

Getting Rid of Fluff

BY ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

SO, after that, Murchison decided to get rid of Fluff. He told me that he had never really wanted a dog, anyway, but that when a dog is sent all the way from New York, anonymously, with \$2.80 charges paid, it is hard to cast the dog out into the cold world without giving it a trial. And Fluff was such a sweet little thing! Just a little fluffy ball with bright eyes. Brownlee—Brownlee lives on the other side of Murchison—was sure the pup had good blood in him, so Murchison tried the pup for a few years, and at last he decided he would have to get rid of him. He came over and spoke to me about it, because I had just moved in next door.

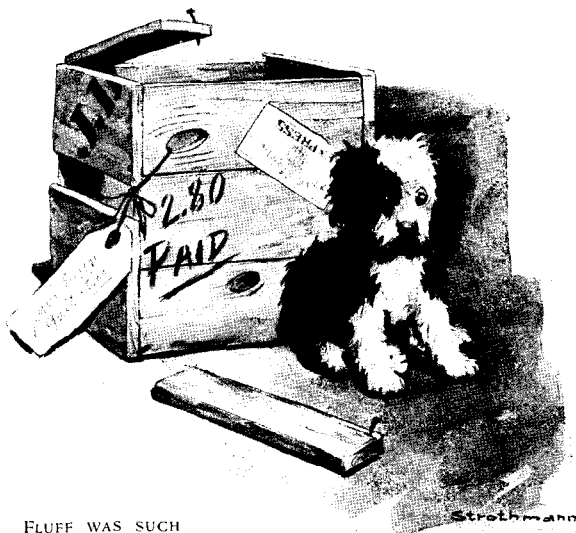
"Do you like dogs?" he asked; and that was the first word of conversation I ever had with Murchison. I told him frankly that I did not like dogs, and that my wife did not like them, and Murchison seemed more pleased than if I had offered him a thousand dollars.

"Now, I am glad of that," he said,

"for Mrs. Murchison and I hate dogs. If you do not like dogs, I will get rid of Fluff. I made up my mind several years ago to get rid of Fluff, but when I heard you were going to move into this house I decided not to get rid of him until I knew whether you liked dogs or not. I told Mrs. Murchison that if we got rid of Fluff before you came, and then found that you loved dogs and owned one, you might take our getting rid of Fluff as a hint that your dog was distasteful to us, and it might hurt your feelings. And Mrs. Murchison said that if you had a dog, your dog might feel lonely in a strange place and might like to have Fluff to play with until your dog got used to the neighborhood. So we did not get rid of him, but if you do not like dogs we will get rid of him right away."

I told Murchison that I saw he was the kind of neighbor a man liked to have, and that it was kind of him to offer to get rid of Fluff, but that he mustn't do so just on our account. I said that if he wanted to keep the dog, he had better do so.

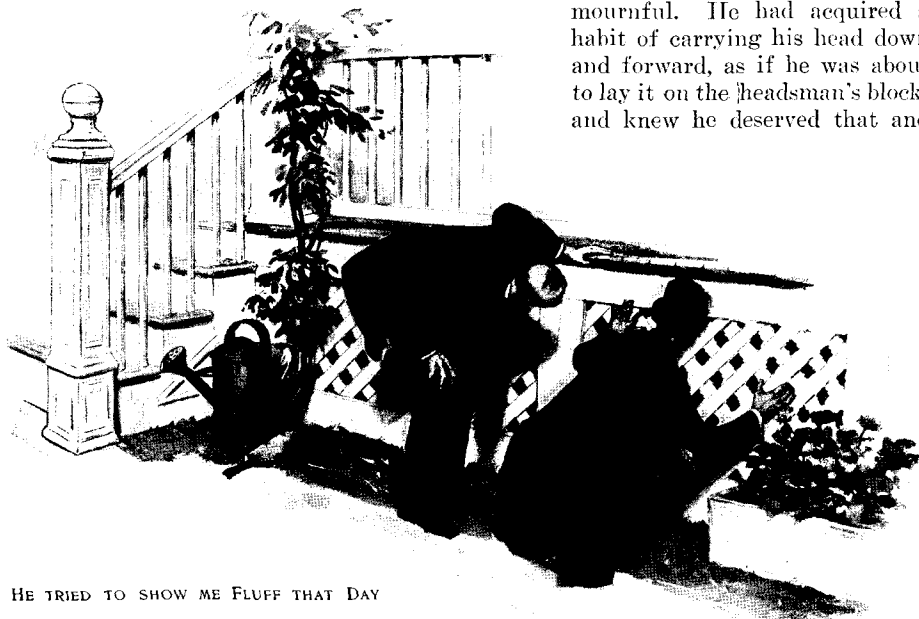
"Now that is kind of you," said Murchison, "but we would really rather get rid of him. I decided several years ago that I would get rid of him, but Brownlee likes dogs, and took an interest in Fluff, and wanted to make a bird dog of him, so we kept Fluff for his sake. But now Brownlee is tired of making a bird dog of him. He says Fluff is too strong to make a good bird dog, and not strong enough to rent out as a horse, and he is willing I should get rid of him. He says he is anxious for me to get rid of him as soon as I can."



