too far to retreat. She had a choice. There was a gate upon which her entranced pupils were leaning, and nearer to her than the gate was the door of the incubating shed.

The bull stood at some distance, on the farther side of the shed, nearer to the gate. Miss Walker made for the shed; but, having a mind as unstable in a physical emergency as it was inaccurate about the days of the week, she decided, when almost within reach of the shed, to make for the gate.

This freak of indecision on her part saved her life. Dark Blue knew no indecision; anyone but an idiot, he reasoned, would make for the nearest shelter. Dark Blue, therefore, concentrated upon the incubating shed; and, once concentrated, was unable to readjust his charge.

He went full tilt at the shed with the force of a ton of dynamite. His horns went through the match-wood walls as if they were melted butter. It was a splendid sight to watch Dark Blue—the roof of the incubating shed carried high upon his horns, like an umbrella, while the contents of the shed, “unhousel’d, unanneal’d,” floated in soft yellow puffs over Dark Blue’s gigantic form.

Even Miss Walker, now on the *right* side of the gate, may have been impressed by the spectacle; for Jack and Prue it was the peerless possession of a lifetime.

It could easily have been worse all round, for the incubating shed was well insured and Mr. Ballard wanted a more modern one. The insurance company tried to prove alternatively that Dark Blue’s attack was an Act of God, or that Mr. Ballard had trained Dark Blue to uproot old incubating sheds on purpose. Both these claims were considered flimsy; none of Dark Blue’s previous acts had been reminiscent of the Deity, nor had anyone ever been able to train him in any direction. When Dark Blue set out to murder, it was a gift.

The effect upon Prue’s mind was the only real disadvantage, for she now knew for certain that Dark Blue was an altogether beneficent Power, who might be trusted

in every possible emergency to do the right thing.

The morning that he chased Miss Walker—a delightful and sporting spectacle in itself—Prue had no lessons. Added to this pleasant miracle, all the poor, dull little chickens kept in boxes, were set free. A brilliant idea flashed into Prue's active mind. Not only chickens could be set free! The maker of these miracles himself could be freed!

With great difficulty, and at the risk of Jim's life, Dark Blue was returned to his loose-box. He was more unhappy than ever, angrier than ever. Had he not tasted both freedom and destruction?

Do those who attack others successfully ever reach a point when they are satisfied with destruction? Dark Blue, back in his restricted prison, where he could toss nothing but hay, kill nothing but time, knew that he could never have enough of murder. He knew himself now to be all-powerful. He had uprooted a house, had set loose upon the air a flock of opening lives; he had barely escaped the supreme joy of destroying a human being.

In the world beyond his stall, there were many such human beings—all would be at his mercy, if he were only once more free. Who can master the churning instincts of a bull? He is the most timid of all animals; a scarf tied over his eyes can reduce him to a trembling so great that he cannot move; and yet he is so fierce and so powerful in his furies that nothing human can withstand him. The whole world is at once a bull's victim and his enemy. What he cannot destroy, he hates; what he *can* destroy, he obliterates. He is the unsolved riddle of the pacifist.

For two weeks after his short spurt of freedom, day and night Dark Blue nursed his bitter lust. It grew and grew with what it fed on until it became a consuming fire. "We *must* sell him now," Jim told his master anxiously, "or he'll die on us! They get like that sometimes—he's too angry to live. He's off his feed with it. You couldn't ever have called him a friendly animal, but now he's worse than unfriendly: he's against himself, if you know what I mean. He won't eat and I don't believe he sleeps. Maybe it was that lorry that got under his skin; you can't be sure with a bull. Or else it's his pride—carrying off that whole incubator shed on his horns—and now he can't even get out of his stall! I ain't ever seen a creature so boiling up inside himself as Dark Blue. It's as if he'd swallowed fire!"

One heavenly June morning, coal-tits were balancing upon the cow-parsley in the meadows; wild roses loosened their delicate, light scent upon the air; swallows darted through space, so swiftly that there seemed no weight at all upon their wings. They hardly interrupted the light through which they flew. Jim was giving the dairymaid a helping hand with the milk; the cook had left the kitchen for a flying visit

to the larder. Mr. Ballard was far away selling lambs; and Mrs. Ballard, with Jack's assistance, was rounding up eggs, thoughtlessly laid by egocentric hens in distant hedges. Prue was supposed to be having her mid-morning sleep. She was in her cot. She could, at a pinch, climb out of it; only no one had, as yet, seen her do it. She climbed out of it. There was no secretiveness in her movements, but there were no witnesses. She ran swiftly through the house and into the garden, with the ease of water passing through a sieve. Her wildest dreams were realized: someone had once more left unlocked the garage door. In a flash, Prue was through it. Dark Blue puffed a lot at her over his stone trough; and his great nostrils looked redder than ever. It was a help to Prue that she had been in and over the stone trough once before. Dark Blue glared hard, and made loud sniffing noises, but when she tumbled into the straw at his feet, he moved aside with a grunt. "Dark Blue", Prue crooned at him. "Deah Dark Blue. I'm going to set you free!" She pulled herself on to her feet and reached for the bolt. The bolt was stiff and heavy, requiring all Prue's force, but once it began to slide back, the excitement on both their parts (for Dark Blue breathed hard down the back of her neck to facilitate the operation) gave Prue a heightened power. Now, there was only the latch to lift, and then all the soft light of the June day streamed in from the yard. But Prue saw only one blinding flash of sunshine before a tornado struck her. Dark Blue, wholly unmindful of her friendly offices, tossed her to one side. Prue lay in a heap, blind and still, for a long while before Jim found her. Dark Blue had neither killed nor permanently injured the child, but he had left with Prue a feeling that lasted all her life—a feeling that she never wanted to open doors again.

