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# DUKE

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## DUKE

**D**OGS have personality as well as people, and good or bad occurs in much the same way. The women we like best are usually married to disagreeable men, and we often wonder what our delightful male acquaintances found attractive in their wives either before or after marriage. Excellent persons frequently own dogs of little or no character, while dogs with strong qualities may have masters who are weak or wholly negative. That was the case with Duke. His master was a vain and petulant ne'er-do-well; a smug exemplar of the complacent race of guides. We shall have small business with him.

The best way to introduce Duke is to exhibit him in the midst of his cherished vocation. Picture to yourself therefore a cocker spaniel either sitting on his haunches or running furiously about under a spruce tree. His face is upraised toward the limbs, on one or more of which sits a flock of grouse, or spruce hens, who lean down like blessed damosels from the gold bar of Heaven. Their foolish heads are all turned aslant as they watch the dog with round quick eyes.

Duke has driven them up from the ground and holds them steadfast by a continuous yapping, so violent that the recoil flings back the flaps of his long drooping ears. His brown eyes blaze and his jaws drool with excitement. Only at

intervals may he stop for an instant to nuzzle a fallen bird or to note what the hunter is doing.

When the last bird had fluttered down, or taken flight, Duke would start off hot-foot in search of another bevy, and, having put them up in the same way, would prance vociferously underneath while the hunter, beginning on the lowest row, picked off the birds one by one with a small bore rifle and worked regularly upward to the right or left.

Duke was a true sport. He had neither animosity nor greed. Pursuit alone engaged his interest, and he had no great concern for the victim, once he was assured of its death. Yet it was astonishing to behold so much zeal in bringing about the end of a fellow-creature. It was a veritable passion.

Now a fanatic is not, ordinarily, a comfortable companion for a pleasure tour, and there are many objections to taking a dog on a canoe trip. It always means an extra mouth to be filled, and this often requires the transportation of additional provisions. The animal must be kept away from the food during its preparation and out of the canoe if he is large or wet. He is liable to wander away from the party unless watched, and he is ever under foot in camp. He takes advantage of your indolence or preoccupation, and he presumes on your affection. Altogether he demands as much attention as a child. Our predicament therefore was acute, for Duke was both a dog and a fanatic.

Joe, the half-breed guide, had come aboard the boat in the night. We discovered him at daylight with Duke at his heels, and when he hoped we would not object to having the dog with us on the Agawa, we felt both indignation and disgust, for it was too late to send him back. As the trip progressed we became more reconciled. We found the dog to be less trouble than we expected and far more interesting than the lazy half-breed, who had brought a mirror, like a school girl's vanity bag, in which with nauseating frequency,

he admired his ill-assorted features or arranged his greasy hair.

Duke had no vanity. He was a serious dog. He rarely unbent and while politely appreciative of caresses he never invited attention. He ate what was obtainable and liked it. When camp was moved by water he ran along the shore, unless constrained, mournful and rebellious, into the canoe. In spite of his name Duke had no claims to royalty nor even to high birth. Indeed his quarterings showed the bar sinister. Furthermore he had not been raised on the sheltered home system. Far from it. He was a soldier of fortune whose life of hardship had developed all the resourcefulness of a street gamin. He furnished his own entertainment by day, and at bedtime dug himself in without ceremony at the foot of a convenient tree. Owing probably to his school of adversity he seldom barked idly. It was only in course of his business or during uncommon emotional stress that his voice was raised. In this respect he resembled the forest animal more than the domestic dog.

His master declared that Duke "was a good pa'tridge dog," and mentally we credited Joe with this one truthful statement, not much in itself but a beginning. Apparently the dog had considered the pleasures and pitfalls of existence and picked out his career. For pursuit of the grouse he would sacrifice food, water, or sleep at any time, either his own or ours. From his standpoint he was generously tolerant of human ineptitude in smelling out spruce hens. It was a tribute in a way to his canine self-esteem, but our inability to follow him closely when the scent was warm evoked a certain bewilderment. If he admitted our power he must doubt our intelligence. The dilemma was unavoidable. He was selfish? Yes, intensely, but other qualities recommended him strongly to our affection.

