CHAPTER II.

A TRAMP DOG AND CRUEL BOY.

"No radiant pearl which crested Fortune wears,  
Shines with such lustre as the tear that flows  
Down Virtue’s manly cheek for other’s woes."

"Go on with your dog story," said Tom.  
"All right, I will," replied Ed, "I switched off on to the  
cats and got wound up, so had to run down before I could get  
back to the dogs. I believe I left the track at the two little  
dogs. Well, the third dog was a large, handsome Newfoundland  
that came to the Fosters’ late one cold afternoon in early  
spring. Nellie spied him, and called to him from the porch:  
‘Come, poor doggie, come.’ He came with drooping head, but  
with a pleased, though slow, wag of his tail, as if it too, was  
too tired out to move, and his tongue hanging out of his mouth,  
as if it was a hot day in summer. He crossed the porch into  
the dining-room and dropped onto the floor as if he was dead.  
Mrs. Foster told Nellie to get the wash basin full of cold water  
and wet his mouth and head, and give him a drink; then to run  
to the barn, where the men were putting up the cows, and tell  
her papa to come to the house. As soon as Nellie wet his  
mouth and head, he opened his eyes, giving her a grateful  
look, than raised his head and took a big drink of water, but  
did not try to get up. Nellie came running to the barn and  
said, ‘O, papa, come to the house quick! another tramp dog has  
come, and he fell right down on the dining-room floor and can’t  
get up, I’m afraid he will die.’"
“Mr. Foster said, ‘All right, I’ll come right away, but you
ought not to have let a strange dog, especially a sick one, come
into the house, for he might bite some of you, and you know
that mamma can’t get out of their way.’

‘But, papa,’ said Nellie, ‘I know he won’t hurt anyone
because he looked so kind and glad out of his eyes after I wet
his head and gave him some water, that I know he wouldn’t
think of biting anyone; and you know that we always give
every poor tramp dog and cat something to eat and drink, just
the same as we do tramp people.’

“And that’s a fact too, boys,” said Ed, “and I really
believe that every specie of tramp had this farm marked, for
hardly a day passed but some sort of a tramp came for some-
thing to eat or to wear, or to stay all night. And they were
never refused, unless they had been drinking, when they were
told that if they had money to buy whiskey they had money
to buy something to eat, but if they preferred whiskey instead
they could go without something to eat. Mrs. Foster said it
was better to feed three undeserving persons than it was to
turn one deserving one away, and that Christ says ‘Inasmuch
as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye
have done it unto me,’ and that nobody was ever the poorer
for what they gave them. I guess it’s a pretty good rule to go
by anyway, and if I was a tramp I should know it was.

“Well, in a little while Mr. Foster came back to the barn
and told us about the dog. He said he thought he belonged to
one of the emigrants that passed here soon after dinner, and,
probably, was too tired out to keep up with the teams, and
must have come a long distance, as he was completely
exhausted, nearly starved to death and footsore. That his feet
were swollen up like puff-balls and he was burning all over
with fever. Mr. Foster said, ‘I bathed the poor fellow’s feet
with hot water and gave him some aconite, Mrs. Foster had
already had prepared, for she said he appeared to have a fever,
and the bottom of his feet looked swollen and inflamed. With
good care he will be all right in a few days. He appears to be a fine dog. I left Nellie feeding him and he ate as if he was famished. I don’t see why his owner did not let him ride part of the time. I tell you what it is boys; there is nothing truer than the old proverb, ‘A merciful man regardeth the life of his beasts;’ he will not only minister to their needs, but is quick to see when they need help.’

‘Harry went to the house to see the tramp and when he came back said, ‘He is sure enough a fine dog and if nobody claims him he will be lots of help to me in finding the cows, every night, in the pasture.’

‘That all depends,’ said his father, ‘whether he worries the cows or not.’

‘Oh,’ said Harry, ‘I will soon teach him not to do that.’