Dark Blue found himself alone in the yard; a gate was open leading into a grassy lane. He set off down it at a steady, purposeful trot. He had light, he had air, he had freedom; and he cared about none of these things—nor for the hand that had set him free, nor for the heart that loved him. But he had not forgotten the lorry that had baffled him in the field, nor the human being he had not succeeded in destroying. The grass was soft under his hooves, the hedges full of enticing herbage; a little stream ran sparkingly beside him, ready to quench his thirst and to ease his hot, wild heart. But Dark Blue's purpose broke over these light incitements as a gathering wave breaks over a child's castles on the shore. The main road stretched suddenly before him—open, and, for the moment, empty. But there was something far away that flickered against his hot eyes, a tiny speck that grew larger. His rage gave him a clue to what it might be. He wanted to destroy a lorry—and this was, therefore, a lorry. He was free and could attack it. No men—no pole—no rope—were near to baffle his intent. Dark Blue pawed the soft earth and bellowed fiercely to give himself the final incentive craved by his coward nature. Then, lowering his horns, he charged, at

full gallop, down the road. The driver of the lorry neither saw nor heard him until, in a whirlwind of dust, Dark Blue was upon him.

The driver thought, he explained after several weeks of hospital, that hell had been let loose. Dark Blue had no thoughts—for one ecstatic instant the power of a God thrilled through his every nerve—to kill—to wreck—to make an end!

The end was made—but it was made upon himself. All his strength, roused to its fullest, was used in vain against the creativeness of man. He died as all killers die—lonely, and more helpless than the child who had set him free.

IV

A Pair

When Hans Kraus first heard of them, he thought they must be angels. His father and mother had been to see them one Sunday morning for a treat. In the conversation that followed Hans gathered that these creatures had all the features of angels. They were pure white; they went like the wind; they were noble-hearted and obeyed the will of a god.

It was true that Hans had not grasped before that angels had long white tails, but are not feathery tails akin to wings, and perhaps even better adapted for dealing with flies?

When his father took Hans himself to see the Spanish riding-school, the question was settled. Horses or angels stood for the same thing in Hans's mind for ever.

At four years old, Hans had made up his mind to become a rider in the Spanish riding-school; and he never changed it, though it was a difficult problem. Such an occupation goes by favour, by heredity, by living within the charmed circle of people whose destinies are one with horses.

His father Kraus could help Hans only a little. He sold corn to the stables, and not always very good corn, and then there was trouble. However, Hans's father was more honest than most people, because he had the intelligence to realize that if he sold bad corn, he would soon be found out by the look of the horses, and lose his job. So he only sold rather less good corn than what he was paid for, and he, and any venal grooms there were, pocketed the difference.

When a little boy knows what he wants to be, and lives all day long with only that one end in view, miracles can be accomplished.

In a world of so many conflicting elements, where everybody is flying off at a tangent, steadiness is more of a miracle than magic, and Hans was miraculously steady. He hung all day long about the stables. He ran errands for the grooms; he brought them beer without secreting a drop for himself. At first they told him: "No one is ever allowed to go into the riding-school, except on show days, and only those who are employed with the horses may enter the stables at all. This is no circus, my boy—it is serious!"

Hans answered: "But I will work for them and for you, for nothing! I am myself

serious!”

His heart fixed itself upon the reluctant grooms through his bright blue eyes, and as he was such a little boy, and so accommodating about beer, in the end the grooms sacrificed their rigidity and let Hans into the stables.

Once there, they found him very useful. He helped to clean stalls, filled and emptied buckets, and was so industrious, quick and mild, that nobody had any interest in getting rid of him.

Hans played truant from school so that he could work all day long in the stables, until one day his teacher had the sense to tell him:

“To become a Spanish rider you must know something more than can be learned in a stable. You must be an educated man, capable of passing school tests!”

Hans saw at once that it would be worth while to stop playing truant until he had learned what was necessary for riders; and after all, he had the rest of his life in which to study horses.

Hans learned how to slip into their stalls without disturbing them; how to hold his hand out fingerless and flat so that they could eat apples or sugar off it without nibbling his fingers; how to check crib-biters, and how to persuade nervous horses that they were not really vicious.

Hans found that the great thing was always to trust any horse that could be trusted, and to depend on himself for getting swiftly out of the way of those who couldn't. There were borderline horses, of course, who could only be trusted every now and then; but by being very observant, Hans learned which was now and which was then.

Very soon all the well-meaning horses in the stables understood Hans and his small hands were so firm and gentle that they preferred his handling to that of any of the grooms.

It was a long while before Hans was allowed to groom a horse by himself. Fortunately he had watched the grooms for so many hours, and when they were in good-natured moods had asked them such intelligent questions, that he knew all the processes of a horse's toilette before his chance came to put them into practice.

One day he found his favourite groom drunk, at a convenient moment, and only too thankful for Hans's assistance; so the groom went to sleep in a corner of the horse-box, and Hans groomed his first horse. It was a *Lippizaner* and everybody knows what a *Lippizaner* can be made to look like, when he is well groomed. It was a wonderful affair, and when Hans had finished grooming his horse, no bright angel was ever more fit to ornament his corner of Paradise, from henceforward Hans was allowed to groom any horse in the stable.

Hans soon acquired the knack of making each horse in turn understand that what Hans was doing would always be favourable to him.

When a vicious stallion rolled the pupils of his eyes into their sockets, flattened his ears back and bared his teeth, Hans would say: "*Bitte schön! Moment!*"—The instant of malice would pass, and the stallion decide *not* to obliterate this very small polite fellow-creature, who was really only doing his best to make him smart and comfortable; and finally would even allow himself to be washed and hissed over; brushed and curry-combed until he realized that he had become a glory, though he would still have tried to kill any full-grown groom that came near him.