He had mannerisms, too, without which such a temperament could hardly exist. One of these was unusual and effective. He would gravely raise his right paw and wipe it over his eye

as if the lid were paralyzed and must be helped to wink. We called this maneuver the "high sign," for he seemed to use it as a friendly greeting much as we would shake hands. To be sure he often overdid it just as the Indians will salute one with the double-barreled "bo-jeu, bo-jeu," and again when extraordinary joy or honor is intended, will multiply the salutation indefinitely. Still the "high sign" was a very captivating expression of the softer side of the dog's nature.

Now "an enthusiast is often absurd but never languid," and Duke was generally up and away at dawn. It is the hour when night prowlers retire to their dens and the sunshine folk come out of their sanctuaries in search of food. The grouse were sun-worshippers, and Duke added himself to their congregation and became an exhorter. As we dressed we could hear him off in the woods yelping with crazy perseverance at the early bird. For several days we struggled against the net which finally settled over us. Let him bark his head off. Why should we care? He was not our dog anyhow. Then the tempter would whisper, "It would take only a moment to get those birds for breakfast. They must be near by. At least one ought to find out." Thus inclination doth make weaklings of us all.

After a few surrenders, descent was easier, and soon we made it a point to take a large piece of bread or a couple of biscuits as we departed, for we felt a subconscious certainty that we should be gone until late afternoon.

The results of our indulgence were quickly apparent. Fishing had to be abandoned while we gratified the ambition of the spaniel. Trout disappeared from our menu, and while we do not dislike the flesh of the grouse but rather look upon it as a delicacy, yet think of the conditions. We had grouse three times a day, and still we failed to overtake the replenishment. It finally came to the point where we picked off the male birds only and flung a stick at the rest. Yet even so the supply was excessive. This, together with an insurgent

desire to fish and a recurrent impatience under the monopolistic paw of Duke, occasionally provoked revolt.

One such incident comes to mind. We had left the dog tied to a tree and supervised by Arethusa and Joe while we traveled four or five miles up stream to work a particularly difficult but productive pool. In the midst of our operations we noted the swirl of a big fish which rose short to the fly. To cover his hiding place advantageously required a change of position. The pool was fathoms deep and guarded by overhanging banks, thick set with alders. Clinging to a leaning stem with one hand, we lowered our feet slowly and quietly into the water until we touched some kind of a ledge or foothold about breast deep. Still grasping the alder stem which assured our return though it imperiled our stability, we managed awkwardly to put out the fly. It was fruitless. As the line flew back for a second attempt there was a commotion on the bank above and little Duke came hurtling through the alder tops. He plumped full upon the spot where the fly was to fall and his face was aglow with doggy smiles as he splashed joyously toward us. The fishing terminated then and there, and putting up the rod in vexation we seized the gnawed fragment of rope which dangled from the animal's neck and took the trail homeward. Twice on the route the culprit escaped and led us on breathless climbs up steep ascents before he could be recaptured. From positions of honorable attainment beneath his high-perched quarry it was necessary to drag him by force, and the mutual indignation accompanying the action excited, in us and probably in him, a pervasive but very human feeling of profanity.

After several experiences it might be supposed that we would welcome an opportunity to be relieved of our irrepressible guest, but humanity is consistently inconsistent.

From a yacht in the bay some men came up river fishing. They discussed flies and trout, weather and trails, camps migratory and fixed. They talked with Joe, petted Duke,



and went their way. In a few hours they passed through on their return, and soon afterward we remarked the absence of the dog. Then the mis-begotten lout of a guide confessed he had sold the animal secretly to the sailors. We were grieved and angry, but also impotent. We realized at once that we had lost an important feature of our expedition. Indeed we would have parted with Joe much more cheerfully. Our philosophy was sorely taxed and we went to bed smouldering with rage.

The next morning we chuckled exultantly as we heard Duke's eager voice. He had fled from bondage and was signaling his arrival by treeing a partridge on his regular beat. We dressed hurriedly, seized a piece of bread and a lump of chocolate, filled the match box, made sure of the compass, and went to his aid. Duke recognized our approach only by a greater vehemence of attack. Having secured the bird we swung back to the trail, traveled up river for a mile or so, and then turning sharply to the west entered a ravine of beetling crags and falling water, and spent the day in deliberate gratification of the dog.

