

BALLINGTON'S CANINE PARADOX
By Angus MacEwan

It was characteristic of Ballington that he accepted even his dismissal as Katherine Gordon's sultor placidly and with a due regard for the proprieties. His voice was cool and even and shaded to the exact note of regret that a well bred man should permit himself. As Katherine told herself afterward, it was like a John Drew matinee.

But if Ballington showed no outward emotion it was not because he did not care for the girl whose dashing ways were his exact opposite; neither did he give up hope. Under that carefully groomed exterior there lay a bulldog tenacity of purpose that few suspected least of all Kittle Gordon.

He kept on at the Bruntons' house party, and even Dickie Hines lost sleep wondering whether Kittle really had given him his answer, so correctly polite was he in his attentions to her, for which Kittle was devoutly thankful, since Mrs. Brunton had given positive orders that she marry Ballington, and Mrs. Brunton's word was law out of itself.

It was her disobedience which brought about the crisis, for when Ballington left there had been an inquiry, and Kittle, with a fine show of spirit, had flung out of the room, declaring that she would return to her parents and freedom rather than out of the "shop" as it were, and the disappointed Mrs. Brunton had ordered the carriage around and had taken to bed with a sick headache over the misadventure of her pet plan for her niece.

So it happened that Kittle in her impetuosity did not realize that she was without money until she approached the ticket window at the tiny station. With a gasp she turned away from the window and sat down on one of the hard benches to think over the situation.

Town was 150 miles away, so that walking was out of the question. There was no one she could write to to send

her money, and she would die rather than go back to her aunt's house and ask for her fare. Her brain was still in a whirl when Harding Ballington came slowly into the waiting room. With a rush she had crossed to him and in another second was pouring out



SHE HID HER MOIST EYES IN THE DOG'S SHAGGY COAT.

her tale a trifle incoherently, but in sufficient detail to enable Ballington to surmise what the matter was.

"That will be a very easy matter," he declared. "I'm going up to town myself and shall be glad to escort you."

"What are you doing here, anyway?" she asked curiously. "I thought you had gone away last week."

"Fred Cambus and I were back in the woods for a little shooting," he explained. "We came out yesterday, and I stayed over to see the county fair. Do you know I never saw a county fair before?"

"I'm glad you stayed to see it," she smiled. "Just suppose you had not come along. I should have been stranded here."

"As it is," he laughed back, "I think I had better be getting the tickets."

He reached for his pocketbook, but withdrew his hand, empty, and made a rapid search of his other pockets, final rapid turning with a look of blank dismay.

"Do you know," he exclaimed, "that my pockets have been picked? I have some small change, less than \$2, but not enough even for your ticket. I will have to telephone the Bruntons."

"You will not," she begged. "To have Aunt Emma saying all sorts of horrid things?"

"I might report my loss to the town constable," he suggested. "He may find it in time for us to catch the train. I might offer my watch as a pledge for the tickets, only they took that too."

"Don't you know any one else about here?" she pleaded. "Some one you could borrow from?" Ballington shook his head.

"The best I can suggest," he said, "would be to wire for some money."

"But that would not come in time for the train," she objected. "I never could stay in this town all night."

"Why not the Bruntons?" he pleaded. "They seem to be our only quick salvation."

"If you suggest that again I shall never speak to you," she scolded. "She would be sure to find out, and I'd die before I let her know."

"I might put the dog in pawn," he suggested whimsically. "Poor Bruce is about all the light fingered gentry left here."

He regarded the ragged little fellow with affectionate interest. The dog had been his dead brother's pet, and, while his rough coat gave him a shockingly disreputable appearance, Bruce was clever beyond the run of dogs.

During his brother's last illness Ballington had taught the dog a score of clever tricks for the invalid's amusement, and Bruce was proud of his accomplishments. Feeling that he was being made the subject of the conversation, the little fellow gravely turned a somersault and sat up on his haunches. For a moment Ballington regarded his pet's accomplishment with speechless awe.

"Do you mind if I leave you a little while?" he asked.

"You are not going to the Bruntons?" she demanded suspiciously.

"My word of honor," he said simply. "May I suggest that you get yourself a cup of tea at the hotel?" He placed some coins in her hand and with a bow strolled out of the station.

It was difficult to get anything at the hotel with the fair goers invading the place, but at last she succeeded in getting a light lunch and started back to the station.

The special excursion trains were pulling out of the station now, and the platform was crowded with tired pleasure seekers. Off at one side a large crowd had gathered, and, finding that Ballington was not in the station, she strolled over to see what the attraction might be.

With a gasp she saw that Ballington was putting Bruce through his trick for the edification of the crowd, and with a sudden rush of anger she wondered if he had been drinking. Then with a revulsion of feeling she saw her

gravey remove his hat and pass it around the crowd. Most of them melted away, but many of them stopped to drop a coin in the hat and pet the dog. At last they were all gone, and with a flushed face she was looking straight into Ballington's laughing eyes.

"I've got enough for the fares and the Pullman seats," he said as he came toward her. "Behold Bruce, the rescuer of damsels in distress."

She caught the dog up in her arms and hid her moist eyes in his shaggy coat. Slowly she turned toward the station, but Ballington laid a hand upon her arm.

"I would suggest," he said, "that since our train is not due for an hour yet and as these excursion trains will be out of the way by then it might prove less embarrassing to you if you waited until they were gone. They might recognize your traveling companion."

"And to think I might have spared you this if I had let you telephone the Bruntons," she said penitently. Ballington laughed.

"Do you know I rather enjoyed it?" he confessed. "I think Bruce did too. He shall have his reward tonight in the best chicken to be had in the market."

"And you?" she asked.

"I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we have fooled Mrs. Brunton," he laughed carelessly.

She held out her hand. "I refused you the other day because I was afraid you were too dandified to be human," she said softly. "I know better now. Will you ask me again?"

But there was no need to ask. Eyes spoke to eyes, and each knew the other's message.

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