

After a time he noticed that the animal was intently listening to something without, and beyond his vision, although, to the artist's ear, no sound broke the profound stillness. The muscles seemed to be strained to the utmost; every nerve was quivering, the nostrils dilated, and the whole body had a waiting, expectant air, though its former posture remained unchanged.

Presently the long, shaggy tail began a slow, side-wise wag of satisfaction, that grew swifter as the seconds flew by. The eyelids opened and shut in a rapid, incessant motion, and if a dog can ever be said to laugh, the monstrous beast shook with convulsions and his leering jaws widened into a horrible grin. Did these demonstrations of joy spring from faithful affection toward an absent object about returning? He had known similar manifestations to be the outcome of savage gloating over an expected victim.

A shadow fell across the doorway, and a powerful figure, shaggy and massive and brawny as the beast there, strode in with a rifle across its shoulders and an ugly looking knife in its belt. The dog gave a tremendous leap toward it. Renfrew held his breath and instinctively closed his eyes. Would the dog miss the man's throat?

A hearty, ringing voice brought the man to a sitting posture. "Hi, Zeke, my boy! I take no stock in kissin'. Them be ways o' giddy wimmen-folk, wat's allus sloppin' over like a even-full bucket, wen th' surface 's riled a bit. Glad t' see yer pard? Down then, sir, an' gin me yer hand on 't, like th' honest gentleman ye air; an' faithful, too, I trow, as th' ole clock in my mother's kitchen, that 'll gin th' hour as long as time lasts. A gentleman 'dyed in the wool, bred in the bone,'" affectionately patting the dog's head, while Zeke showed intelligent appreciation by vigorously wagging his tail, lolling his tongue, and by short, quick barks of assent.

"An' why not?" glancing for the first time at Renfrew, as if expecting dissent from the statement. "Thar be dogs thet be brutes, an' thar be men thet be brutes. It be a poor rule thet won't work both ways, I reckon. Well, now stranger," with the mountaineer's ready variableness of thought and speech, that serves him well in any emergency, "I 'lowed you-uns 'ud be peart 's a cricket 'fore long. You-uns hed a mighty close call, le' me tell ye. W'en I stumbled acrost ye last evenin', ye jest raved 'bout summat t' eat, an' nothin' else. I made a big kittle o' strong broth, an' th' way you-uns went fer 't made my eyes water; an' arter thet ye went t' sleep like a baby. Hankerin' still arter th' loaves an' fishes, be ye?" as Renfrew's eyes wandered wistfully toward the fireplace. "Wall, now, thet be nateral, an' a good omen generally, though not allus, I'm bound to admit. Thar

be times w'en a man's stomach 's the very wust jedge he kin tie to. Th' more bad whisky he pours into it, th' louder it cries fer more, till th' filthy leech sucks th' vitals dry. Thet air a fac' wuth knowin, an' some men thar be thet learn it to ther cost. Now, Zeke 'ere knows w'at reason fails to teach man. He won't tech it in any shape. Howsomever, you-uns has struck th' right lead, an' no bad konsekenes 'll foller, depend on 't. Thar, stranger, eat an' be filled with th' fat o' th' land—a dish fit fer a king."

He set before him a shining tin platter, filled with the savory mess that had been so tantalizing, and which proved to be some wild game, deliciously cooked and seasoned; a royal feast, to which the artist did ample justice, and soon really felt like himself again. Zeke, too, came in for a bountiful share of the feast, which disappeared with astonishing celerity.

"Thet dog 'as a most amazen' capacity fer stowin' away victuals," remarked the mountaineer, gazing fondly at the huge creature, that seemed oblivious of all else save the business in hand—the filling of his inner vacuum to his entire satisfaction. "But he be a philosopher wi' it all. He eats anything an' everything that's set afore 'im without grumblin', an' thet's a long shot more 'an some folks kin do, le' me tell ye. Intelligent? You-uns 'll believe it w'en ye git better acquainted wi' 'im. Not 'nother dog ekel to 'im to my notion. Kep' purty close watch on ye, didn' he, stranger? I was afeard you-uns might git up an' wander off, ye know, an' I sez to Zeke, sez I, 'Zeke, don' ye let thet air man git up till I come back.' I reckon ef I'd 'a' staid till th' crack o' doom, you-uns 'ud 'a' both been thar yit, wi' stomachs holler 's an ole stump, fer Zeke never disobeyed a order. He'd 'a' gin ye fair warnin', an' ef ye'd 'a' flung it back in his teeth, you-uns 'ud mos' likely been a heap sight th' wustest off."

Renfrew thought it the most likely thing in the world, and was not in the least anxious to try the experiment. He at once suggested returning to camp if the mountaineer would be so kind as to direct his course. But his host pronounced him unfit to make the journey before the next day, and promised to accompany him, on condition that he would bring his outfit down to his domain and share his cabin, and what comforts it afforded, as long as he remained in the mountains. The idea struck the artist very favorably. The location was picturesque and grandly beautiful. He could not have chosen a better spot for awakening dormant powers. Surely, if anywhere, the priestess of his art had her temple here. Besides, the mountaineer's offer had been given in such a spirit of simple, whole-hearted generosity, that he felt he could not do otherwise than accept in the same spirit of simple frankness.