FLUFF WAS SUCH
A SWEET LITTLE THING

When I saw Fluff I agreed with Brownlee. At the very first glance I saw that Fluff was a failure as a dog, and that to make a good camel he needed a shorter neck and more hump, but he had the general appearance of an amateur camel. He looked as if some one who had never

had taken Fluff out to make a duck dog of him, and that all the duck Fluff was interested in was to duck when he saw a gun, and that after he had heard a gun fired once or twice he had become sad and dejected, and had acquired a permanently ingrowing tail, and an expression of face like a coyote, but more mournful. He had acquired a habit of carrying his head down and forward, as if he was about to lay it on the headsman's block, and knew he deserved that and



HE TRIED TO SHOW ME FLUFF THAT DAY

seen a dog, but had heard of one, had started out to make a dog, and had got to thinking of a camel every once in a while, and had worked in parts of what he thought a camel was like with what he thought a dog was like, and then—when the job was about done—had decided it was a failure, and had just finished it up any way, sticking on the meanest and cheapest hair he could find, and getting most of it on wrong side to.

But the cheap hair did not matter much. Murchison and Brownlee showed me the place where Fluff had worn most of it off the ridge-pole of his back crawling under the porch. He tried to show me Fluff that day, but it was so dark under the porch that I could not tell which was Fluff and which was simply underneathness of porch. But from what Brownlee told me that day I knew that Fluff had suffered a permanent dislocation of the spirits. He told me he

more, and the sooner it was over the better. He couldn't even scratch fleas correctly, Brownlee said, but would give a couple of weak-minded little flips at the spot with his hind flipper, and then stop and groan. He had become so meek, Brownlee said, that when he met a flea in the road he would not even go around it, but would stoop down like a camel to let the flea get aboard. He was that kind of a dog. He was the most discouraged dog I ever knew.

The next day I was putting down the carpet in the back bedroom, when in came Murchison.

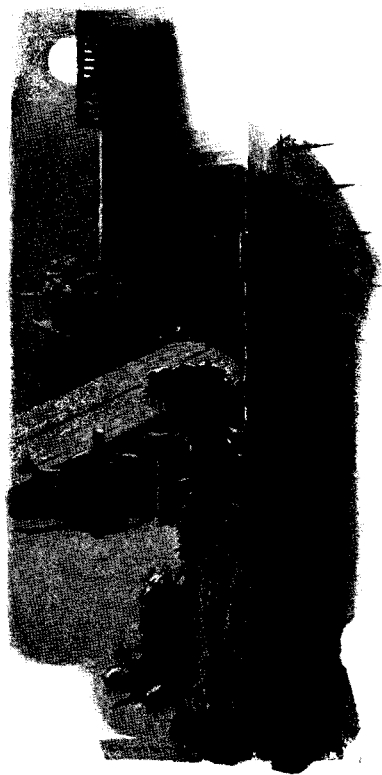
"I came over to speak to you about Fluff," he said. "I am afraid he must have annoyed you last night. I suppose you heard him howl?"

"Yes, Murchison," I said, "I did hear

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him. I never knew a dog could howl so loud and long as that. He must have been very ill."

"Oh no!" said Murchison, cheerfully. "That is the way he always howls. That is one of the reasons I have decided to get rid of Fluff. But it is a great deal worse for us than it is for you. The air inlet of our furnace is at the side of the house just where Fluff puts his head when he howls, and the register in our room is right at the head of our bed. So his howl goes in at the inlet and down through the furnace and up the furnace pipes, and is delivered right in our room, just as clear and strong as if he was in the room. That is one reason I have fully decided to get rid of Fluff. It would not be so bad if we had only one register in our house, but we have ten, and when Fluff howls his voice is delivered by all ten registers, so it is just as if we had ten Fluffs in the house at one time. And ten howls like Fluff's are too much. Even Brownlee says so."



