

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers* 2, 1886 – 1887 June 5, '86 to May 21, '87)

## My Dog and My Secret

“Isn't he darling? Isn't he beautiful? Such a lovely nose! And such eyes!” – This is what I heard my wife say as I came home to dinner one day, and just as I was hanging up my hat and coat in the hall. We had been married five years and this was the first time she had not met me at the front door and escorted me in. As I listened, the monologue went on. “You lovely pet, you. You are too beautiful for any thing!” And then the noise of kissing went on as distinct as the words. I hurried in to examine the “he” that was so sweet and beautiful. It was a dog and my wife held it in her lap, in her sky-blue silk lap; and was still caressing it.

“Oh! is that you, Bob? Did you wipe your feet? Is it that late? Isn't he a beauty?” Said my wife, holding up the animal for my admiration and worship. “He's a genuine thorough-bred,” she continued, of the ‘Wilson and Home’ breed. There are only two in the world: the Queen has one, and this is the other. That is what the man told me himself. Don't look so cross at it! It is only \$25, and the man will call at your office in the afternoon.” This conversation and a great deal more of the same sort took place on Monday; and from that day on our family consisted of three beings, the pug dog, my wife, and I. I am particular about the day as well as the order in which I have named the family party; for on the following Tuesday, I felt that I was playing second fiddle in that household, the leading part being sustained by the pug dog. And I must do it or him justice by saying that he or it (whichever you please) was very well up in his part, and took the lead naturally and kept it up. And here I must contradict the saying that “two are company, and three are none,” so far as our Pug was concerned; for he was a never ending source of delight and conversation to both of us. At meal times, I was kept in a constant state of excitement by watching the Pug and eating my dinner. And in the evening, my wife – who kept a diary of the dog – narrated, with rhetorical embellishments what Pug had been doing in my absence. I used to read the newspaper with one eye, and watch Pug with the other, chew the buttons of my boots and hang by his teeth to the tassels of the sofa while my wife spurred him on pretending to stop him; and I have walked to my office many a time with his yellow hair hanging like a golden cloud on the surface of my best overcoat. The first hour of the night he would sleep in a little basket lined with comfort; and the balance of it he would spend on my overcoat or at the foot of the bed.

The pug was always fed first: in fact, since he had been in the house we had breakfast an hour earlier than usual. As I said before, he was a never-failing fountain of fun and amusement, especially to my wife, for three weeks have gone by, and she had never said “Mother” once; she bought him a harness and several expensive collars; and no end of ribbons to ornament his neck, and if possible, to match his complexion. No other dog was ever allowed to come within six feet of our pug; and if she saw one coming, she would catch up our pet in her arms as though she was afraid of hydrophobia. I asked her one day, as I saw her beating off with her pink-lace parasol a poor little cur who was trying to get

a smell of our beauty, “Are you afraid he'll get the measles, my dear?” “Measles!” She scornfully replied, “No! fleas.”

She never went out at night to theater, concert, or Opera because the dog could not be left alone, – it might fret: and taking it out in the daytime nearly cost us all our lives. It fell out this way:

It was a beautiful day, and my wife thought that the dog would enjoy a walk: so he was harnessed up, and decorated with his collar and ribbons, and we went. My wife held him by a string, and I held my wife by the arm, and he walked away in front, tugging and pulling us along like a mule on a tow-path. All went smoothly, until he - the dog - saw the policeman on the corner of 5th and Walnut, with a red sash on; when the pug took a sudden plunge toward him, pulled the string out of my wife's hand, and galloped across to the new Post Office. I don't know whether he had a prejudice against the police, or whether it was simply a trick to scare the cop. Away he went. So did my wife, and then I followed. At the moment two cable cars each supplied with a defective grip at each end came smashing along at the rate of 40 miles an hour. It seemed to me that all the fire bells commenced to ring, the people to shout at us, as, in true Indian fashion, one behind the other, we galloped across the street amid the wagons, cabs, coaches, drays, and cars, – the dog a full length in the lead. It was a miracle we were not all killed on the spot. It was a very close shave, but somehow or another, we escaped: and my wife got up the dog, covered with mud, and carried him triumphantly from the scene of confusion, while I tried to look like a disinterested bystander.