‘When we went to supper the dog was still laying on the dining-room floor, and when each of us looked at him and gave him a kind word he looked at us with grateful eyes and wagged his tail as if he was glad to be noticed. With a few days of good care he was as good as new, and appeared to be very grateful for the kind treatment he had received. He was perfectly happy and contented in his new home and nobody came to claim him, so the Fosters decided to keep him, which made it necessary to give him a name. The whole family, including the hired girl and the hired men took part in the naming. He was called all sorts of names in the hopes that one of them might be his old name. He paid no attention to any of them, till Mrs. Foster said such a stately looking dog ought to have a high sounding name, and called him Colonel, when he pricked up his ears and wagged his tail, and seemed as pleased with the name, as if it was really his own; and wouldn’t answer to any other, so he was called Colonel.

‘He proved to be a very useful dog in many ways and was much attached to every one of the family. Harry soon learned him to be lots of help in bringing the cows up from the pasture. He was a fine watch dog and would not allow a dog to come
into the calf pasture, by the side of the road, and chase the calves as they frequently had done. He seemed to think it was his special duty to keep a close guard over Nellie and her pet lamb, and the two little dogs, Rex and Dido. Wherever Nellie went, on the farm or in the woods, on the other side of the road, the lamb was with her, followed by Rex and Dido with Colonel bringing up the rear, as if to guard them, and so well did he do it that it came near costing him his life.

"One morning we were at work, in the meadow, putting up hay; when Nellie came running to us, with the lamb and the little dogs following her, and said, 'O, papa, do come as quick as you can! or Colonel will bleed to death; I shut him up
in the wood shed so he couldn’t follow me. Mr. Miller cut his foot pretty near off with an axe. The dogs, the lamb and I were going to the woods to get some flowers, and just as we reached the other side of the road Mr. Miller came along with an axe in his hand; when Dido ran across the path, in front of him, and he gave her an awful kick in her side that made her cry and fall down, when, quick as a flash, Colonel gave one of his savage growls and jumped at Mr. Miller, when he cut him with the axe.’

‘Mr. Miller is the father of the boy whose dog killed Nellie’s kittens, and who, when they have more kittens in the place than they want, lets the boy and his dog kill them. It is a case of like father, like son,’ and I guess the boy came honestly by his cruel disposition. Mr. Foster was gone quite awhile, and when he came back was as ‘mad as a march hare’ and said ‘I have just come from telling neighbor Miller what I thought of such a cruel, cowardly and contemptible act, and that the kicking of that little Dido was even worse than the cutting of Colonel. He made all sorts of apologies and said he was sorry that he did it, and knew that it was a mean thing to do, but he was in a hurry and out of humor and Dido stood across the path, and before he thought he gave her a hard kick, and said he ought to have known that Colonel wouldn’t bite him unless he had hold of Dido.’

‘He came near cutting Colonel’s leg off just below the knee. It was a long diagonal cut. I had to take several stitches and put splints on to hold it to place, and it may, by good care, knit together so he can use it again, but I am afraid it won’t. The poor fellow lost so much blood that he couldn’t stand up. I got madder every minute I was working with him, till I just had to tell Miller what I thought about it to ease my mind.’

‘When we went to dinner we all went into the woodshed to see Colonel. The poor fellow would look up at us so pitiful, then at his cut leg and wag his tail at our words of sympathy.
This cut was dressed as regular and he was cared for as if he was a human instead of a dog. His leg got all right, but it was several weeks before he could walk on it. It learned us all a lasting lesson though; that is, to never vent our ill temper on a dumb animal."

The next morning, after I had been fed and the men were cleaning up the barn, a dirty-looking boy came in and said, "Hello, Ed, where’s that new heifer calf that my sister says is so awful nice?"

"There it is, in that pen," replied Ed, "but don’t disturb it, for it is laying down."

The boy looked at me, then said to Ed, "It don’t look no different than any other calf, an’ I don’t think it will make no better cow than our old Mag, that mam said made pretty near a hundred pounds of butter last year."

Ed said, "That shows how much you know about cows. Why that calf’s mother made over three hundred pounds of butter, in six months, when she was only two years old."

The boy then said to the other man: "Why Jim, what in the dickens are you sweeping the floor for? I never hern tell of such a thing as sweeping a stable floor—by jimminy if you ain’t sprinkling flour on the floor? What yer doing that fur?"