Hans knew very well that you must be careful with a vicious horse. Such a horse has no time to spare in which to learn good manners. He tries to savage anything that moves near him; afflicted by panic, he will take no risks himself, and gives others very little chance to escape them. Hans treated such horses with infinite care, and the gentleness of a nursing mother.

He would remain out of their reach until they had begun to trust him; and find ways of ministering to their comfort until, little by little, the most savage beast, fenced in by his raw and irritable nerves, began to let down his defences.

All horses, Hans learned, have their own little weaknesses, like all human beings. Nobility is a doubtful commodity and should never, either in men or horses, be relied upon too much.

One horse is afraid of being spoken to suddenly; another does not like to have his head touched; a third feels an irresistible desire to kick out at anything near his heels, but out of his sight.

After all, what are his heels for? Hans asked himself. One must look at it from the horse's point of view. If he wishes to defend himself, he has no teeth near his tail, but heels he has got, and he knows how to use them.

Quiet horses loved having Hans in their loose-boxes; they snuffed him all over with their velvet muzzles, and rested their heavy heads on his shoulders.

Hans could do anything he liked with them, if he went the right way about it; and even if he didn't know the right way at first, the horses would take pains to point it out to him, without any great risk to his existence. Of course, Hans got stepped on sometimes by accident, and kicked occasionally on purpose, but you have to take the rough with the smooth in any profession.

It was his heart's desire to be with horses; and when once the heart's desire is gratified, one hardly notices which are kicks and which are ha'pence.

The school closed for the hottest of the summer months, and the horses, after their first three months on the Lounge, were taken back to Styria.

When Hans was thirteen years old, he was allowed to go with them.

The grooms camped out in tents, and lived with the horses all day long, riding them gently, and gradually training them to definite tasks of obedience.

Hans rode each horse in turn, so that he might feel sure of himself as well as of any particular horse. "If I ride only one," he explained to the grooms, "he will become too easy and I shall not know if I am a good rider, or only a bad rider riding a good horse."

Hans rode softly, as if he was on velvet, until to ride became more natural to him than to walk; and until a horse was more like his mother than the summer earth.

It was a wonderful two months, and at the end of it the Head of the School said to Hans: "I thought you would make a good stableman, and even that is rare—but you will make something rarer than that—you have the seat, the hands, and the heart of a rider. Now we shall have you trained for the School."

Hans felt the earth grow unsubstantial under his feet, as if he were treading on light.

He was too young to begin his training, but three years passed in a flash; and every year he rode more, and studied with intensity the separate stages of trick-riding.

The horses began their training at four years old, and their education lasted three years; *Lippizaners* were slower to train, but lived longer than other horses.

The first year their training was general and they were ridden on the snaffle; but the second year their education became more severe, and the work between the pillars took place. This was the moment when the horses chose for themselves what their future speciality was to be. Only those horses that showed a natural disposition towards certain figures were trained in them.

There was no circus-training, but a gradual, intensive development along the line of the horse's special talents. Whatever figure he showed a disposition for, became his by right; and although the obedience tests were common to all, no time was wasted in trying to force an unnatural talent upon an animal whose gifts lay in a different direction.

This had been the principle of the Spanish School since the sixteenth century, and the horses were still allowed to practise it, proving that any animal learns what he likes better than what he dislikes, and that force only becomes necessary when common sense breaks down.

The horses were still ridden on the snaffle during their second year, but with the beginning of the third year they had to accustom themselves to a double bridle.

When Hans was eighteen years old, he was given a special horse to train, a

Lippizaner, a fine young stallion whose name was Emerald.

Emerald showed, from his first three months, an amazing confidence in his teacher. He was a big horse, with muscles like steel springs. He was white from stem to stern, with solid hindquarters and legs as thin as matches. The pink of his skin showed through the satin smoothness of his coat; and as he moved he glistened. Hans kept Emerald's long flowing tail as carefully trimmed as if it had been the coiffure of a court lady.

At the end of the second year horse and man seemed to read each other's mind, so securely did they work together, each prompting and sustaining the other.

With the beginning of the third year Hans had to do a lot of explaining to Emerald about the double bridle, for the great horse, accustomed to his freedom and proud of his docility, could not bear the sense of physical and spiritual restraint. Hans lay awake at night trying to think of ways to make the sense of forced servitude easier for Emerald.

"How can we do the *Levade*," Hans would murmur into Emerald's ear, before he brought him out of his horse-box, "if your neck isn't held tight? Think—how you must balance yourself on your hindquarters, with your four legs held to the spot—and if your neck were loose—where wouldn't we be wobbling off to?—Just consider!" and in the end Hans believed that Emerald grasped that there was some support to be got out of the double bridle's fixed unpleasantness.

When it came to the *Capriole*, months and months were needed before Emerald mastered this incredible school jump.

In the *Capriole*, the leap on the spot has to be a metre high. Emerald must fold his forelegs under him, and kick out his hindlegs so that the spectator could see his shoes, the line from hindleg to foreleg should be level; and what a business this was Hans's mother could have explained, because she heard him cry out about it in his sleep night after night. Perhaps Emerald's sleep was disturbed by it too; but *he* could not explain his dreams; Emerald could only learn how to please Hans by understanding the pressure of his knees, listening to his voice, and sweating to keep his restless nerves from slipping beyond his own control.

The last test of a perfectly trained horse is the *Quadrille*, which has to be ridden with faultless accuracy.

When Emerald took his place in it, and never missed a turn or a circle, then Hans knew that the first stage of their work together was over. They had taken the right direction and the rest of it was the same as any other artist's job: to advance along the road to perfection.

When Emerald's third year was completed there was very little that he could not

do, with Hans's careful prompting, and he did it all with a passionate good will that almost burst Hans's heart with love and pride.

Sunday was the peak of their existence. Hans's father and mother never missed a performance.

They were allowed in, after all the paying people had taken their seats, and they would rather have missed their weekly *Schnitzel* and *Apfelstrüdel* than not have watched Hans and Emerald riding in their glory.

