

GOOD STORIES FOR CHILDREN---By Walt McDougall

HOW A LITTLE
DOG FOILED A
BOLD ROBBER
AND RESTORED
A LONG-LOST
MOTHER TO HER
HOME



TATTERS AND HIS MISTRESS IN THE PARK

QUEER THINGS
THAT HAPPEN-
ED TO A BRIGHT
LITTLE SKYE
DURING HIS FEW
SHORT YEARS
OF LIFE

MY NAME is Tatters, and I am a little silvery-coated Skye. I was born in a diamond mine in far-away South America, and only came here about three years ago, although as my Man is an American, I feel as if this had always been my home.

My first memories are of my Man and Bessie, his daughter, who is now twelve years old, but who was only ten when the thing happened about which I will tell you. I was called Tatters because of my shaggy coat, I suppose, but my Man said that on account of my hair they ought to call me Elbert Hubbard. I don't understand this yet.

However, hair or not, I am considered by all good judges to be the handsomest Skye, as well as the cleverest, ever seen in these parts. No trouble had been spared to teach me all that a dog can learn, and the admiration that is expressed when I appear in public with my broadcloth coat tells me plainly that I have cause to be proud.

To tell the truth, however, all that sort of thing makes me sick. For my part, that long, silky hair, so carefully combed and brushed until it shines like a silver tea-pot, fills me with disgust, and that is why, whenever I have a chance, I roll in something nasty and sticky. Of course, I get a bath as punishment afterward, but I have at least an hour or two of bliss.

There's something delicious in getting nice and dirty and exhaling that lovely smelly smell, although Bessie pretends that it sickens her, and she shudders when I bring into the house nice decayed bones, redolent with an aroma that fills me with lovely shiverings of glee; refuses to allow me to kiss her for hours, and, in fact, acts so silly that I am ashamed of her. Girls are certainly funny things, and very different from boys, who have little nonsense about them. I know a boy who hates to take a bath as much as I do myself. He's Bessie's cousin, and a good fellow, who sickens me at chickens and cats. Bessie always scolds me for even winking at them.

My Man is, I imagine, about the best Man ever made. He obeys me in nearly everything, and we rarely disagree nowadays over anything, although when I was younger he sometimes got so rebellious that he attacked me with a whip and larruped me just because I did things that he thought I ought not to do.

He forced me to sit up and hold sticks, carry letters and little baskets and things in my mouth, and at first I hated it until I found out what fun it was. He bossed me awfully in those days, making me mind him in even the smallest details, no matter what I wished to do myself, but now he merely hints to me if he wishes anything, and of course I love him so much that I am always very willing to do him a favor. He says:

"Tatters, suppose you get me my slippers;" or, "Hello, Tatters, I hear the post-man at the door; just run down and get the letters," and off I go like a flash, for I feel that he is so big and fat I ought to spare him the trouble of walking around, you know.

Sometimes, just to tease him, I pretend that I will not give him his letters, and then he makes believe to be angry and scolds me dreadfully; but I know it's all pretending, for when he really is angry there's a little keen spark in his eye that tells me that is no time for fooling. When I am teasing him he has to laugh, for to save my life I can't keep from wagging my little stumpy tail and giving myself away.

That he adores me and worships me I know full well, for he lets me sleep cuddled up in his bed, and when he is reading and I am snoring on his lap I have known him to sit still for an hour rather than disturb my slumber.

It's a great thing to own a nice, agreeable Man, although sometimes they are awfully careless and unreasonable. I have known him to stand and talk to another man on the street for a dreadful time, although I was barking at him with all my might and ordering him to come along, and many a time he has gotten on the railroad train and gone away somewhere without taking me along. Then I am very forlorn, for upon one thing I insist and always have my own way: I will not eat a morsel of food unless he gives it to me. No, sir; he is my Man and it is his duty to feed me. Once he stayed away three days, but he will never do it again, he says, for I did not touch food until he returned, for somehow I had lost all appetite worrying about what had happened to him.

Bessie is a dear little girl, although she is somewhat too greedy for her father's kisses to suit me, and when she is fondling him I sometimes feel a distant desire to chew her legs a little and chase her away; for what are kisses compared to the nice licks I can give him if he will let me? He seems to be as fond of her as he is of me, and that annoys me, although I hate to show it, as perhaps it might hurt his feelings; but at such times I run about barking savagely, and generally the scheme works. They stop hugging each other to see whether I am going crazy or not, and then I jump up on his lap and crowd her off.