HE WOULD CLING TO THAT NOTE

I told Murchison that I agreed with Brownlee perfectly. Fluff had a bad howl. It sounded as if Cruel Fate, with spikes in his shoes, had stepped on Fluff's inmost soul, and then joggled up and down on the tenderest spot, and Fluff was trying to reproduce his feelings in vocal exercises. It sounded like a cheap phonograph giving a symphony in the key of woe minor, with a megaphone attachment and bad places in the record. Judging by his voice, the machine needed a new needle. But the megaphone attachment was all right.

Brownlee—who knows all about dogs—said that he knew what was the matter with Fluff. He said Fluff had a very high-grade musical temperament, and that he longed to be the Caruso of dogs. He said he could see that all through his bright and hopeful puppyhood he had looked forward to being a great singer, with a Wagner repertoire and tremolo stops in his song organ, and that he had early set his aim at perfection. He said Fluff was that kind of a dog, and that when he saw what his voice had turned out to be he was dissatisfied, and became morbid. He said that any dog that had a voice like Fluff's had a right to be dissatisfied with it—he would be dissatisfied himself with that voice. He said he did not wonder that Fluff slunk around all day, feeling that he was no good on earth, and that he could understand that when night came and everything was still, so that Fluff could judge of the purity of his tonal quality better, he would pull out his voice and tune it up and look it over and try it again, hoping it had improved since he tried it last. Brownlee said it never had improved, and that was what made Fluff's howl so mournful. It was full of tears. He said Fluff would try it at G flat and B flat and D flat, and so on until he struck a note he felt he was pretty good at, and then he would cling to that note and weep it full of tears. He asked Murchison if he hadn't noticed that the howl was sort of damp and salty from the tears, but Murchison said he hadn't noticed the dampness. He said it probably got dried out of the howl before it reached him, coming through the furnace. Then Brownlee said that if there was only some way of regulating Fluff, so that he

could be turned on and off, Murchison would have a fortune in him: he could turn his howl off when people wanted to be cheerful, and then, when a time of great national woe occurred, Murchison could turn Fluff on and set him going.

He said he never heard anything in his life that came so near expressing in sound a great national woe as Fluff's howl did. He said Fluff might lack finish in tonal quality, but that in woe quality he was a master: he was stuffed so full of woe quality that it oozed out of his pores. He said he always thought what a pity it was for dogs like Fluff that people preferred cheerful songs like "Annie Rooney," and "Waltz me around again, Willie," to the nobler woe operas. He said he had tried to like good music himself, but it was no use: whenever he heard Fluff sing he felt that Murchison ought to get rid of Fluff. Then Murchison said that was just what he was going to do. What he wanted to talk about was how to get rid of Fluff.

But I am getting too far ahead of my story. Whenever I get to talking about the howl of Fluff I find I wander on for hours at a time. It takes hours of talk to explain just what a mean howl Fluff had.

But, as I was saying, Murchison came over while I was putting down the carpet in my back bedroom, and told me he had fully decided to get rid of Fluff.

"I have fully decided to get rid of him," he said, "and the only thing that bothers me is how to get rid of him."

"Give him away," I suggested.

"That's a good idea!" said Murchison, gratefully. "That's the very idea that occurred to me when I first thought of getting rid of Fluff. It is an idea that just matches Fluff all over. That is just

the kind of dog Fluff is. If ever a dog was made to give away, Fluff was made for it. The more I think about him and look at him and study him, the surer I am that the only thing he is good for is to give away."



"I HAVE FULLY DECIDED TO GET RID OF HIM," HE SAID

Then he shook his head and sighed.

"The only trouble," he said, "is that Fluff is the give-away kind of dog. That is the only kind you can't give away. There is only one time of the year that a person can make presents of things that are good for nothing but to give away, and that is at Christmas. Now, I might—"

"Murchison," I said, laying my tack-hammer on the floor and standing up, "you don't mean to keep that infernal, howling beast until Christmas, do you? If you do, I shall stop putting down this carpet. I shall pull out the tacks that are already in and move elsewhere. Why, this is only the first of May, and if I have to sleep—if I have to keep awake every night and listen to that animated fog-horn drag his raw soul over the teeth of a rusty harrow, I shall go crazy. Can't you think of some one that is going to have a birthday sooner than that?"