It was dark when we reached camp. The yachtsman had called to reclaim the fugitive, as we had anticipated, and had waited around for several hours as we had hoped he might. He explained that Duke had seemed quite contented until daylight when he made a hasty but thorough inspection of the ship. No one was awake but the cook, and having received his breakfast from this functionary the dog promptly jumped overboard and swam ashore. We never learned exactly what argument the sailor put forth, but evidently Joe had been unsympathetic and close fisted, while Arethusia exploited her helplessness before such obvious realities.

Thus far the situation developed agreeably, and we arose next morning expecting to repeat the performance, but after wandering through a short stretch of low land we happened to climb a hill which commanded a view of the lake some three

miles away. Over leaden waters a small beetle was scurrying timorously off to the west. It was the yacht. We glanced at the sky and understood. Bad weather was brewing and the boat was shifting her anchorage from the broad unsheltered bay to a snug harbor among the islands.

The impressive picture tempted us to linger until the pageant of the rain advanced majestically up the lake. Wide, high columns with a dense smoky overhang swept on before the wind. When our retreat began the forest was stirring sullenly with preliminary creaks and groans. A wild blast drove in like a flourish of trumpets. The trees bowed their heads, and amid wail of wind and roar of water the hills veiled their breasts in the storm. It was a typical North Shore tempest. Rain drops beat upon leaf and twig with the patter of bullets and deluged the earth with spray. The river, too, was bearded with jets several inches high where the ash-gray missiles fell. At the river also the wind found boisterous freedom. Skimming along the twisted tree tops it swooped down into the sculptured channel with a rush that bent back the trunks at the water's edge like javelin throwers.

The rain pelted through our clothing remorselessly, and wayside underbrush slapped us on all fronts with its collected floods. We were drenched to the skin, and drained and squashed as we walked like a supersaturated sponge.

So fierce was the storm that all outside activity except the most primitive was abated. The tent was our refuge. Here we passed the time with a book or in repairing our gear, and rarely ventured out except on brief excursions for food or firewood. For the first twenty-four hours we heard only the howl of the gale, the crash of falling timber, and the loud drumming of rain on leaves, river, earth, and canvas. Then while the downpour continued, thunder began and rolled incessantly. Rippling rivers of fire showed a gray desolation of forest on either side of the amber torrent which foamed through the narrow rock-strewn course. Along this plunging

speedway the storm could be seen at its fiercest. Bits of cloud, rain, and tufts of spume wrenched from wave crests scurried wildly up stream, and sheeted ghosts raced by in swarms. It is possible, doubtless, that the good Lord might send more terrific thunderbolts to those hills and more stunning reverberations, but, doubtless, he never did.

Amid the boom and rumble of Heaven's artillery, the dog disappeared. The incident was not uncommon and at first caused no uneasiness, but when night fell we began to be anxious. Arethusa remembered him rolled up on a dry spot near the tent about noon, but no one had seen him since.

Bedtime came, and Arethusa pushed her feet down into her sleeping bag with a long luxurious sigh. She jerked them back with an exclamation, for she had thrust them straight into Duke's warm curly hide. Duke was in retreat. Evidently he was gun shy when it came to pieces of large caliber. He licked Arethusa's feet ingratiatingly with his soft, wet tongue and whined a piteous little prayer in vain. He might nationalize our labor but not our sleeping bags. Friend Duke was dragged forth protesting every inch. In compensation he was given some duffel for a bed and an apparent equivalent of sweaters and coats for cover, but the substitute was not satisfactory, and twice in the night he tried to creep back into Paradise only to be detected and driven off. In the morning we found him hidden beneath Arethusa's canvas headpiece, but never before, nor indeed afterward, was he known to forsake his open-air burrow.

For four days the rains fell and the floods came. The V-shaped valley of the Agawa drains rapidly, and soon the slopes and cliffs were covered with streams and waterfalls in lines of foaming silver. The river rose until our domestic gauge showed an increase of thirteen inches. The water, turbid from hillside scourings, ran like a flume, and fishing was impossible.

