A CALIFORNIA WINTER.

[illegible poem]

—Katharine Van Harlingen in Harper's.

STRANGE DELUSION.

"Prisoner, rise and look upon the jury. Gentlemen, have you agreed upon your verdict?" It was the clerk of the court who spoke.

"We have."

"And what say you? Do you find the prisoner guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty—of murder in the first degree."

So said the foreman of the jury, and the hush of death overspread the court as the panel was polled, man by man.

The prisoner, a tall, blonde girl, had shot her affianced husband on the street. Her father, a respected merchant of a neighboring city, had engaged Henry North, the most famous criminal lawyer of his day, to defend her. The address to the jury by North had been one of the most sympathetic appeals ever made to a jury. It had touched every tender chord in the human heart. It had appealed to the jurymen as fathers, as brothers and as husbands. Everybody said that Henry North never had been so brilliant, never so magnetic.

And yet he had failed!

The keenest chagrin was written on every line of his face, but as he gathered up his papers he commented solely to himself:

"I knew it would be so!"

Knew what? How could he have foreseen the verdict when every other person in the courtroom had confidently expected an acquittal? What could he have meant?

The great criminal lawyer regained his composure in a moment. He made the usual motion for a new trial, stepped to the side of the convicted murderess, assured her that hope still remained, then shook the long, slender hand of the staring, statuesque woman as she was remanded for sentence. The next instant he was seen rushing hurriedly toward the stairway.

The spot and terminus courtroom, as everybody knows, is at the head of the long, marble staircase leading toward Broadway.

Hardly a minute later, before the room had cleared, a cry was heard in the outer hall. It was a shriek of agony and horror!

At the foot of the marble steps, gasping for breath, lay the famous advocate, Henry North, the idol of his profession. At the top of the landing North had been seen to reel, and before anybody could reach him he had plunged headlong to the bottom of the flight. Blood rose to his lips, his eyes were wide open, but appeared to be staring at an invisible object. The clammy moisture of death was upon his brow.

The dying man was raised in the arms of a young clerk, as a gaping crowd quickly gathered. He tried only long enough to say:

"He has killed me at last. He was crouching at the head of the stairs and tripped me." Then had come the shriek and the agonizing words: "Keep him off! Oh, way!"

Henry North ceased to breathe.

The death was the sensation of a week. The funeral was one of the largest ever seen in New York. But the mystery surrounding his last words remained. Many theories were advanced to explain them, none of which, to the shame of our common humanity, were creditable to the deceased, though there never had been a shadow upon his name.

I was the clerk who received the last confidences of Henry North. He was my father, and the secret of his life and tragic death had been the mystery of our family. Among his papers was found the following narrative, addressed to me, which after careful consideration I have decided to publish, to refute the calumny cast upon my father's name as a lawyer and as a man. The first date in it is six months ago, though the final page was undoubtedly written the last morning of his life. It is entitled "The Black Dog:"

"March 15, 1883—Something mysterious came into my life ten years ago today. Its influence upon my career has been such that I feel I must make some record of it, not knowing what may be its future developments. I also feel that I owe it to my dear son to leave some explanation of things that may have appeared strange to him and that may require investigation or defense. Indeed, I have suspected that he has noticed my strange conduct. Of late I observe that he finds an excuse for accompanying me to court and walks my companionship more than formerly.

"My misfortune arose in this way. When a young lawyer, I was elected to the New York assembly during the reform revolt of 1874 that swept Tilden into the governorship. The session of 1874-5 was an eventful one. Everybody will recall the great struggle with the canal 'ring,' in which I bore a prominent part. Near the close of the session I was asked to introduce a bill. It came from one of my constituents and was framed in the interests of the wool growing farmers in the center of the state. It authorized the killing of all vagrant dogs in counties north of the Harlem river. I presented it without proper consideration, and when the bill came up for final passage I found myself committed in its favor.