After that episode, we abandoned all promenades with the dog: and we purchased for him a balloon, an India rubber sausage, and a Maltese cat for in-door amusement and exercise. Of course he was allowed to go out in the yard, and I noticed that he always wanted to go there at meal times; my wife would suddenly drop the soup-ladle, and rush for the back door, and out would dart the dog, and she was no sooner back in her place than the dog would howl like a lion to be let in.

As I said before, I was contented: for, although, –between you and me – I would not have given ten cents for a whole dog-show full of dogs, and each one the best specimen of its race; – still, it was the cheapest domestic amusement I had ever come across. What I saved in ice cream, theaters, Shillito, and mother-in-law by the presence of that dog bought me a couple of shares in a building Association. It was a home bonanza. – This was the sunny side of the Pug. Now the shadow side.

I went home one cold day on a Wednesday, as usual, to dinner. I knew it was Wednesday, because I could smell the washing and ironing in the kitchen. I found the street door wide open. I ran to the back of the house to ask our girl Mary why that invitation to steal overcoats and umbrellas have been given. No Mary, but the kitchen-door and back-gate equally open-mouthed. I rushed up-stairs, and as I went, I heard some one crying and sobbing, in the dining-room, and felt a sombre, funereal atmosphere in the hall. When they arrived in the room, I found my wife crying and rocking herself backwards and forwards like a feminine Celt at a wake. “What is the matter,” I gasped. “Is the dog dead?” “Lost, stolen, kidnapped, robbed!” cried my wife: and then, as the magnitude of the loss burst upon her she went off into such an uncontrollable fit of grief, that even speech left

her for a moment or two. "Where's Mary?" "Gone after the dog, you stupid!" "Well, where's my dinner?" "You don't mean to say, Bob, you could sit down now and eat?" said my wife, as though horrified at my impiety.

Then Mary came in, and said that she could not see a hair of him anywhere. Then they both cried in unison, (Mary always in the minor key) and between the sobs I heard 20 reasons why the charcoal man stole that dog. In the first place, the fellow had a disagreeable voice; and he always bawled "Charcoal!" in front of the window whenever the poor dog was trying to enjoy his "nap" and in the next place, the dog had bit him. Then she hurried me out to hire the Pinkertons at Chicago, and notify the Chief of Police of what my wife called the "highway robbery." Of course I went, and was glad to get out. You will not be surprised that, on my way I stopped at the St. Nicholas, and had oysters and prairie chicken. You cannot lose a dog like that every day. Then I went to my office; and as I sat smoking, and turning over the Chief of Police in my mind, and wondering what the Chief of Police knew about lost dogs, the telephone called me. It was my wife. I never knew before how easy it was to tell fibs through the telephone; in about three minutes I had told lies enough to fill in evening newspaper and all about the Chief of Police: what he said and what I replied, and how anxious he was to get my dog. This seemed to satisfy her. Then she said, "Put an advertisement in every paper, and a suitable reward." "How much shall I offer?" I enquired. "Oh! Anything; a hundred or two dollars." "Great God!" I involuntarily exclaimed, when snap went the telephone in my ear, I was still looking at the invention of the 19th Century, and wondering if the Charleston Earthquake had struck the wire or a blizzard of the West, when the telephone man came in carrying a ladder and crowbar and a pair of pinchers.

"What's up?" I asked. "Your telephone's two come down: you forfeited it by swearing." "I didn't swear" "Yes – you did. John Robinson was sitting on 'change, and he says it took his hat off." "All right: I have lived 35 years without a telephone, and I can go the other half without any help from the Telephone Exchange." "Besides," I thought to myself, "in the present state of my wife's nerves, there ought not to be a telephone between us.

When I went home that night, I heard my wife telling the private watchman that she believed the charcoal man stole it, and that he looked like a thief anyway. And she told me privately that a night watchman who would allow it to be stolen in the day-time was no good anyway. – That was a very melancholy evening. My wife brought out the ribbons bought for our pug, the buttons he pulled off my shoes and the basket where he slept, and cried over them; and in the intervals bathing her head in Spirits of Camphor.