We had planned a permanent camp, but when the trout ceased to rise we considered a site higher up. By such a move we could work the upper river more carefully, but besides this open justification was an unspoken but stronger desire to avoid another visit from the yachtsman which we felt might occur.

So we put Arethusa and Duke, the lunch and the fishing gear into the canoe. The men stepped into the river, seized the craft by bow and stern, and started. Near shore the water varied in depth from ankle to knee, but the current piled foam to our hips. Through eddies, backsets, and the down rushing flood the boat went fitfully forward while we pushed and pulled and stumbled and at times lost footing altogether on the slippery stones of the bottom.

Duke was a small dog, but he occupied the entire canoe as he dashed madly from end to end and from side to side in his eagerness to identify the adventitious odors from the woods. To Arethusa, any information he might obtain seemed trifling compensation for the danger she ran of upsetting during one of those headlong charges which vocal orders only momentarily restrained. And so in one of his numerous efforts to scramble past she seized him by the neck and pinioned him in her lap, and here he remained until the ascent was finished, though he never ceased to analyze the air-borne tidings, and to shiver and whine over his exciting discoveries.

Where hills or cliffs shoulder into the river an upright wall is formed, and at the base of such places we frequently found the water so deep or the flow so swift that we were forced to enter the canoe and cross to the other side. This maneuver, in spite of our fiercest paddling, often cost us two hundred yards of our hard-won advance. For five hours we drove onward until at length we paused at the Half-way Pool to reconnoiter. This point gave convenient access to the upper river and yet was remote enough for our diplomatic

needs. Fishing of course was futile, but the water seemed promising under normal conditions, the ground inviting for a camp, the outlook inspiring, and as we lunched and dried out it was agreed to change.

Then we descended. The word is really too mild. The trees swept by in an indistinguishable mass, and we whisked around bends with a centrifugal force that almost hurled us into the bushes. Five hours to ascend, and we race back in eighteen ecstatic minutes.

The whole of the next day was spent in shifting camp, and this means much in a country where distance is measured by time rather than by space. The mileage was not great, but the trail was rough and irregular. Yet travel by water was much worse, and the useless canoe was temporarily abandoned.

The duffel was assembled and apportioned, and swinging up our packs we filed through the ancient woods like a procession from *Pilgrim's Progress*. Duke, attached by a cord, was in the van. He led the party, not with intelligent care and foresight, like the blind man's dog, but willy-nilly, as the tug leads the lumber schooner. Have you ever attempted to conduct an active dog in leash, along a trail which requires over and under, up and down, by, through, around, across, and the entire flock of prepositions adequately to describe? Heaven help the blind man who might be dependent upon Duke's ministrations! The projects, duties, ideas, and urgent aspirations he tried to execute required all our patience to correct, thwart, and restrain.

None the less we did finally arrive but in truth "dog tired," and with a temper as sensitive as a compass needle. Joe went back for another load while we selected a place for the tent, cleared away shrubbery, built a fire, and established our routine.

In the week that elapsed before the river subsided we busied ourselves in photographing, cutting trails, and easing

Duke's ardor for grouse. We no longer opposed this pursuit. The stars were against us. At least we said they were. We took the smooth and pliant way and tried merely to guide and limit the dog's activities.

Time passed with dreamlike rapidity, and the march back began. As we paused a moment at the old camp for a last look around and to pick up the canoe, we found a note from the yachtsman in which he reproached us in good, set terms for a more than implied dishonesty. In view, however, of his own disingenuous conduct in trying to filch the dog from us by stealth, we were only agitated pleasantly.

We pushed shoreward and found the Big Lake so calm that a speedy junction with the fish-tug was effected. Once on board we puffed away south, and in a few hours had the satisfaction of bidding the half-breed farewell. With Duke it was otherwise. Our relation to him had passed through numerous gradations, from resentment to indifference, and from open admiration for his intelligence and independent spirit to a warm affection. Duke was singularly proficient in his business, such as it was, and straightforward in his dealings. What more could be said or expected of a comrade? No, we parted from Duke with the grief we should feel for a very dear friend whom we never expected to see again.