"Horace Benning, of a Hudson river district, rose when the bill was called up, and in order to secure the floor moved to strike out the enacting clause. Then he made one of the most attractive speeches I ever listened to, though every word was a reproach and a humiliation to me. Every sentence of it was so burned into my heart that I am able to reproduce it now. He spoke with deep feeling:

"'Gentlemen—This bill must not pass. I rise here in my place to oppose it—seriously, stubbornly to the last limit of my parliamentary rights—because I have by a friend at home who is vitally interested. In my absence he is the guardian of my family, the companion of my wife and children. He is sleepless in my interests. I trust him and he is worthy of any man's supreme confidence. As a comrade, he never has faltered in his devotion to me. Now that I am honored with a seat in your distinguished body he is no prouder of me than when I was a struggling lawyer seeking my first case. He'd give his life for mine at any moment. Though a devoted slave to me he's a peer of the realm. He's a dog, a noble specimen of his race.

"'I love him. And I say he must not die by the hand of man!

"'Recall the dogs of history. Have you forgotten Llewellyn's grand Gelert? Is gone from us all memory of the immortal Barry, of the great St. Bernard, for whom a stately monument is raised at Berne? Are we not told that Kotmir, faithful guardian of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, was admitted into Paradise by Mohammed? Can we, as lawmakers, overlook the glorious judicial combat to the death between the devoted dog of Aubrey and the murderer of his master? Do we forget that Byron, the prince royal of our English tongue, made for himself a grave at Newstead abbey by the side of his beloved mastiff, Boatswain? And Maera, too, descended from the noblest dogs of all antiquity, was translated to the heavens to become a dog star of the northern sky!

"'Oh, ye dogs among you, hang your heads in shame!

"'The dog has shone in song and story since the world began—no living creature so nearly allied to man. Indeed, 'tis said he learned to bark by hearkening to human speech. His dream of life is to serve mankind. His master's heart is his only heaven he knows.

"'No temptation can corrupt him. Friends prove false, but his fidelity endures through life. And if misfortune dire overtakes the master the dog alone does not desert. Ah! when comes the end—that last sad scene of all—friends, family, home, all gone, this faithful comrade follows the body to an unmarked grave in potter's field, where prone upon the soft, dark mound he wails a requiem and dies!'

"This speech had a magical effect. It put me in a false position. I loved the dog as well as he, but my unfortunate attitude as sponsor for the bill compelled me to defend it. But I was sorry when it passed by a small majority.

"A few nights after when I came home to my apartments I found a great, black dog stretched upon the white bearskin before my fire.

"He raised his head and his great, brown eyes stared me full in the face. His was a sympathetic look, but in my imagination, distorted by long brooding on the subject, he had come to reproach me for my act. The animal was sorry for me.

"Naturally, I resented this and motioned him to leave; he lay quite motionless and his great, brown eyes continued to follow me about. I became infuriated and kicked at him viciously. The dog, unmoved still lay unhurt before me.

"I had kicked a spectral dog!

"As I rose upright I saw the glossy black and clearly outlined form of the crouching animal slowly vanishing. Like smoke it arose before my eyes, enveloped me.

"Next day I saw that dog again! And I have seen him every day during the ten years that have intervened.

"I am sure that other people do not see him; but the animal has become an integral part of my existence. He accompanies me on the street, into the assembly chamber, into the committee room and back to my lodgings.

"I have been carrying a cane, but I have had to leave the stick at home because the dog was constantly crowding between it and my leg, and when friends were walking with me they were unable to understand my involuntary exclamations of annoyance.

"Yet, strange as it may appear, I began to grow fond of my spectral associate. Companionship is natural to man; and we know in the light of history and experience it is life itself to the canine race. Our days passed very happily together. We led the same regular lives. I generally walked to my office, or when the weather was bad I always selected the best route out of consideration for my devoted companion. At times I even took a carriage on his account. His care became my enthusiasm.