I go out with Bessie very often, and then lead her carefully to the park, where there can always be

found a lot of dogs who never are washed, and nice mouldy things to roll in and perfume you all up just heavenly. I manage to lose her frequently, and it was thus I met the dark-haired lady who, although Bessie's hair is golden, made me think of my Girl. She looked so much like Bessie that at first I stopped and stared, but when she smiled I came as near to her as I ever do to strangers, and finally condescended to lick her hand. After that I always stopped to speak to her whenever I met her, and felt very kindly toward her.

But there was one person for whom I had no feeling except a keen, bitter hatred and fear; for, as you are perhaps aware, a dog knows a bad man instantly. I am not permitted to reveal to human beings the secret of this strange fact, but rest assured that it is true.

This man whom I so fervently despised was a friend of my Man's, and although I endeavored to warn my Man by attempting to bite Mr. Floyd on every occasion, he refused to take the warning, but actually was cross with me more than once. Mr. Floyd hated me as cordially from the first; indeed, it is a sign of a bad man not to love a dog, no matter what kind of a dog it is; and he tried several times to get a kick at me when my Man was not looking, but it takes a pretty quick man to kick Tatters Graeme, let me tell you; and once, while I was at it, I got in a sharp bite on his leg.

He was forever haunting our house, this man Floyd, and always snooping around prying into everything when alone in a room, as I who watched him constantly saw. I believed he was seeking something from the first, and that is why I always watched him; but, in fact, I watch every stranger. He had a mean, watery blue eye and a very red nose, and his habit of looking around very often, as if he thought somebody was about to grab him, made me nervous. When he was talking to my Man or to Bessie he used to chuckle softly and rub his hands together until I would bark with anger. I believe that Mr. Floyd was a man who would commit any crime, even bone-stealing from an honest dog not being beneath him.

One summer night we were all on the porch when Mr. Floyd happened somehow to speak of Bessie's mother. My Man was silent, but I could see in the dark that he was looking at his child. Then he said:

"Bessie cannot remember her mother, and knows nothing about her. I have never had the heart to tell her."

"I am old enough now to know about my mamma," said Bessie. "Tell me, papa."

"It is a painful story," said my Man, slowly. "It will only sadden you, my dearest one."

"Tell me," she insisted, coming closer to him and placing her head on his shoulder. There, with her golden head making a glow about her, she sat all through the tale.

"Not long after you were born, not more than a year, your mother lost a diamond necklace at a ball which was given at the house of a dear old friend. Perhaps because she was still in a nervous condition, or maybe because this necklace was exceedingly valuable, not only on account of the large size of the diamonds, but because it had been given to her great-grandmother by the Czar of Russia, Peter the Great, longer ago than you can possibly imagine, your poor mother worried so much over the loss of the necklace that soon she sank into a dangerous fever."

"Just at the crisis of the fever, which is the time when all hope is centred upon an hour, perhaps, your mother in her delirium arose and dressed herself while the nurse was absent, and, strange to say, left the house without being observed by any one. She was never seen again."

"Did—did she die?" gasped Bessie.

"I know not, my dear. She vanished as completely as if she had been taken up to heaven. We never obtained the slightest trace of her afterward."

"That was very mysterious!" said Mr. Floyd. "What did you think had happened?"

"What could I think? She was far too feeble to walk a block, apparently, although in delirium patients often reveal wonderful endurance. I can only say that we exhausted every means at our command without the least result. From that day to this I have never ceased to hope, but I long ago gave up seeking for her."

"And the diamonds?" asked Mr. Floyd. "Did you ever find them?"

"Yes; they were recovered in a week, but she was too delirious to be told about them. I thought at one time that it might have restored her to reason, but they would not permit me to mention them."

After a long silence Mr. Floyd asked:

"How were the diamonds lost?"

"The clasp on her necklace had loosened, and it fell into the moss in the conservatory and was discovered by the gardener. I have it here in the house. Would you like to see it? Some day when Bess is a woman she will have the diamonds."

We all went into the house, and going to a large brass chest of antique workmanship, my Man opened it with a funny little key and took out a box. From this he produced a gleaming, flashing mass of large diamonds, so brilliant that they made me blink. Mr. Floyd's eyes reflected the flame in the stones, but there was a gleam of desire and covetousness as he ran the long strand of diamonds through his hands and held his breath as he gazed upon them.

Whether I would have been so quick to suspect one of whom I was fond or not, I can't say, but at any rate I had no fondness for Mr. Oily Floyd. I used to sit for hours with my eyes fixed on the spot on his leg where I wanted to bite him.

Bessie was so thoughtful all the rest of the evening that I was able to slip away from her when Lucy, our colored girl, opened the door, and skip away down the dark street.