The snows fell and nurtured the earth, spring rains softened it, and the summer foliage of the North Shore came to fulness. On the cool, lustrous and crystalline bosom of Lake Superior the fish-tug bears us again to the Agawa. Once more we drop overside and enter upon those lovely brown waters which constitute the natural home of the brook trout. In no other medium do the fish possess such abounding vitality or display such richness of color. Indeed these Pactolian currents add their gold to the saffron sands of the bottom and even send a tawny gleam into the sun-shot shadows of the big rocks.

Up the Agawa, after three miles, the canoes cannot be paddled profitably, but when the water is favorable we avoid extreme loads on long portages by placing our duffel in the boats, which we then push or drag up stream as beasts of burden. To make our present journey easier we also planned to move one day and fish the next until we came to the Half-way Pool where we had stopped the previous year. The method was born of wisdom, for in this way our daily task could be apportioned to the endurance of our flabby muscles, and the body could gradually accustom itself to the stimulating conditions as it tightened up to augmenting fatigues. It is in these first trials that the exhilaration of the North Shore leads to excesses, and also to a weariness so profound that in the dilatory darkness of that country sleep falls upon one with a bludgeon and steals away all consciousness and perception until the rays of the rising sun bore through the fabric of the tent.

There came a day therefore when we urged the canoes heavily and irksomely up a long drawn aisle of alders. Noon approached and we began to seek a favorable landing place for tea. As we scanned the shore line with hunger-sharpened eyes we sighted a queer dark object on a flat stone which stood out from the bank. We studied it thoughtfully, for it resembled nothing we should expect to find along that river. It might be a beaver, but why so incautious, and why, too, such shameless idleness? It might—and yet—well, as usual we sought help.

"Amik, Tawab?" Is it a beaver?

"Animosh," a dog, he replied without hesitation.

We stopped and turned in astonishment. How in the name of all the gods would a dog be here, seventy-five miles at least from any settlement?

"Mebbe run away, mebbe somebody leave him." Thus the impassive Tawab. We drew nearer. There was no sign of life.

"Dead, Tawab?"

"Kawin, he move." This also we accepted, though our senses rebelled.

The canoe touched the shore and we looked down upon a little black dog whose stubby tail quivered in feeble recognition. He tried to lift his right paw, but the attempt was pathetic. Poor Duke was perishing from starvation. We opened a can of milk, mixed it with water, crumbled biscuit, and fed him with our fingers. After lunch we put him tenderly in the canoe on a sweater and gave him food every hour till we made camp.

From our own experience it was plausible to infer that whoever had brought the dog to the woods had lost patience with his tireless hunting and left him to "dree his weird." Still, Duke was too resourceful to die of hunger in the North Woods, especially in summer, and we finally concluded that he had returned from one of his solitary expeditions, and, finding camp deserted, had resolved to remain on guard, food or no food, until his master reappeared.

Duke was near his end and so weak that for two or three days he was unable to lift his hind legs over a small log without help. We nursed him with sympathy and anxiety, and rejoiced to see his face lose gradually its pinched expression. When recovery once began, he mended rapidly, but at the same time the ferment in his blood reasserted itself. Again he took up his mad pursuit of spruce hens, and again we exhausted ourselves in trailing his endless enthusiasm.

Finally Arethusa, in desperation, suggested a means of relief. We made a stockade about five feet high out of spruce saplings set deep in earth. In this dungeon we imprisoned His Grace.

For the next two days we angled in peace and happiness, but on the third, Duke appeared joyfully at breakfast. He had dug under the stockade, and his manner expressed not



only his own pride in the feat but a naïve expectation of our approval.

Rescue was at hand, however, from a source wholly unlooked for and fundamental in character. As we ate lunch one day beside the river a huge cow moose appeared on the opposite shore with her young calf. She looked at us with the indifferent tranquillity of a domestic cow, and probably would have moved off in a minute or so if Duke had not seized upon this inauspicious instant to violate all his prescriptive etiquette by yapping invidiously at the visitor.