"I wish I could," said Murchison, wistfully, "but I can't. I want to get rid of Fluff, and so does Brownlee, and so does Massett, but I can't think of a way to get rid of him, and neither can they."

"Murchison," I said, with some asperity, for I hate a man who trifles, "if I really thought you and Brownlee and Massett were as stupid as all that, I would be sorry I moved into this neighborhood, but I don't believe it. I believe you do not mean to get rid of Fluff. I believe you and Brownlee and Massett want to keep him. If you wanted to get rid of him, you could do it the same way you got him."

"That's an excellent idea!" exclaimed Murchison. "That is one of the best ideas I ever heard, and I would go and do it if I hadn't done it so often already. As soon as Brownlee suggested that idea I did it. I sent Fluff by express to a man—to John Smith—at Worcester, Massachusetts, and when Fluff came back I had to pay eight dollars and fifty-five cents charges. But I didn't begrudge the money. The trip did Fluff a world of good—it strengthened his voice, and made him broader minded. I tell you," he said, enthusiastically, "there's nothing like travel for broadening the mind! Look at Fluff! Maybe he don't show it, but that dog's mind is so broadened by travel that if he was turned loose in Alaska he would find his way home. When I found his mind was getting so tremendously broad I stopped sending him places. Brownlee—Brownlee knows all about dogs—said it would not hurt Fluff a bit; he said a dog's mind could not get too broad, and that as far as he was concerned he would just like to see once how broad minded a dog could become; he would like to have Fluff sent out by express every time he came back. He told me it was an interesting experiment—that, so far as he knew, it had never been tried before—and that the thing I ought to do was to keep Fluff travelling all the time. He said that so far as he knew it was the only way to get rid of Fluff; that some time while he was travelling around in the express car there might be a wreck, and we would be rid of Fluff; and if there wasn't a wreck it would be interesting to see what effect constant travel would have on a coarse

dog. He said I might find after a year or two that I had the most cultured dog in the United States. Brownlee was willing to have me send Fluff anywhere. He suggested a lot of good places to send dogs, but he didn't care enough about dog culture to help pay the express charges."

"I see, Murchison," I said, scornfully. "I see! You are the kind of man who would let a little money stand between you and getting rid of a dog like Fluff! If I had a dog like Fluff, nothing in the world could prevent me from getting rid of him. I only wish he was my dog."

"Take him!" said Murchison, generously; "I make you a full and free present of him. You can have that dog absolutely and wholly. He is yours."

"I will take the dog," I said, haughtily; "not because I really want a dog, nor because I hanker for that particular dog, but because I can see that you and Brownlee and Massett have been trifling with him. Bring him over in my yard, and I will show you in very short measure how to get rid of Fluff."

That afternoon both Brownlee and Massett called on me. They came and sat on my porch steps, and Murchison came and sat with them, and all three sat and looked at Fluff and talked him over. Every few minutes they would—Brownlee and Massett would—get up and shake hands with Murchison and congratulate him on having gotten rid of Fluff, and Murchison would blush modestly and say: "Oh, that is nothing. I always knew I would get rid of him."

And there was the dog not five feet from them, tied to my lawn hydrant. I watched and listened to them until I had had enough of it, and then I went into the house and got my shotgun. I loaded it with a good BB shell and went out.

Fluff saw me first. I never saw a dog exhibit such intelligence as Fluff exhibited right then. I suppose travel had broadened him, and probably the hydrant was old and rusted out, anyway. When a man moves into a house he ought to have *all* the plumbing attended to the first thing. Any ordinary unbroadened dog would have laid down and pulled, but Fluff didn't. First he jumped six feet straight into the air, and that pulled the four feet of hydrant pipe up by the

roots, and then he went away. He took the hydrant and the pipe with him, and that might have surprised me, but I saw that he did not know where he was going nor how long he would stay there when he reached the place, and a dog can never tell what will come handy when he is away from home. A hydrant and a piece of iron pipe might be the very thing he would need. So he took it along.

If I had wanted a fountain in my front yard, I could not have got one half as quickly as Fluff furnished that one, and I would never have thought of pulling out the hydrant to make one. Fluff thought of that—at least Brownlee said he thought of it,—but I think all Fluff wanted was to get away. And he got away, and the fountain didn't happen to be attached to the hydrant, so he left it behind. If it had been attached to the hydrant, he would have taken it with him. He was a strong dog.