When Emerald first stepped delicately over the clean ribbed sand, he looked like any other fine horse that knows his manners.

He even moved a little nervously, though it was pride and not fear that inspired his restive carriage. He always kept well within the control of Hans's knees and hands, although sometimes, for the fun of the thing, he pretended to evade it.

When Emerald felt quite sure that nothing alarming or obstructive could interfere with their activities, he slid into the rhythm of the music, with unwavering steadiness.

The trumpets sounded, and one by one the riders approached the great box, which used to be the Emperor's, and saluted.

The *Pas de Deux* followed—an intricate and tricky business, dependent on exact timing.

Neither turn nor circle must be interrupted by an impatient movement, and at the end Emerald was so at one with the music that he seemed to float down the length of the school and through the pillars, pacing now this way and now that, through or round the two central pillars, with the exquisite precision of a ballet dancer.

The other horses took their part, each in turn setting to his corner, while the group spread out or drew together like a fan.

The *Quadrille* followed in which the four best horses took part. For this figure, the excellence of one horse and rider was not enough; it was a perilous and difficult affair, as hard to correlate as the movements of migrating birds.

The music changed, and became more staccato and imperative.

This was the moment for each horse to perform his chosen dance.

Emerald could take the *Levade*, but his speciality was the *Capriole*.

He left to the other horses *Mezair*, *Courbette* and *Croupade*.

The *Ballotade* Emerald shared with one other horse; or rather they competed, for they had not learned to share, and were in fact highly jealous of each other; so that the breadth of the riding-school was always put between them when it came to this performance.

When the *Quadrille* was over, Hans rode Emerald into an empty space.

Emerald, his neck arched, his tail spreading, his nostrils crimson and dilating, his

great eyes blazing with excitement, began to approach the *Capriole*.

Hans sat on the centre of his back straight as a sword from head to spine, and supple as the bend of a wave.

Once more they swept up towards the Royal box; then Emerald, his hindlegs arched, raised his forefeet to the height of a dog begging; and, motionless as a frozen leaf, he hung upon the air.

Hans sat light and firm, encouraging Emerald with the steady pressure of his knees, not letting his weight forward be a shade too much, and, above all, not letting Emerald slide too far back.

There was always great applause for the *Capriole*, for indeed it is a fine and moving sight when two fellow creatures master a difficult law, by working together in harmony, neither taking precedence nor advantage of the other.

Emerald always performed the *Capriole* at least once in each Sunday performance; but he could not always persuade himself to take it on the same spot. Sometimes he would be able to steady his nerves and muscles at the chosen moment before the Royal box; but at others he would need the long swinging dance down the side of the school, before the nerve rose up in him, and in a burst of conscientious urgency he felt able to give Hans the final token of his confidence.

Hans never pressed or hurried Emerald. He let the great horse blossom into his act of grace at the time and place which best suited him.

When one of the other riders said to Hans: "It seems to me you let your horse do what he likes!" Hans answered with pride: "Yes—but, you see, I have first taught him what to like!"

When all the other horses had swung out in dignified triumph to the stables, Emerald was still fresh enough for the greatest feature of the school.

He went out, too, with the other horses; but only to return, on the snaffle, with Hans on his feet beside him, and the long-rein lying close across his back, as his only guidance.

This was a nervous business for both of them. Emerald no longer had that sense of confident oneness with his rider; he was not half a horse and half a man any more: he was a horse alone.

Hans, too, was forced into a double responsibility; he must neither move one step too fast, nor fall one inch behind; and he must hold back his over-eager friend, without breaking into his memory of their successful figures.

They must move faultlessly together, through altering measures of sound; slip exactly through the pillars, and be ready for the final salute—hoofs in air, neck arched, with the spread tail a glory.

When the salute was over, Hans would whisper: "*Fertig!*" Emerald would turn, and side by side they would float down the school together, Hans darting one triumphant glance up towards his parents, who were nearly falling over the sides of the ring with pride and excitement.

Once in the stables, there was such a rubbing down, such splendid drinks and special mashes given to Emerald by Hans, with such praise and inarticulate love, as seldom falls to the lot of any but the best of horses from the best of masters.

But life cannot be lived for long on the peak.

The first break in Hans's unfettered joy was the death of his parents: his mother first, and his father a few months later.

No one would sit in the school again and thrill so violently, when Emerald and Hans rode in—nor would anyone sink back with such depths of gratified exultation, when they rode out.

For a time Hans was low-spirited and Emerald felt that something disastrous had occurred, which no amount of carefully executed *Caprioles* could quite put right.

At last Hans's sadness lifted, and a fresh excitement, unlike the old, sober satisfaction of shared living, took its place.

A girl called Lisa Lotte came Sunday after Sunday to the riding school.

She was a very pretty girl and felt that the best horse and the best rider were nothing but her due.

She took some trouble, through her eyes and the aimed emphasis of her person, to reach Hans's attention; and in this she succeeded perfectly.

Hans thought that he had his audience back again. But this was where he made his mistake. Lisa Lotte was a performer, and not an audience.

She came to the Spanish School regularly for a year, until Hans married her, and then she very quickly stopped coming. She had got what she had gone for, a person who appreciated her charms and would earn her living for her. When you have bought a goose at the market you do not go back again—not, at any rate, for the same goose.

Hans was disappointed when Lisa Lotte ceased to come on Sundays, for he had wanted to share Emerald with his wife; it was easier to talk about a thing you shared.

But Lisa Lotte soon broke him of talking about Emerald. She told him that she never wished to hear about that tiresome horse again.

In spite of this painful shock, Hans loved Lisa Lotte very much. For a month or two after his marriage, he walked as if on light, as he had done when first he knew that he could be a Spanish rider.