It was a futile bravado of course, and we smiled indulgently at our naughty pet. The smile lost its mirth when we saw that mother moose resented the insult. She stamped the earth, shook her head savagely, and started across to punish the offender. Duke was cuffed into silence immediately, and we, in the absence of effective weapons, looked heedfully at the nearest trees, for a maddened moose is by no means particular in wreaking a vengeance. The cow reached mid-channel, and we were on the point of lifting Arethusa into a convenient birch when the animal got a whiff of smoke from our camp fire. She stopped, glanced inquiringly at the calf, stared attentively at our stone-still figures, and at last retired in slow defiance. The calf had not moved, and, having nosed and licked her gawky princeling, mother moose threatened us once more with her head and disappeared in the timber. Then we drew a long breath and cuffed the dog again to express our nervous relief.

After this incident we noticed a change in Duke's demeanor. His affiliation with us became more intimate. He was more docile and more ready to recognize us as persons of importance than as the mere slaves of his fevered ambition. He was a real dog. Through some metamorphosis he had accepted us as his folks, and he showed a sense of responsi-

bility and a desire to please which was as novel as it was eloquent. He no longer made his independent trips to the forest, and when we remained in camp he was content to lie for hours, if need be, with his nose fixed immovably between his paws. Like two curtains his long pendulous ears trailed the ground, and between them his watchful eyes followed all our movements. What was he thinking? What curious revolution was taking place in his brain as he pondered the riddle of the new life?

Ordinarily he seemed to pay no attention to our conversation, but let the word "partridge" be mentioned, however casually, and Duke's ears went up, his eyes shone, and his stumpy tail became a mere blur in the air. Frequently when he slept his legs would jerk convulsively and his mouth work so that we could almost visualize the hunt. But it was not a still hunt. His agitated dream was accompanied by muffled whines and barks, so fierce at times that his slumber was broken. Also at the slightest hint of leaving camp Duke would be at our heels, his eyes ablaze with excitement and supplication. His zeal, however, had been tempered by the growth of a new idea. The rake and prodigal had suddenly realized certain spiritual values. His mind was awakened to higher things. Duke had got religion, and his chain was very heavy for he had forged it himself. When the gods of the camp hunted, Duke hunted also, hunted valorously, for the gods can do no wrong, but otherwise he followed the moods of the gods as he laboriously and painfully interpreted them.

We never discovered any particular reason for this transformation, but who can say what rain or which dew expands the bud into the flower, or who can mark the veritable factor in conversion? Duke's new and saintly rôle was far more convenient around camp, but none the less it was not nearly so interesting as his former passionate industry which had been so extremely irritating at times.

The dog's protective sense expanded enormously. Furtive and incommunicable things that went on among the dim mazes of the wilderness, he sifted with his delicate nose, not for his own purposes as before but with a feeling for our advantage. On our part we rarely learned what unwonted sound, what subtle, by-slinking odor caused his hair to rise as he stood four-square in sturdy relief against the firelight, nor what started him off on a tour of inspection or inspired his low growls of warning.

We recall a night when a growl of unusual emphasis and fervor brought us out of a sound sleep to a sitting position. The time was somewhere in the middle watch. "A full moon stood high in her effortless sweep through space, and drenched the trees with the whiteness of snow." Duke bristled by the dying fire. He sniffed the air in short sharp breaths and winnowed shrewdly the intelligence it bore. He became more eager and demonstrative, and after studying him for a moment, we pulled on a heavy jacket and joined him.

A wonderful spell of white bewildering power lay upon the world. Not a star was visible. A mist hung cotton-thick upon the river. The forest was still, tense, inscrutable. Time was and was not. Silver birch mingled with maple, dark hemlock, and spruce in a pillared forum, but the shadows of their foliage fell directly upon their roots. We advanced a few steps and the silence of that portentous listening throng crept impalpably forward and enveloped us. "The trees seemed to swim in the wake of the moon, and rags of luminous cloud moved as curtains by swift withdrawing airs." A single orb looked down with a hard steady glare, while we felt on every side the unwinking gaze of innumerable lidless eyes. Draughts of air ebbed and flowed, carrying strange burdens of odor—odors that the human nostril was too dull to divine. But while grosser perceptions were at fault, some intuition was alert to an atmosphere charged with hostility and,

yes—of hatred. Duke was aware of this for his super-sensitive nose was picking up significant tidings out of that marvelous night. With deep-muttered curses he urged us stiffly outward.