Then I went hunting for a cat that was my size, for I had no wish for big game. I thought I saw a white gleam far across the park lawn, and I scampered across the damp grass in a hurry. Then, just as I hoped to see pussy, I came to a sudden stop, for there upon a park bench sat Mr. Floyd with the most villainous looking ruffian I had ever seen. I could smell the wickedness of him even from where I stood. They both saw me, and Floyd said:

"Hello! There's that cur of Graeme's! Git out of here, you brute!"

"Great Scott! He's only a dog! You don't think he can hear and understand us, do you?" said the ugly man.

"He's smart enough for anything, that little imp is," replied Mr. Floyd, and he threw a small stone at me.

I retreated, but making a circle, came up in the dark where the tree-shadow blackened the grass, and there I sat down within a yard of them to listen.

"Yes, I saw the diamonds, and as I told you, he keeps them in the house. I have always been pretty sure of it," said Floyd.

"When I saw his wife in the hospital where I was lying with a broken leg, she was not silly, and I heard her tell about losing them. Then I made a few inquiries and she told her story, and when she mentioned her name I remembered about the loss of the Graeme diamonds, eight or nine years ago. It took me a couple of years to find my man, but I did it."

"He doesn't know that his wife went crazy," was picked up in the street, taken to a hospital where she gave her name as Annie Laurie, and was afterward sent to some asylum for the insane, but I know it. She hopped out of bed one winter day and walked right out of the house and was never heard of again."

"That's a queer story," said the other man.

"Don't you believe it?" demanded Floyd.

"Oh, cert! Only it sounds like a novel!"

"It surely does. Now, we will have those shiners before the week is out, and this is my plan: We will make the attempt on Thursday, because he is going to a meeting that afternoon, and it's the servant's off, which leaves only the kid in the house. We send her a fake letter telling her to come at once to her papa, and the house is cleared, for she will take the dog with her, see? Then into that rear-porch window we step, bust open the brass box without any trouble, and there you are with diamonds worth more than two hundred thousand right before your eyes. It's really too easy."

They got up and walked away, and I scurried home full of terror, to find Bessie standing on the porch. In my excitement I had never heard her blow the whistle.

Next day she brought me a lovely collar with my name and address engraved upon it, for she said

that I was a runaway and might be stolen. Ha! I'd like to see it tried.

The following day was Thursday, the day selected for the robbery, and if ever I wished for the power of speech I yearned for it then. You know, as a rule dogs are glad they can't talk, for if they could men would at once compel them to work for them, I think, and in this opinion I am supported by many wise dogs. My conduct was so mysterious all day, for I was constantly trying to warn my Man and Bessie of the danger, that at last they concluded I was sick and tried to give me a powder.

In the afternoon Bessie called me, and without taking the lead went to the door. I followed, for I well knew that I could slip away from her in the street and get back into the house, for there was a broken pane of glass in the cellar window, just over the coal bin, which is a place beloved by all clean dogs; for there one gets blacker and more soiled than anywhere else. From the coal bin the way upstairs was clear, and once behind the divan I could watch and observe all that happened.

So my mind was quite easy as I trotted along before her, barking at every ugly old man or woman and threatening every little boy and girl, as is my custom when abroad. I love to see the old men stand still and shake their sticks at me as I circle wildly around them, pretending to be a wolf, or at least a mad Saint Bernard. But I never get too near the sticks. Oh, dear no.

As we went up the street we met Mr. Floyd, who looked surprised and pleased, for with Bessie out of the house he saw that he would not have to send the proposed letter, and then he hastened away, hurrying, as I knew, to the house so as to accomplish his purpose before we returned. Half way down the block he turned, and I saw the dirty and villainous-looking man coming across the park toward him. I watched both until they turned the corner, for they were going to enter our back gate as soon as we had gone a few blocks further. Then came my chance, for Bessie stopped to talk to another girl and I slipped away, flying like an arrow down the street and into a narrow walk beside the house. Already both men had vanished. Like a flash of sunlight from a mirror I darted through the broken window, across the coal and upstairs, and even as I flew I heard them softly treading the back porch. Upstairs and behind the sheltering divan I whisked noiselessly, and, shaking with excitement, crouched there, my heart beating so that I feared they must hear it.

Then I heard the window open and their footsteps approaching, for once within they had no need to be careful. In another moment they stood in the room and Floyd laughed.

"It's a shame! It's really too easy!" he chuckled.

"Yes," added the other, "ain't really earning the money, is it?"

Floyd took a sharp bar of iron sharpened on the end and with a hammer drove it beneath the lid of the brass box, and in an instant wrenched it loose, taking out the little box and going nearer to the window.

"Here they are! Look at them! Did you ever see anything like that?" He held the string of diamonds in the sunlight and they blazed like tiny flames. The other man's eyes bulged with greed and delight. As they gazed over the gleaming gems Floyd stepped a space behind him and suddenly struck him on the back of the head with the iron bar.