All the world blossomed afresh for him, and if he could not share Emerald with

Lisa Lotte, he found no difficulty in sharing Lisa Lotte with Emerald.

Emerald responded to Hans's happiness as if it were his own. It was almost a pity there was no one who loved them, to watch them in the school on Sundays; but the Head of the School watched them, and all Vienna was proud of Hans and Emerald.

Still all this pride and satisfaction did not bring in any more money, and that was what Lisa Lotte wanted.

There had to be sets of pink glass, like those her married sister possessed; and then her friend Elizabeth had silver dishes on the sideboard; and above all, Lisa Lotte herself must have more and finer clothes. A new hat can't cost much! Then silver sandals and a dress for dancing; and why not dancing? If Hans was too tired to dance in the evening, after all that stupid horse-riding, Lisa Lotte would find someone who was not tired.

It was very bewildering for Hans, because he had always supposed that marriage meant a very clean house, good food, and great kindness—with, by and by, children to share it. But none of these things were included in his marriage. There was no kindness, no sign of a child, badly cooked food, and things swept up into corners.

Finally, at the end of two years there was even less, for Lisa Lotte ran away with an acrobat.

One might have thought this would be a relief to Hans, but unfortunately Hans was not acrobatic. Once fixed, his heart had a way of remaining fixed; and Hans had fixed it upon Lisa Lotte.

Any other horse but Emerald would not have put up with what followed for a moment; for Hans became listless, and even careless. He could not concentrate upon the intricate ardour of his profession. He left more than half of the work to Emerald, and gave him no gratitude for doing it.

Emerald knew well enough that Hans was suffering, and that he must stretch his nerves to take the place of his master's.

One day Hans let him down badly in the *Capriole*; the lovely turn was spoilt by his bad riding, and the audience hissed.

This was a shock to his pride, and it might have helped Hans if he had been in any need of discouragement, but he was already discouraged enough.

"This is the end," Hans said to himself, as he rode out of the school with drooping head. "No wonder Lisa Lotte left me! I must have failed her somehow, and now I have failed Emerald; it remains only to fail myself. This I shall do to-night!" and Hans decided to hang himself in the stables. He would have preferred to shoot

himself, but that might startle the horses. To hang oneself is quite an easy thing to do in a stable, because there are plenty of strong leather straps about and good places to drop from.

That night Hans did not go home, he did not want to see again those ugly, shiftless rooms which had held so short and beautiful a dream. He hid in the stables till all the grooms had gone home, and all the lights but one had been put out.

There was nothing left but the pungent smell of horses, and the quiet. The horses slipped or stirred a little; a hoof pawing in the straw clinked against the bricks beneath or a horse shook its ears and resettled itself; but these were all peaceful sounds that hardly broke the silence.

Hans thought, "I will just look in at Emerald, before I do it!"

Emerald was in a large corner loose-box; he had no bad habits, so he was without restrictions and there was nothing that a horse could have which was not at his disposal.

When the gate of his box slipped back, he turned his head, and looked at his master.

He had forgotten the *Capriole*, perhaps he had never blamed Hans for their failure. When there is guilt, animals feel it, as some sensitive human beings feel thunder; it is a discomfort rather than a fault.

He was glad to see Hans in the middle of the night, and when Hans saw his gladness, the bitter stiffness of his anger unlocked itself within him. He cried with his head pressed against Emerald's glossy neck; and when he had stopped crying he no longer felt that life was a cheat.

It was true Lisa Lotte had cheated Hans; she had taken herself away, and with her all his dreams, but perhaps that was not altogether a disaster. For to live with a cheat is not only to lose one's dreams, but to cripple one's own sense of reality. Reality was now uncrippled for Hans; all that he had had before Lisa Lotte stirred his heart, was his again.

The bond between him and Emerald was unbreakable. He had been faithful to Emerald for ten years, and faithless only for a moment; but if he had killed himself he would have been as faithless as Lisa Lotte herself, and perhaps more cowardly, for Lisa Lotte hadn't given up living, she had merely decided to live with someone else.

"This will never do," Hans said out loud, half to himself and half to Emerald. "What I was thinking of was a *Dummheit*. I can't keep house alone, but why should I? There is my widowed sister at Linz. I will send her a post card—life can arrange itself differently!"

So he pulled a heap of straw into a corner of Emerald's loose-box, and slept

there till morning, better than he had slept since Lisa Lotte left him.

His widowed sister consented very easily to give up a little shop in Linz, that had never paid very well, and to make her brother a home in Vienna instead.

Once more Hans had a clean room, well-cooked food, and kindness; and sometimes—but not very often, because his sister enjoyed cooking more than watching horses dance—his sister would come to the school on a Sunday morning.

Hans thought sometimes: “It is funny, all my happiness and all my grief were quickly over! What I have now is neither happiness nor grief, but it is enough.”

The years slipped by like snowflakes, without noise or hurry or seeming to take up very much room in the air, until one day the new Head of the School said to him: “Hans, your hair is grey! You are sixteen years older than Emerald. *Lippizaners* retain their vigour and live longer than any other horses, but Emerald must have a younger rider. I do not say you ride less well than you did, in fact there is still no rider in the school to touch you; but the public likes to see a young man on a horse’s back. Do not be afraid, you can have all the work you want in the stables, and be well paid for it, but you must stop riding.”

If he had said to Hans: “Pray eat all you want for dinner, but stop breathing,” Hans would have felt much the same. He made no complaint. He said in fact nothing, but chewed a straw which he had just picked up and stuck in the corner of his mouth, to keep him in countenance.

He felt no different, neither younger nor older—fatter nor thinner—than he had always felt.

This particular blow was not like the loss of Lisa Lotte; nor did suicide again occur to him. Once you had lived through that sharp tearing of a breaking heart, you weren’t going to make any more fuss when something else went through the same gap.