Did something move in the looming shadows of underbrush or was it fancy? One cannot be sure, but Duke rushed forward on the instant and came whining back at our harsh command. Gradually his excitement subsided, and in high-strung expectancy we walked slowly down to the shore. A trout leaped from the water into the somewhat thinner medium above and fell back invisible. A white-throat called once and stopped, his song unfinished. We followed the moose trail down stream until we heard the splash of rapids and smelt the peculiar fragrance of broken water. Here the dog became agitated again and difficult to restrain. He barked furiously and the hair on his back rose like a porcupine's quills.

No cause for his excitement could be discovered, however, and we turned back to camp, pulled the fire together, and laid on fresh logs. Then we stretched out in the glow of the flames, intoxicated by the weirdness, wonder, and mystery of aged Nature's cryptic face. Duke cuddled up close and immediately it was daylight.

At breakfast, Tawab, inquired tactfully, "You no sleep las' night?"

We explained our nocturnal expedition in detail, and Tawab, stepping away for a moment brought back a handful of grass and leaves. "Ma-ing-na-gan," wolf, he said. "You smell him." We did "smell him," but our breath was wasted. The other Indian also "smelt him," and agreed with Tawab, while Duke, sniffing from a distance, showed by hair and voice that he agreed with both of them, and so we made it unanimous.

We fished the river industriously up and down, and then with a beatitude that comes only when the reward exceeds

our conscious deserts, we moved camp to the Big Lake in expectation of fishing the reefs. On reaching the shore, however, we found an incoming sea and a surf impossible for canoes. Idleness of indefinite length was before us, and meanwhile we wanted trout.

A brook of some size discharges into the lake about two miles south of the river, and it was easy to evoke a reason for dropping a fly upon its infrequently visited pools. The disposal of Duke was the first difficulty. It was a real problem, for we had become so fond of him that it hurt us almost as much as the dog to leave him behind. Alas, our eternal separation was close at hand.

A survey of ways and means revealed a box half-buried in the sand, a waif from some boat. We called the dog, patted his head, rubbed his ears, and then with remorseful but obdurate heart, imprisoned him. We weighted the box with stones and hurried off with the conscience of a murderer.

We walked rapidly for a time, but soon settled down to a steady jog more nearly in keeping with the tempo of our thoughts. To the right was the Great Lake, Gitchi Gami, brilliant and gemlike, but also capricious and death dealing. To the left the illimitable forest, receptive and friendly in the bright sunlight but abounding in nebulous uncertainties that symbolize the ineluctable phantoms of life. Unlike the tropical forest which oppresses the traveler with its rank luxuriance and torpor, the North Woods is spare and hard-bitted. The air, too, is quickening as well as fragrant. It is a place of enigmas and ever impending adventure. Where events happen suddenly to be sure, but logically as by operation of undiscernible plans. Purpose there may or may not be, but in all the affairs of the wilderness one is impressed by its grim, its supernal indifference.

We play upon the breast of the forest in full knowledge that she may shuffle us into oblivion with as complete an

unconsciousness as she has of our presence. Duke had already met this contingency and through drift or design had escaped by a hair. Was it merely a coincidence that he should come to our notice at that particular crisis? Was the reversal of disposition only a step in his development, or was it, as we believed, in some way the outgrowth of environment? We wondered, too, about his future under the strange and distant conditions which we planned for him. His experience had not fitted him to be a courtier. He neither fawned nor dissembled. And must he exchange a glorious freedom for a life of parasitism? Must he degenerate into a snobbish city dog, or would he perchance die of ennui while chafing in his bondage? The outlook was uncomfortable in any event. We felt an inexcusable selfishness in having left him behind and to avoid further self-reproach we quickened our steps.

We reached the brook and fulfilled our mission with interest and success. The declining sun still gave considerable light as we started home. We had traveled probably three hundred feet when we noticed wolf tracks in the sand. This brought no particular reaction until we came to a wet spot wherein the footprints were deep and clear cut. We now observed two things. First, that the marks of the paws were exceptionally large, and second, that the left forefoot had but three toes. We traced back the fresh spoor in mild curiosity. In a few yards we discovered a depression where the animal had sat down, doglike, to evaluate apparently, the visitor at the creek. At this point all signs ceased abruptly. He had entered the woods.