"That’s not flour, youngsters," Jim replied, "It’s land plaster. We have to sweep the floor and sprinkle it with this every morning so the barn will be clean and sweet, so the milk won’t absorb any bad odors."

"What’s that, odors?" said the boy, "What kind of stuff is it and where does it come from?"

"Oh, you little numbskull!" replied Jim, "you wouldn’t know if I told you. It means so the milk won’t smell and taste like a dirty cow stable."

The boy then went to one of the windows and caught a couple of flies, for although there were screens over the windows to keep out the flies and mosquitos, there were a good many flies in the barn; then he went to the table, used to set
the cans on in which the men carried the milk to the milk-
house, which had not yet been washed off, and was playing
with them, when Ed came up to him and said, "Why, Billy
Riggs! what in the old harry are you doing?"

"Oh! replied Billy, "I just caught these flies an' pulled off
their wings an' part of their legs, an' am having lots of fun

with 'em. See what a funny crooked trail they make crawling
through this milk on the table."

Ed said to him, "You cruel, wicked, little rascal! If you keep
on at the gait you're going you will soon fetch up in the State
prison. Don't you know that it is wicked and cruel to torture
anything like you have the flies? Didn't anyone ever tell you
such things was cruel, don't your teacher tell you so?"
"Dad an' mam lets me do it," replied Billy, "an' I hain't got no teacher, cause I don't go to school, cause I haint got no books. It takes all dad's money to buy whiskey an' tobaccer for him an' brother Jack, so he can't buy me no books. My sister she works out some fur the neighbors an' gits money to buy her books an' some clothes so she can go to school. An' I'll soon be old 'nuf to work an' git money to buy me some books too, so I can go to school."

"That's too bad," said Ed, "I'm sorry for you, but I don't want you hanging around here, for fear you will be hurting Yeksa's calf or something else. Mrs. Foster wouldn't have you here a minute, for she is always telling us we must always be kind to every harmless living creature the Creator has made."

"Well," said Billy, "if mam was like her an' taught me such things I'd be kind too. Was you kind to flies an' everything when you was a little boy like me?"

"That boy is a tough case," said Ed to the other men, "The fact is," said he, "we need missionairies at home, instead of sending them to heathen lands, to teach just such neglected chaps as he is to be kind. Say boys, here is a paper I picked up, last night, that Mrs. Foster takes. It is called Our Dumb Animals, is published in Boston. Sit down and let me read you a little of it, it won't take long, and you listen too, Billy, then we must get to work and finish filling the silo."

The men sat down and Ed read this short paragraph: "I believe,' said Catherine Smithies, a noble Christian woman, of England, 'that teaching children to be kind to the lower animals is preparing the way for the gospel of Christ. All criminals of the future years are children now; they should be educated in kindness; and, if you would add to the usefulness and happiness of children through life, teach them to say kind works and do kind acts to animals."

"Every word of that is true," said Tom, "and you have sure missed your calling Ed. You ought to be a preacher in
some town and teach the law of kindness to neglected children, instead of milking cows and learning calves to drink."

"Ed said, "I guess that's so, but here comes Reed. I sent by him for the mail. Oh! here is a letter from Mr. Foster. They will come home next week, and I am glad of it, for I hate to have so much to look after and so much responsibility."

"Well," said Jim, "we have got along first-rate. Yeksa's calf has come and has learned to drink and is growing fine, and that will please Mrs. Foster. I always like to please her for she is always so patient and kind, and always speaks so pleasant to all of us; in fact, all the family are kind to the hired help and animals."

"Say, Ed," said Billy, who had picked up the paper as soon as Ed laid it down and looked at the pictures, "can I take this paper home, fur its got lots of pictures in it of cats an' dogs, an' horses an' birds that I'd like to have my sister read bout 'em to me. She can read better'n I can."

"Yes, you can have it," said Ed, "now run home and read it, and I hope you will get some good from the reading, but first let me read to you two verses that I was just reading, they were wrote for just such chaps as you." "All right," said Billy, "let's hear it." Then Ed read:

Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
   For God has made them so;
Let bears and lions growl and fight,
   For 'tis their nature to.

But children you should never let
  Your angry passions rise;
Your little hands were never made
  To tear each other's eyes.

"That's good," said Billy, and away he went.