Hans went back and tried to eat his dinner, but he could not. He did not tell his sister what had happened. For a week or two he never went near the stables. He had never been sick before, so they allowed Hans a month’s sick leave; and then Hans went back to work again, but he did not go to see Emerald. He knew the other grooms would look well after him, and they respected Hans’s silence and his grief. None of them spoke to him of Emerald and his new rider.

Nothing in life seemed sensible to Hans any more, but he went on living, and he did his work well, because he thought: “I was happy once, and for all those years I did what I had always wanted to do, shall I not then do something that I don’t want for the rest of the time, without being happy? Many men are not as lucky as I am even now, for I have work, and it has still to do with horses!”

It was almost a shock when only three months after Hans had given up riding, the Head of the School once more approached him and said: "Hans, it's an odd thing! That horse of yours won't work without you! I've tried him in turn with all the riders. It's not that he can't. He won't! He's waiting to get you back. Anyhow, I have the feeling that that is in his head. There isn't a horse we've got that can touch him. None of them do the *Levade* as he does, and he's the only horse who can do a *Capriole* at all, or the single, long-rein running. Take him into the school this morning, and we'll see what happens."

Hans trembled all over as one trembles after an accident when one finds out that one is not dead.

He went into Emerald's loose-box and when Emerald felt the touch of his master's hand, he whinnied high and shrill; his ears pricked, and he too shivered and trembled.

Then they rode into the Lounge together. The school was empty except for the Head and a curious groom or two; but it was as if every seat was filled, and in their ears the trumpets sounded.

Emerald stepped delicately up the ring. He danced, without the music, but with faultless precision, the *Pas de Deux*. He took the *Levade* next, then he floated through the pillars and set to corners for the *Quadrille*. In the centre of the Lounge he took the *Ballotade*. Then Emerald faced the Royal box. They were both trembling still, but the trembling was ecstasy, it did not interfere with what they had to do.

Emerald took his leap for the *Capriole*, folding his forelegs neatly under him, kicking out his hindlegs in an unbroken line. Hans sat motionless but supple with once more the unconquered wildness of youth in his heart.

"Well," said the Head of the School, as they came through the doors, "I suppose the public will have to put up with that grey hair of yours, Hans, after all; for I see it was a mistake to try to break up a pair."

V

Henry

For four hours every morning, and for twenty minutes before a large audience at night, Fletcher was locked up with murder.

It glared at him from twelve pairs of amber eyes; it clawed the air close to him, it spat naked hate at him, and watched with uninterrupted intensity, to catch him for one moment off his guard.

Fletcher had only his will and his eyes to keep death at bay.

Of course, outside the cage, into which Fletcher shut himself nightly with his twelve tigers, were the keepers, standing at intervals around it with concealed pistols; but they were outside it. The idea was that if anything happened to Fletcher they would be able by prompt action to get him out alive; but they had his private instructions to do nothing of the kind, to shoot straight at his heart, and pick off the guilty tiger afterwards to cover their intentions. Fletcher knew better than to try to preserve anything the tigers left of him, if once they had started to attack.

The lion-tamer in the next cage was better off than Fletcher; he was intoxicated by a rowdy vanity which dimmed fear. He stripped himself half naked every night, covered himself with ribbons, and thought so much of himself that he hardly noticed his lions. Besides, his lions had all been born in captivity, were slightly doped; and were only lions.

Fletcher's tigers weren't doped because dope dulled their fear of the whip and didn't dull their ferocity; captivity softened nothing in them, and they hated man.

Fletcher had taught tigers since he was a child; his father had started him on baby tigers, who were charming. They hurt you as much as they could with an absent-minded roguishness difficult to resist; what was death to you was play to them; but as they couldn't kill him, all the baby tigers did was to harden Fletcher and teach him to move about quickly. Speed is the tiger's long suit, and Fletcher learned to beat them at it. He knew by a long-trained instinct when a tiger was going to move, and moved quicker so as to be somewhere else. He learned that tigers must be treated like an audience, though for different reasons; you must not turn your back upon them, because tigers associate backs with springs.

Fletcher's swift eyes moved with the flickering sureness of lightning—even

quicker than lightning, for while lightning has the leisure to strike, Fletcher had to avoid being struck by something as quick as a flash and much more terrible.

After a few months the baby tigers could only be taught by fear, fear of a whiplash, fear of a pocket pistol which stung them with blank cartridges; and above all the mysterious fear of the human eye. Fletcher's father used to make him sit opposite him for hours practising eyes. When he was only ten years old, Fletcher had learned never to show a tiger that he was afraid of him. "If you ain't afraid of a tiger, you're a fool," his father told him; "but if you show a tiger you're afraid of him, you won't even be a fool long!"

The first thing Fletcher taught his tigers, one by one in their cages, was to catch his eye, then he stared them down. He had to show them that his power of mesmerism was stronger than theirs; if once they believed this, they might believe that his power to strike was also stronger. Once Fletcher had accustomed tigers to be out-faced, he could stay in their cages for hours in comparative safety.

The next stage was to get them used to noise and light. Tigers dislike noise and light, and they wanted to take it out of Fletcher when he exposed them to it.

When it came to the actual trick teaching, Fletcher relied on his voice and a long stinging whip. The lion-tamer roared at his lions; Fletcher's voice was not loud; but it was as noticeable as a warning bell, it checked his tigers like the crack of a pistol.

For four hours every morning, Fletcher, who was as kind as he was intrepid, frightened his tigers into doing tricks. He rewarded them as well; after they had been frightened enough to sit on tubs, he threw them bits of raw meat. He wanted them to associate tubs with pieces of raw meat, and not sitting on tubs with whips; attempting to attack him, which they did during all transition stages, he wanted them to associate with flashes from his pocket pistol, followed by the impact of very unpleasant sensations. Their dislike of the pistol was an important point; they had to learn to dislike it so much that they would, for the sake of their dislike, sacrifice their fond desire to obliterate Fletcher.