"There!" said Brownlee, when we had heard the pipe rattle across the Eighth Street bridge. "There is intelligence for you! You ought to be grateful to that dog all your life. *You* didn't know it was against the law to discharge a gun in the city limits, but Fluff did, and he wouldn't wait to see you get into trouble. He has heard us talking about it, Murchison. I tell you travel has broadened that dog! Look what he has saved you," he said to me, "by going away at just the psychological moment. We should have told you about not firing a gun in the city limits. You can't get rid of Fluff that way. It is against the law."

"Yes," said Massett, "and if you knew Fluff as well as we do, you would know that he is a dog you can't shoot. He is a wonderful dog. He knows all about guns. Brownlee tried to make a duck dog out of him, and took him out

where the ducks were—showed him the ducks—shot a gun at the ducks—and what do you think that dog learned?"

"To run," I said, for I had heard about Brownlee teaching Fluff to retrieve. Brownlee blushed.

"Yes," said Massett, "but that wasn't all. It doesn't take intelligence to make a dog run when he sees a gun, but Fluff did not run like an ordinary dog. He saw the gun and he saw the ducks, and



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he saw that Brownlee only shot at ducks when they were on the wing. And he thought Brownlee meant to shoot him, so what does he do? Stand still? No; he tries to fly. Gets right up and tries to fly. He thought that was what Brownlee was trying to teach him. He couldn't fly, but he did his best. So whenever Fluff sees a gun he is on the wing, so to speak. You noticed he was on the wing, didn't you?"

I told him I had noticed it. I said that as far as I could judge Fluff had a good strong wing. I said I didn't mind losing a little thing like a hydrant and a length or two of pipe, but I was glad I hadn't fastened Fluff to the house—I always liked my houses to have a cellar, and it would be just like Fluff to stop flying at some place where there wasn't any cellar.

"Oh," said Massett, "he wouldn't have

gone far with the house. A house is a great deal heavier than a hydrant. He would probably have moved the house off the foundation a little, but, judging by the direction Fluff took, the house would have wedged between those two trees, and you would have only lost a piece of the porch, or whatever he was tied to. But the lesson is that you must not try to shoot Fluff unless you are a good wing shot. Unless you can shoot like Davy Crockett you would be apt to wound Fluff without killing him, and then there *would* be trouble!"

"Yes," said Murchison, "the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals folks. There is only one way in which a dog can be killed according to law in this place, and that is to have the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals folks do it. You send them a letter telling them you have a dog you want killed, and asking them to come and kill it. That is according to law."

"That," I said, firmly, "is what I will do."

"It won't do any good," said Murchison, sadly. "They never come. This addition to Gallatin is too far from their offices to be handy, and they never come. I have eighteen deaths for Fluff on file at their offices already, and not one of them has killed him. When you have had as much experience with dogs as I have you will know that the Prevention of Cruelty to them in this town does not include killing them when they live in the suburbs. The only way a dog can die in the suburbs of Gallatin is to die of old age."

"How old is Fluff?" I asked.

"Fluff is a young dog,"

said Brownlee. "If he had an ordinary dog constitution, he would live fifteen years yet, but he hasn't. He has an extra strong constitution, and I should say he was good for twenty years more. But that isn't what we came over for. We came over to learn how much you mean to get rid of Fluff."

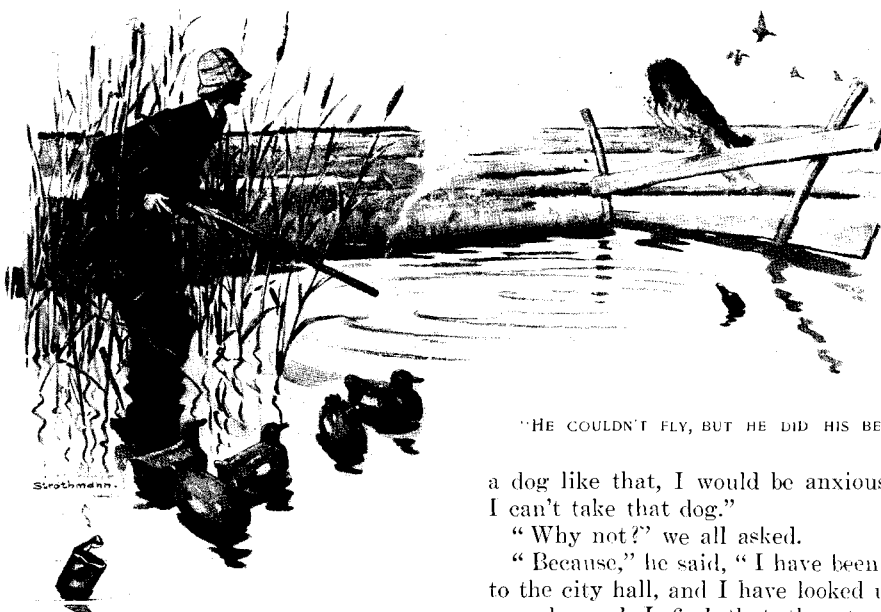
"Brownlee," I said, "I shall think up some way to get rid of Fluff. Getting rid of a dog is no task for a mind like mine. But until he returns and gives me back my hydrant I shall do nothing further. I am not going to bother about getting rid of a dog that is not here to be got rid of."