"Resuming my law practice with renewed energy, I was gratified to find that the dog accompanied me into court and curled himself up under my table while I was trying a case. After a few experiences I observed a very curious fact, namely, that the animal always left the room before the jury returned, if the verdict were to be adverse to my client. At first this act suggested to me a tender regard for my feelings—a desire not to witness my chagrin at defeat. As the thought developed in my mind, I frequently detected myself making a speech to the dog instead of to the jury. I watched his face with more care than I did that of any man in the courtroom. I hoped to read there a sure intimation of the verdict. But he always remained the same attentive attitude, and gave no sign until he left the room. Then he always awaited me outside the door, lovingly licked my hand and accompanied me home.

"As my criminal practice rapidly grew I daily studied his conduct more closely. I had already decided that his judgment was infallible. He never erred. He appeared to understand law—the technicalities, rather than the equities of a case. Ah! what a judge he'd make—my dog!

"Yet, the appalling thing about this delusion is that it has changed my whole life. I was married before the misfortune overtook me, but I have become estranged to my home. I lead a solitary life. I have given up my clubs, my friends and all my social habits. I have been and am in constant fear that somebody else will discover that I am followed by a black dog; that I am cursed by a delusion; that I am only a simple entity, but have a demon—gentle, if you please, but as an old Greek demon—bound to me. That would be horrible! I'd have to kill myself, and I'm afraid of death.

"How is it all going to end?"

Now by the son—I do not omit any quotations from my father's diary during the six months that followed the extract just given, though there are pages of the most agonizing and pitiful narrative, in which he lays bare his daily life so fully—his hopes, his sufferings, with rare gleams of joy—that it seems profanation in the dead to make them public. There are constant references to the dog, generally in a friendly spirit, but less frequently is he spoken of with enthusiasm. On the last page, evidently written before he left for the courtroom on the fatal morning, I find this:

"Sept. 18, 1883—Since the Katie King murder case has been on trial I have noticed a change in the dog's demeanor. He has become tricky, where before he was sympathetic. He has grown vicious. There is a treacherous leer in his great brown eyes. I have detected him twice in the act of tripping me! Slipping stealthily before me, he will crouch in my path. Twice have I escaped terrible falls, almost by a miracle. His temper has wholly changed. He sulks and snaps at times. He hasn't injured me yet, but I am beginning to fear him. It is more than that; it is mortal terror! But I hope for a verdict today. Then I'll rest. A trip to Europe may clear my brain of the clouds that darken it. I'll go where the cursed beast cannot follow me."

I, his son and private secretary, add my dear father's last words, as I held him in my arms, to make his narrative complete:

"He has killed me at last. He was crouching at the head of the stairs—tripped me." To which should be added his agonizing appeal, not heard by other ears than mine: "Take him away! Keep him off! He has me by the throat!" And I had forgiven him."—Julius Chambers in Once a Week.

Oil from Salmon Heads.

Within the last few years the manufacture of oil from salmon heads has been undertaken with profit. The heads are bought from the canneries at the rate of 1,000 for one dollar. One factory produces as much as 18,000 gallons a year, worth twenty-four cents a gallon. The heads are cooked by steam and the oil is run off the tops of the vats. One thousand heads make from thirty to thirty-five gallons of oil. It is not disposed of by itself as a commercial article, but is mixed as an adulterant with other and more costly oils.

The Courage of Women and of Men.

Women are more courageous than men, and for a very good reason, namely, that they have to suffer pain so much more frequently. The nerves of women suffer physically so much more than the majority of men that they learn to endure pain with comparative fortitude. The mere fact that men suffer so little causes them to dread the very idea of pain, and when it comes to bear it badly.—Pall Mall Gazette.

How to Keep Cheese.

A piece of cheese cloth squeezed out in vinegar and wrapped around drying cheese will preserve them, and all cheeses except cream cheeses can be kept from spoiling by putting them on a thick layer of powdered charcoal and covering with charcoal the top of the cheese. Cheese should be kept in a cool dry place, under a bell glass or in the tin cartridge boxes, but in wood.—New York Journal.

Honor Has the First Claim.

The first thought of a wife or a mother should be her home; all things, no matter how important, are secondary to that. No matter how famous a woman may become outside public walks, let her see to it that the things she will ask of her home and she performs the pleasant duty to her God, her family and mankind.—Detroit Free Press.

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