Fletcher took them out one by one at first and then rehearsed them gradually together. It was during the single lessons that he discovered Henry.

Henry had been bought, rather older than the other tigers, from a drunken sailor. The drunken sailor had tearfully persisted that Henry was not as other tigers, and that selling him at all was like being asked to part with a talented and only child.

"E 'as a 'eart!" Henry's first proprietor repeated over and over again.

Fletcher, however, suspected this fanciful statement of being a mere ruse to raise Henry's price, and watchfully disregarded its implications.

For some time afterwards, Henry bore out Fletcher's suspicions. He snarled at

all the keepers, showed his teeth and clawed the air close to Fletcher's head exactly like the eleven other tigers, only with more vim. He was a very fine young tiger, exceptionally powerful and large; the polished corners of the Temple did not shine more brilliantly than the lustrous striped skin on Henry's back, and when his painted impassive face, heavy and expressionless as a Hindoo idol's, broke up into activity, the very devils believed and trembled. Fletcher believed, but he didn't tremble—he only sat longer and longer, closer and closer to Henry's cage, watching.

The first day he went inside, there seemed no good reason, either to Henry or to himself, why he should live to get out. The second day something curious happened. While he was attempting to outstare Henry, and Henry was stalking him to get between him and the stage door, a flash of something like recognition came into Henry's eyes, a kind of "Hail fellow well met!" He stopped stalking and sat down. Fletcher held him firmly with his eyes; the great painted head sank down and the amber eyes blurred and closed under Fletcher's penetrating gaze. A loud noise filled the cage, contented, pleasant noise. Henry was purring! Fletcher's voice changed from the sharp, brief order like the crack of a whip into a persuasive, companionable drawl. Henry's eyes re-opened; he rose, stood rigid for a moment, and then slowly the rigidity melted out of his powerful form. Once more that answering look came into the tiger's eyes. He stared straight at Fletcher without blinking and jumped on his tub. He sat on it impassively, his tail waving, his great jaws closed. He eyed Fletcher attentively and without hate. Then Fletcher knew that this tiger was not as other tigers; not as any other tiger.

He threw down his whip, Henry never moved; he approached Henry, Henry lifted his lip to snarl, thought better of it, and permitted the approach. Fletcher took his life in his hand and touched Henry. Henry snarled mildly, but his great claws remained closed; his eyes expressed nothing but a gentle warning, they simply said: "You know I don't like being touched, be careful, I might have to claw you!" Fletcher gave a brief nod; he knew the margin of safety was slight, but he had a margin. He could do something with Henry.

Hour after hour every day he taught Henry, but he taught him without a pistol or a whip. It was unnecessary to use anything beyond his voice and his eyes. Henry read his eyes eagerly. When he failed to catch Fletcher's meaning, Fletcher's voice helped him out. Henry did not always understand even Fletcher's voice, but where he differed from the other tigers was that he wished to understand; nor had he after the first recognition the slightest inclination to kill Fletcher.

He used to sit for hours at the back of his cage waiting for Fletcher. When he heard far off—unbelievably far off—the sound of Fletcher's step, he moved forward

to the front of his cage and prowled restlessly to and fro till Fletcher unlocked the door and entered. Then Henry would crouch back a little, politely, from no desire to avoid his friend, but as a tribute to the superior power he felt in Fletcher. Directly Fletcher spoke, he came forward proudly and exchanged their wordless eye language.

Henry liked doing his tricks alone with Fletcher. He jumped on and off his tub following the mere wave of Fletcher's hand. He soon went further, jumped on a high stool and leapt through a large white paper disc held up by Fletcher. Although the disc looked as if he couldn't possibly get through it, yet the clean white sheet always yielded to his impact; he did get through it, blinking a little, but feeling a curious pride that he had faced the odious thing; and pleased Fletcher.

He let Fletcher sit on his back, though the mere touch of an alien creature was repulsive to him. But he stood perfectly still, his hair rising a little, his teeth bared, a growl half suffocated in his throat. He told himself it was Fletcher. He must control his impulse to fling him off and tear him up.

In all the rehearsals and performances in the huge arena, full of strange noises, blocked with alien human beings, Henry led the other tigers; and although Fletcher's influence over him was weakened, he still recognized it. Fletcher seemed farther away from him at these times, less sympathetic and godlike, but Henry tried hard to follow the intense persuasive eyes and the brief emphatic voice; he would not lose touch even with this attenuated ghost of Fletcher.

It was with Henry and Henry alone that Fletcher dared his nightly stunt, dropped the whip and stick at his feet and let Henry do his tricks as he did them in his cage alone, with nothing beyond Fletcher's eyes and voice to control him. The other eleven tigers, beaten glaring and snarling on to their tubs, sat impassively despising Henry's unnatural docility. He had the chance they had always wanted, and he didn't take it—what kind of tiger was he?

But Henry ignored the other tigers. Reluctantly, standing with all four feet together on his tub, he contemplated a further triumph. Fletcher stood before him, holding a stick between his hands and above his head; intimately, compellingly, through the language of his eyes Fletcher told Henry to jump from his tub over his head. What Fletcher said was: "Come on, old thing! Jump! Come on! I'll duck in time. You won't hurt me! It's my stunt! Stretch your old paws together and jump!" And Henry jumped. He hated the dazzling lights, loathed the hard, unexpected, senseless sounds which followed his leap, and he was secretly terrified that he would land on Fletcher. But it was very satisfactory when after his rush through the air he found he hadn't touched Fletcher, but had landed on another tub carefully prepared

for him; and Fletcher said to him as plainly as possible before he did the drawer trick with the other tigers: "Well! You are a one-er and no mistake!"