By the time Fluff returned I had thought out a plan. Murchison had never paid the dog tax on Fluff, and that was the same as condemning him to death if he was ever caught outside of the yard, and when he was he could not be caught. He was a hasty mover, and little things such as closed gates never prevented him from entering the yard when in haste. When he did not jump over he could go right through a fence. But to a man of my ability these things are trifles. I knew how to get rid of Fluff. I knew how to have him caught in the street without a license. I chained him there.

Brownlee and Massett and Murchison came and watched me do it. Our street is not much used, and the big stake I drove in the street was not much in the way of passing grocery delivery wagons. I fastened Fluff to the stake with a chain, and then I wrote to the city authorities and complained. I said there was a dog without a license that was continually in front of my house, and I wished it removed; and, a week or so after, the dog-catcher came around and had a look at



A HYDRANT MIGHT BE THE VERY THING HE WOULD NEED. SO HE TOOK IT ALONG



"HE COULDN'T FLY, BUT HE DID HIS BEST"

Fluff. He walked all around him, while Massett and Brownlee and Murchison and I leaned over our gates and looked on. He was not at all what I should have expected a dog-catcher to be, being thin and rather gentlemanly in appearance; and after he had looked Fluff over well he came over and spoke to me. He asked me if Fluff was my dog. I said he was.

"I see!" said the dog-catcher. "And you want to get rid of him. If he was my dog, I would want to get rid of him too. I have seen lots of dogs, but I never saw one that was like this, and I do not blame you for wanting to part with him. I have had my eye on him for several years, but this is the first opportunity I have had to approach him. Now, however, he seems to have broken all the dog laws. He has not secured a license, and he is in the public highway. It will be my duty to take him up and gently chloroform him as soon as I make sure of one thing."

"Tell me what it is," I said, "and I will help you make sure of it."

"Thank you," he said, "but I will attend to it"; and with that he got on his wagon and drove off. He returned in about an hour.

"I came back," he said, "not because my legal duty compels me, but because I knew you would be anxious. If I owned

a dog like that, I would be anxious, too. I can't take that dog."

"Why not?" we all asked.

"Because," he said, "I have been down to the city hall, and I have looked up the records, and I find that the streets of this addition to the city have not been accepted by the city. The titles to the property are so made out that until the city legally accepts the streets each property owner owns to the middle of the street fronting his property. If you will step out and look, you will see that the dog is on your own property."

"If that is all," I said, "I will move the stake. I will put him on the other side of the street."

"If you would like him any better there," said the dog-catcher, "you can move him, but it would make no difference to me. Then he would be on the private property of the man who owns the property across the street."

"But, my good man," I said, "how is a man to get rid of a dog he does not want?"

The dog-catcher frowned.

"That," he said, "seems to be one of the things our lawmakers have not thought of. But whatever you do, I advise you to be careful. Do not try any underhand methods, for now that my attention has been called to the dog, I shall have to watch his future and see that he is not badly used. I am an officer of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals as well as a dog-catcher, and I warn you to be careful what you do with that dog."

Then he got on his wagon again and drove away.

The next morning I was a nervous wreck, for Fluff had howled all night, and Murchison came over soon after breakfast. He was accompanied by Brownlee and Massett.

"Now, I am the last man in the world to do anything that my neighbors would take offence at," he said, as soon as they were seated on my porch, "and Brownlee and Massett love dogs as few men ever love them; but something has to be done about Fluff. The time has come when we must sleep with our windows open, and neither Massett nor Brownlee nor I got a minute of sleep last night."