Aroused by the thought that this wolf might have spied upon us before, or that he might have been prying into our present business more fully, we hung the creel on a neighboring limb, leaned the rod against the trunk, and took the probable path of the beast into the forest. There was no trace of his passage, of course, but making a rather wide detour

we came down on the creek. Here were footprints again. Our theory was correct. The tracks went along over shingle and sandbar and came out on the trail where none had been visible before. We moved more warily, for we felt sure the animal was near by. As we neared the tree where the creel hung we glimpsed something black vanishing among the bushes. It was too small for a wolf, and we paused dubiously, for we sensed catastrophe. An instant later we were startled by a yelp of pain which alarmed us with its strong suggestion of Duke. We moved toward the sound and in a few steps found him. Poor little Duke! He was lying on the sand in a small weed-clear space. His body had been torn and his back broken by a single crunch of those fierce, exasperated jaws. When we approached, his eyes lighted up with the last stubbornness of life as he tried to lift his right paw. It was an appealing action which might have been a "high sign," but the gesture was never finished, and even as we examined his injury the affectionate longing faded out of his eyes, the surface glazed, and his sturdy spirit went out in gasps. With wet eyes and parched throat we looked upon the stilled body of our friend, and in that summer-scented dusk we felt the adumbration of eternity.

Reaction came and with it analysis. How had it happened? What mysterious message did the air bring to that prescient nose and that wood-wise head? We learned later that Duke had whined a few times after our departure and then, seemingly accepting the situation, had settled down, reconciled, if not content. Thus he remained till near sunset when a frantic disturbance arose in the box. The dog whined, growled, and clawed at the apertures, and finally, before anyone could interfere, had forced his way out and fled madly down the trail. There had been no hesitancy in his wild charge; no swerving, nor any slightest faltering from the instant of his deliverance until he turned aside into the very jaws of an ambushed death. Did his venture

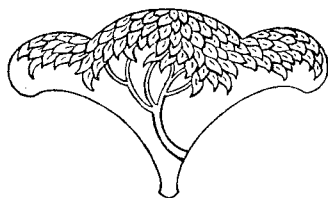
grow out of a determination to interpose his own frail body between a far-sensed peril and his friend? It seemed so, and yet, as we knelt beside him, we could see only the sad futility of the event. Slowly it dawned upon us that while his fate might be only an incident, or possibly a warning, yet why not a propitiation?

This idea produced a queer uneasiness, and we were aware that our humble position invited aggression, if aggression were meant. Spurred by the unwelcome suggestion, we rose, went back for our creel and rod, and resumed our journey. Usually we find a comfort and satisfaction in taking something home, and our heavy basket should have furnished a goodly reason, but our feelings were overwrought.

Clouds lowered over the lake with only a single red glow where the sun had gone down. There was no break in the austere immensity of the waters. The wind was rising again, an unsettled, homeless wind, and the waves fell upon the beach with deliberate rhythmic menace. The path was meager and hard to find. The forest, too, was ominously silent, and beyond its edge were very questionable and pregnant shadows in which a vagrant human corpuscle could easily be submerged. Even the trees, so friendly at noon-time, now appeared formidable, if not actually hostile. They diffused an imperturbable pantheism which might transform or destroy either through direct interference or by occult familiars; by servitors who hover or lie in wait. The air was filled with intimations of pursuit, or of mysterious treachery which quick inspections of the back-trail did not drive away. Potential attack lurked everywhere. We felt strangely diminished, and leaving the trail we walked along the wave line of the beach on the swept and garnished sand. Here we found a handy cudgel which comforted us somewhat, but the consciousness that a malign presence was alertly imminent did not pass until, with a distinct sense of escape, we entered the friendly golden aura of the camp fire. But



that feeling of pursuit, was it all imagination—an emotional sequence to sorrow and isolation? Barely the sigh of relief was breathed when out of the woods came the howl of a wolf; a howl of defiance, savage, implacable. Then stillness infinite.



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