

## CHAPTER VIII

Another trick Dag Daughtry succeeded in teaching Michael so enhanced him in Captain Duncan's eyes as to impel him to offer fifty pounds, "and never mind the cat." At first, Daughtry practised the trick in private with the chief engineer and the Shortlands planter. Not until thoroughly satisfied did he make a public performance of it.

"Now just suppose you're policemen, or detectives," Daughtry told the first and third officers, "an' suppose I'm guilty of some horrible crime. An' suppose Killeny is the only clue, an' you've got Killeny. When he recognizes his master--me, of course--you've got your man. You go down the deck with him, leadin' by the rope. Then you come back this way with him, makin' believe this is the street, an' when he recognizes me you arrest me. But if he don't realize me, you can't arrest me. See?"

The two officers led Michael away, and after several minutes returned along the deck, Michael stretched out ahead on the taut rope seeking Steward.

"What'll you take for the dog?" Daughtry demanded, as they drew near--this the cue he had trained Michael to know.

And Michael, straining at the rope, went by, without so much as a wag of tail to Steward or a glance of eye. The officers stopped before Daughtry

and drew Michael back into the group.

"He's a lost dog," said the first officer.

"We're trying to find his owner," supplemented the third.

"Some dog that--what'll you take for 'm?" Daughtry asked, studying Michael with critical eyes of interest. "What kind of a temper's he got?"

"Try him," was the answer.

The steward put out his hand to pat him on the head, but withdrew it hastily as Michael, with bristle and growl, viciously bared his teeth.

"Go on, go on, he won't hurt you," the delighted passengers urged.

This time the steward's hand was barely missed by a snap, and he leaped back as Michael ferociously sprang the length of the rope at him.

"Take 'm away!" Dag Daughtry roared angrily. "The treacherous beast! I wouldn't take 'm for gift!"

And as they obeyed, Michael strained backward in a paroxysm of rage, making fierce short jumps to the end of the tether as he snarled and growled with utmost fierceness at the steward.

"Eh? Who'd say he ever seen me in his life?" Daughtry demanded triumphantly. "It's a trick I never seen played myself, but I've heard tell about it. The old-time poachers in England used to do it with their lurcher dogs. If they did get the dog of a strange poacher, no gamekeeper or constable could identify 'm by the dog--mum was the word."

"Tell you what, he knows things, that Killeny. He knows English. Right now, in my room, with the door open, an' so as he can find 'm, is shoes, slippers, cap, towel, hair-brush, an' tobacco pouch. What'll it be? Name it an' he'll fetch it."

So immediately and variously did the passengers respond that every article was called for.

"Just one of you choose," the steward advised. "The rest of you pick 'm out."

"Slipper," said Captain Duncan, selected by acclamation.

"One or both?" Daughtry asked.

"Both."

"Come here, Killeny," Daughtry began, bending toward him but leaping back from the snap of jaws that clipped together close to his nose.

"My mistake," he apologized. "I ain't told him the other game was over. Now just listen an, watch. 'n' see if you can catch on to the tip I'm goin' to give 'm."

No one saw anything, heard anything, yet Michael, with a whine of eagerness and joy, with laughing mouth and wriggling body, was upon the steward, licking his hands madly, squirming and twisting in the embrace of the loved hands he had so recently threatened, making attempts at short upward leaps as he flashed his tongue upward toward his lord's face. For hard it was on Michael, a nerve and mental strain of the severest for him so to control himself as to play-act anger and threat of hurt to his beloved Steward.

"Takes him a little time to get over a thing like that," Daughtry explained, as he soothed Michael down.

"Now, Killeny! Go fetch 'm slipper! Wait! Fetch 'm one slipper. Fetch 'm two slipper."

Michael looked up with pricked ears, and with eyes filled with query as all his intelligent consciousness suffused them.

"Two slipper! Fetch 'm quick!"

He was off and away in a scurry of speed that seemed to flatten him close

to the deck, and that, as he turned the corner of the deck-house to the stairs, made his hind feet slip and slide across the smooth planks.

Almost in a trice he was back, both slippers in his mouth, which he deposited at the steward's feet.

"The more I know dogs the more amazin' marvellous they are to me," Dag Daughtry, after he had compassed his fourth bottle, confided in monologue to the Shortlands planter that night just before bedtime. "Take Killeny Boy. He don't do things for me mechanically, just because he's learned to do 'm. There's more to it. He does 'm because he likes me. I can't give you the hang of it, but I feel it, I know it.

"Maybe, this is what I'm drivin' at. Killeny can't talk, as you 'n' me talk, I mean; so he can't tell me how he loves me, an' he's all love, every last hair of 'm. An' actions speakin' louder 'n' words, he tells me how he loves me by doin' these things for me. Tricks? Sure. But they make human speeches of eloquence cheaper 'n dirt. Sure it's speech. Dog-talk that's tongue-tied. Don't I know? Sure as I'm a livin' man born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, just as sure am I that it makes 'm happy to do tricks for me . . . just as it makes a man happy to lend a hand to a pal in a ticklish place, or a lover happy to put his coat around the girl he loves to keep her warm. I tell you . . . "

Here, Dag Daughtry broke down from inability to express the concepts fluttering in his beer-excited, beer-sodden brain, and, with a stutter or

two, made a fresh start.

"You know, it's all in the matter of talkin', an' Killeny can't talk.

He's got thoughts inside that head of his--you can see 'm shinin' in his lovely brown eyes--but he can't get 'em across to me. Why, I see 'm tryin' to tell me sometimes so hard that he almost busts. There's a big hole between him an' me, an' language is about the only bridge, and he can't get over the hole, though he's got all kinds of ideas an' feelings just like mine.

"But, say! The time we get closest together is when I play the harmonica an' he yow-yows. Music comes closest to makin' the bridge. It's a regular song without words. And . . . I can't explain how . . . but just the same, when we've finished our song, I know we've passed a lot over to each other that don't need words for the passin'."

"Why, d'ye know, when I'm playin' an' he's singin', it's a regular duet of what the sky-pilots 'd call religion an' knowin' God. Sure, when we sing together I'm absorbin' religion an' gettin' pretty close up to God. An' it's big, I tell you. Big as the earth an' ocean an' sky an' all the stars. I just seem to get hold of a sense that we're all the same stuff after all--you, me, Killeny Boy, mountains, sand, salt water, worms, mosquitoes, suns, an' shootin' stars an' blazin' comets . . ."

Day Daughtry left his flight as beyond his own grasp of speech, and concluded, his half embarrassment masked by braggadocio over Michael:

"Oh, believe me, they don't make dogs like him every day in the week. Sure, I stole 'm. He looked good to me. An' if I had it over, knowin' as I do know 'm now, I'd steal 'm again if I lost a leg doin' it. That's the kind of a dog he is."