"Neither did I," I said.

"That is different entirely," said Murchison. "Fluff is your dog, and if you want to keep a howling dog, you would be inclined to put up with the howl, but we have no interest in the dog at all. We do not own him, and we consider him a nuisance. We have decided to ask you to get rid of him. It is unjust to your neighbors to keep a howling dog. You will have to get rid of Fluff."

"Exactly!" said Massett. "For ten nights I have not slept a wink, and neither has Murchison, nor has Brownlee--"

"Nor I," I added.

"Exactly," said Massett; "and four men going without sleep for ten nights is equal to one man going without sleep forty nights, which would kill any man. Practically, Fluff has killed a man and is a murderer; and as you are responsible for him, it is the same as if you were a murderer yourself, and as you were one of the four who did not sleep, you may also be said to have committed suicide. But we do not mean to give you into the hands of the law until we have remonstrated with you. But we feel deeply, and the more so because you could easily give us some nights of sleep in which to recuperate."

"If you can tell me how," I said, "I will gladly do it. I need sleep more at this minute than I ever needed it in my life."

"Very well," said Massett. "Just get out your shotgun and show it to Fluff. When he sees the gun he will run. He will take wing like a duck, and while

he is away we can get a few nights' rest. That will be something. And if we are not in good condition by that time, you can show him the shotgun again. Why!" he exclaimed, as he grew enthusiastic over his idea, "you can keep Fluff eternally on the wing!"

I felt that I needed a vacation from Fluff. I unchained him and went in to get my shotgun. Then I showed him the shotgun, and we had two good nights of sleep. After that, whenever we felt that we needed a few nights in peace, I just showed Fluff the shotgun and he went away on one of his flying trips.

But it was Brownlee—Brownlee knew all about dogs—who first called my attention to what he called the periodicity of Fluff.

"Now, you would never have noticed it," he said one day when Murchison and I were sitting on my porch with him, "but I did. That is because I have studied dogs. I know all about dogs, and I know Fluff can run. That is because he has greyhound blood in him. With a little wolf. That is why I studied Fluff, and how I came to notice that every time you show him the shotgun he is gone just forty-eight hours. Now you go and get your shotgun and try it."

So I tried it, and Fluff went away as he always did, and Brownlee sat there bragging about how Fluff could run, and about how wonderful he was himself to have thought of the periodicity of Fluff.

"Did you see how he went?" he asked, enthusiastically. "That gait was a thirty mile an hour gait. Why, that dog travels—he travels—" He took out a piece of paper and a pencil and figured it out. "In forty-eight hours he travels fourteen hundred and forty miles! He gets seven hundred and twenty miles from home!"

"It doesn't seem possible," said Murchison.

"No," said Brownlee, frankly, "it doesn't." He went over his figures again. "But that is figured correctly," he said. "If—but maybe I did not gauge his speed correctly. And I didn't allow for stopping to turn around at the end of the out sprint. What we ought to have on that dog is a pedometer. If I owned

a dog like that, the first thing I would get would be a pedometer."

I told Brownlee that if he wished I would give him Fluff, and he could put a pedometer or anything else on him; but Brownlee remembered he had some work to do and went home.

But he was right about the periodicity of Fluff. Almost on the minute at the end of forty-eight hours Fluff returned, and Brownlee and Murchison, who were there to receive him, were as pleased as if Fluff had been going away instead of returning.

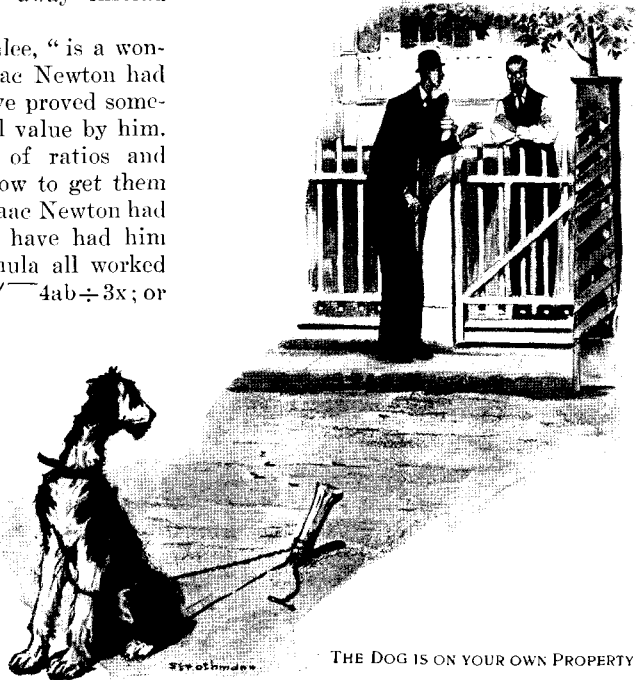
"That dog," said Brownlee, "is a wonderful animal. If Sir Isaac Newton had had that dog, he would have proved something or other of universal value by him. That dog is plumb full of ratios and things, if we only knew how to get them out of him. I bet if Sir Isaac Newton had had Fluff as long as you have had him he would have had a formula all worked out: $x + y (2 \times z - \text{dog}) = \sqrt{-4ab} \div 3x$; or something of that kind, so that any one with half a knowledge of algebra could figure out the square root of any dog any time of the day or night. I could get up a Law of Dog myself if I had the time, with a dog like Fluff to work on. 'If one dog travels fourteen hundred and forty miles at the sight of a gun, how