He fell like a lump of lead to the floor, and Floyd, grinning horribly, chuckled again:

"Ha! Did you think that I brought you here to share this?" He looked at the man carefully and then tiptoed to the door as if he feared to waken his victim. As he passed out a deep hollow groan came from the stricken man's lips, and Floyd turned and struck him again.

"That makes it certain," said he, and passed out. I followed him swiftly, and as he turned at the head of the stairs I flew at his leg. My jaws are full of teeth that are astonishingly large, as well as beautifully white, and when I really bite you may be sure I can be felt. Mr. Floyd flew up into the air and dropped the necklace down the stairs. He howled with pain and reached for his leg, for I had brought the blood. I did not wait, but darted down,

seized the necklace and flew for the coal bin. Yet even there I did not feel safe, and out through the window I dashed.

Across the park I flew and stopped right before the dark-haired lady who was sitting in the shade reading.

For a moment she looked at me as I stood up on my hind legs holding up the necklace; then a change came over her features, a look of astonishment, and she sprang up toward me. She took the diamonds from me and I let her have them readily, although I cannot explain why. She looked at them for an instant, and then cried:

"My necklace! My necklace! It is found! Then she seemed to totter as if about to faint. "Where am I?" she cried. "What am I doing here?"

She looked around in a confused manner and then at me. Seeing my beautiful new collar gleaming amid my silvery hair she knelt beside me and read the name upon it.

"Douglas Graeme, 104 Park Avenue!" she read aloud, and then, "Why, whose dog are you? Not ours! Where did you come from?"

I wagged my stump cheerfully, for I saw Bessie hastening to me across the park and I felt that she could carry on the conversation and answer all questions far better than I. When she came up she said: "You had little scam! Next time you shall have the leader on you!"

The dark-haired lady, with a sweet smile, asked: "Is he your dog? And why has he Mr. Graeme's name on his collar?"

"Why, that's my papa's name," replied Bessie. "My name is Bessie Graeme."

"And that is my name, too!" cried the lady. "How strange! What does this mean? What is this place? Tell me, my child!"

Bessie, in great surprise, told her the name of the city, and she cried:

"But how did I get here? I have never been here before! Oh, where is my husband?"

"What is his name?" asked the girl, looking at the lady with a great light in her eyes.

"Douglas Graeme," replied the lady. "That is his name on this dog's collar! I cannot understand it!"

"I think you must be my mamma," said Bessie, very quietly. "My mamma, who was lost and never found again. Now I am going to take you to my papa and see if I am not right."

The lady held out the necklace, saying in a confused way:

"And these, they are mine. They were lost the other night at the ball."

"They are ours!" cried Bessie. "I am sure! Where did you get them?"

"This little dog brought them to me," she replied, sitting down from sheer perplexity.

Bessie cried: "Something has happened! They have been taken from the brass box! Come, let us go to papa at once!"

But they had not far to go, for as Bessie led the lady across the park my Man, smoking a big cigar which I knew came from the directors' room of the Bank, as I had been there with him, approached, and when his eyes fell on Bessie he smiled, but in another instant his face changed and filled with wonder. Then he rushed forward and held out his arms. The dark lady fell into them and clasped her arms about his neck, right there in public, and seemed about to faint. My Man led her to a seat, and Bessie coolly started to explain what had happened.

"Yes, this is your dear mamma," said my Man, as he held her hand tight. "She has come back to us and we will never let her go again!"

"But how did I get here?" asked Mrs. Graeme, when she had become calm. "I can remember nothing. What has happened to me?"

After she had been told all about her mysterious disappearance it was even then hard to make her believe that many years had passed, but at last she was convinced and we went home. There we found the injured man, of course, and he was not dead after all. When he was taken to the hospital he confessed and told all that Floyd had related, so it was quite easy to follow up poor Mrs. Graeme's history. She had been without memory of the past all these years, not even remembering her name until she saw it on my collar. Then all had come back to her in a flash. She had been cared for by kind people until she was restored to health, but not to memory, and then she had been placed in charge of a department in the hospital itself.

My, but Bessie had a lovely time after that, for her mamma was just like a big girl herself, but as for me, my nose is away out of joint, for now I have to be content with what caresses I can manage to obtain, although I must admit she is as nice as a woman can be and would spoil me completely were such a thing possible.

But I suppose she is aware that to arouse my jealousy is a dangerous thing, and, in fact, ever since I bit that man Floyd everybody treats me with much respect, especially the butcher's boy and the milkman. And they all say that whenever she wears the diamonds hereafter Tatters must be there as a bodyguard, but I can't say I relish the idea, as these society affairs are not to my taste.

WALT McDOUGALL.