The drawer trick was the worst of Fletcher's stunts. He had to put a table in the middle of the cage, and whip each tiger up to it. When he had them placed each on his tub around the table, he had to feed them with a piece of raw meat deftly thrown at the exact angle to reach the special tiger for which it was intended, and to avoid contact with eleven other tigers ripe to dispute this intention. Fletcher couldn't afford the slightest mistake or a fraction of delay. Each tiger had to have in turn his piece of raw meat, the drawer shut after it—and opened—the next morsel thrown exactly into the grasp of the next tiger, and so on, until the twelve were fed.

Fletcher always placed Henry at his back. Henry snatched in turn his piece of raw meat, but he made no attempt, as the other tigers always did, to take anyone else's; and Fletcher felt the safer for knowing that Henry was at his back. He counted on Henry's power to protect him more than he counted on the four keepers standing outside the cage with their pistols. More than once, when one of the other tigers turned restive, Fletcher had found Henry, rigid, but very light on his toes, close to his side, between him and danger.

The circus manager spoke to Fletcher warningly about his foolish infatuation for Henry.

"Mark my words, Fletcher," he said, "the tiger doesn't live that wouldn't do you in if it could. You give Henry too many chances—one day he'll take one of them!"

But Fletcher only laughed. He knew Henry; he had seen the soul of the great tiger leap to his eyes and shine there in answer to his own eyes. A man does not kill his god; at least not willingly. It is said that two thousand years ago he did some such thing, through ignorance; but Fletcher forgot this incident. Besides, on the whole he believed more in Henry than he did in his fellow men. This was not surprising, because Fletcher had very little time for human fellowship. When he was not teaching tigers not to kill him, he rested from the exhaustion of the nerves which comes from a prolonged companionship with eager, potential murderers. The rest of the time Fletcher boasted of Henry to the lion-tamer; and taught Henry new tricks.

Macormack, the lion-tamer, had a very good stunt lion, and he was extravagantly jealous of Henry. He could not make his lion go out backwards before him from the arena cage into the passage as Henry had learned to do before Fletcher; and when he had tried, Ajax had, not seriously but with an intention rather more than playful, flung him against the bars of the cage.

Macormack brooded deeply on this slight from his pet, and determined to take it out of Fletcher's.

“Pooh!” he said. “You call yourself damned plucky for laying your ole ’oof on ’Enry’s scruff, and ’e don’t ’alf look wicked while you’re goin’ it. Why don’t yer put yer ’ead in ’is mouf and be done with it? That ud be talking, that would!”

“I wouldn’t mind doing it,” said Fletcher reflectively, after a brief pause, “once I get him used to the idea. ’Is jaw ain’t so big as a lion’s, still I could get the top of me ’ead in.”

The lion-tamer swaggered off jeering, and Fletcher thought out how best to lay this new trick before Henry for his approval.

But from the first Henry didn’t approve of it. He showed quite plainly that he didn’t want his head touched. He didn’t like his mouth held forcibly open, and wouldn’t have anything put between his teeth without crunching. Fletcher wasted several loaves of bread over the effort—and only succeeded once or twice gingerly and very ungracefully in getting portions of his own head in and out in safety. Henry roared long and loudly at him, clawed the air, and flashed all the language he could from his flaming eyes into Fletcher’s, to explain that this thing wasn’t done between tigers! It was hitting below the belt! An infringement of an instinct too deep for him to master; and Fletcher knew that he was outraging Henry’s instinct, and decided to refrain.

“It ain’t fair to my tiger!” he said to himself regretfully; and he soothed Henry with raw meat and endearments, promising to refrain from his unnatural venture.

But when the hour for the performance came, Fletcher forgot his promise. He was enraged at Macormack’s stunt lion for getting more than his share of the applause. He had the middle cage, and what with the way Macormack swaggered half naked in his scarlet ribbons, and the lion roared—that pulverizing, deep-toned, desert roar—and yet did all his tricks one after the other like a little gentleman, it did seem as if Henry barely got a round of his due applause.

Henry jumped through his white disc—so did the stunt lion. He took his leap over Fletcher’s head—the stunt lion did something flashy with a drum, not half as dangerous, and the blind and ignorant populace ignored Henry and preferred the drum.

“I don’t care!” said Fletcher to himself. “Henry’s got to take my head in his mouth whether he likes it or not—that’ll startle ’em!”

He got rid of all the other tigers. Henry was used to that, he liked it; now he would do his own final stunt—walk out backwards into the passage which led to the cages, and Fletcher would hurry out through the arena and back to Henry’s cage, give him a light extra supper, and tell him what a fine tiger he was.

But Fletcher called him into the middle of the stage instead and made him take

that terrible attitude he had taught him for the new trick. His eyes said: “You’ll do this once for me, old man, won’t you?”

Henry’s eyes said: “Don’t ask it! I’m tired! I’m hungry! I want to get out!”

But Fletcher wouldn’t read Henry’s eyes any more. He tried to force his head sideways into the terrible open jaws, and Henry’s teeth, instinctive, reluctant, compelled, closed on Fletcher’s neck.

What Henry minded after the momentary relief of his instinctive action was the awful stillness of Fletcher. It wasn’t the stillness of the arena—that was nothing, a mere deep indrawn breath. Fletcher lay limp between his paws, as if the trick were over, as if all tricks were over. He wouldn’t get up, he didn’t look at Henry. Henry’s eyes gazed down unblinkingly into the blank eyes of Fletcher. All Henry’s soul was in his eyes watching for Fletcher’s soul to rise to meet them. And for an age nothing happened, until at last Henry realized that nothing ever would.

Before the nearest keeper shot Henry, Henry knew that he had killed his god. He lifted up his heavy painted head and roared out through the still arena, a loud despairing cry.

His heart was pierced before the bullet reached it.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

A cover was created for this eBook.

[The end of *Man and Beast* by Phyllis Bottome]