Friday was another trying day. More grief, more camphor bottles, and no dog. Outside a violent explanation took place between me and the charcoal man. "Do I look like a thief?" he shouted. "Well, my dear fellow, you look more like a thief than you do like a hippopotamus or a hyena. Don't you see the joke?" It took just 4 dollars to make that explanation satisfactory. When I went to my office, I found there four private detectives who work constantly advertising themselves as experts in finding thieves. I made four separate contracts, described the dog accurately, and gave each a photograph of the animal; and told them what I thought, what my wife thought, and what the private watchman recommended. That was Friday. That was an awful day. I never knew there

were so many reporters of newspapers in Cincinnati before. Every five minutes a fellow rushed in and asked, "are you the fellow that lost the pug dog?" And then before I could answer he would describe my office, the broken chairs, the hole in the carpet, and then give a silhouette of my name, occupation, age, politics, and ancestry. "See here!" I suddenly said. "I have no objections to being immortalized as the man who lost a pug dog, but tell me one thing: will this go into the Boston papers? I'll tell you why. My wife's mother lives in Boston, and if she sees this thing in the papers she might start at once." Then he laughed, said "All right," and when he was outside the door wrote, "Boston papers please copy."

But why attempt to paint all of the details of this misfortune? Let me come at once to the catastrophe. To judge by the number of camphor bottles, ten days had gone by, and no dog. The detectives, the reporters, and charcoal men were still on hand, but the dog was invisible. At home, I never said dog once; nor did I by any sausage for fear of the painful suggestion; and the doctor had advised my wife to see company, to forgive the charcoal man and to forget the dog. Well, one night when I was at the Canvas-back-Duck Club, of which I am an honorary member, my friend Boals, as we went home together said suddenly "I say, Bob. I know where your dog is, or was, – I saw it there myself." "Where," I asked, "tell me quick." "Why," said he with a wink, "I saw it at Joe's." "Joe's," I gasped, "Who, where, what, which Joe?" He surveyed me scornfully and then said coldly, "Oh no, you never heard of Joe: of course not!" "Well," I retorted, "at all events you know where she is as you saw my dog there. Is she well?" "Who: the dog or Joe?" "Well," I said, if she has got it," then I paused, and we looked at each other and laughed. "Where are you going?" he suddenly inquired. "Going? Why I'm going to find a policeman and asked him where this Joe lives, and tell him to get my dog for me." "Good!" he said: and when I left and looked back, I saw him standing in gazing after me with looks of admiration and shaking with laughter.

I headed this paper with the title My Dog and My Secret. Now for the secret.

Without describing the details I will say that I managed to receive that pug dog from the possession of the frail but fair Cyprian, whose first name is Joe. I hope she is fair, but there seems to be no doubt about her frailty. I put the dog inside my \$75 overcoat, and started for home.

It so happened that there was a coffee klatsch at the house that afternoon, as the Doctor had recommended some sort of distraction for my wife, and I knew nothing more distracting than two or three pretty girls. There were the lovely Miss Bibbs, and the two beautiful Miss Pinafores, and the elegant Miss Furbelow, and a lot of other pink and pale beau-fils. They were all seated around the table telling each other fish stories when I suddenly burst in with the dog, and placed it triumphantly upon the table. There was a tableau that Munkacsy might have painted. The kissing that dog got, –oh, my! They fed him with cake, and sugar, and coffee, and nearly choked him with half a banana.

My wife looked up with a happy face. "Bob, where did you find him? Tell me this minute; where was he?" "Where?" I repeated. "Why, at —" Then I paused and went for the camphor bottle and rubbed it over my forehead to excite my imagination. "Oh, yes!" Cried the lovely Miss Pinafores. "Do tell us where you found him: he looks so nice and

clean. “And around me arose a soprano chorus of, “Where did you find the dog?” My imagination refused to act, so I took refuge in the street. Fortunately, when I came back the dog was asleep, and not a word was said for fear of waking him.

But the question is, how can a man keep a pug dog and be truthful. That is my secret: whenever my wife looks at the dog she says: “Bob, do you know you never told me where you found our precious pet?” “No, my dear, and I never shall.”

Henry Hooper

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Dec 31, 1886

<REV. JNM 01/2012>