far would two dogs travel?' All that sort of thing. Stop!" he ejaculated, suddenly. "If one dog travels forty-eight hours at sight of one gun, how far would a dog travel at sight of two guns? Murchison," he cried, enthusiastically, "I've got it! I've got the fundamental law of periodicity in dogs! Get out your gun," he said to me, "and I will get mine."

He stopped at the gate long enough to say:

"I tell you, Murchison, we are on the verge of a mighty important discovery—a mighty important discovery! If this thing turns out right, we will be at the root of all dog nature. We will have the great underlying law of scared dogs."

He came back with his shotgun carefully hidden behind him, and then he and I showed Fluff the two guns simultaneously. For one minute Fluff was startled. Then he vanished. All we saw of him as he went was the dust he left in his wake. Massett had come over when Brownlee brought over his gun, and Murchison and I sat and smoked while Massett and Brownlee fought out the periodicity of Fluff. Brownlee said that



for two guns Fluff would traverse the same distance as for one, but twice as quickly; but Massett said Brownlee was foolish, and that any one who knew anything about dogs would know that no dog could go faster than Fluff had gone at the sight of one gun. Massett said Fluff would travel at his regular one-gun speed, but would travel a two-gun distance. He said Fluff would not be back for ninety-six hours. Brownlee said he would be back in forty-eight hours, but both agreed that he would travel twenty-eight hundred and eighty miles. Then Murchison went home and got a map, and showed Brownlee and Massett that if Fluff travelled fourteen hundred miles in

the direction he had started he would have to do the last two hundred miles as a swim, because he would strike the Atlantic Ocean at the twelve-hundredth mile. But Brownlee just turned up his nose and sneered. He said Fluff was no fool, and that when he reached the coast he would veer to the north and travel along the beach for two hundred miles or so. Then Massett said that he had been thinking about Brownlee's theory, and he *knew* no dog could do what Brownlee said Fluff would do—sixty miles an hour. He said he agreed that a dog like Fluff could do thirty miles an hour if he did not stop to howl, because his howl represented about sixty horse-power, but that no dog could ever do sixty miles an hour. Then Brownlee got mad and said Massett

they were not. Fluff came home in twenty-four hours, almost to the minute.

When I went over and told Brownlee, he wouldn't believe it at first, but when I showed him Fluff he cheered up and clapped me on the back.

"I tell you," he exclaimed, "we have made a great discovery. We have discovered the law of scared dogs. 'A dog is scared in inverse ratio to the number of guns!' Now it wouldn't be fair to try Fluff again without giving him a breathing spell, but to-morrow I will come over, and we will try him with four guns. We will work this thing out thoroughly," he said, "before we write to the Academy of Science, or whatever a person would write to, so that there will be no mistake. Before we give this secret to the world we want to have it complete. We will try Fluff with any number of guns, and with pistols and rifles, and if we can get one we will try him with a cannon. We will keep at it for years and years. You and I will be famous."

I told Brownlee that if he wanted to experiment for years with Fluff he could have him, but that all I wanted was to get rid of him; but Brownlee wouldn't hear of that. He said he would buy Fluff of me if he was rich enough, but that Fluff was so valuable he couldn't think of buying him. He would let me keep him. He said he would be over the next day to try Fluff again.

So the next day he and Murchison and Massett came over and held a consultation on my porch to decide how many guns they would try on Fluff. They could not agree. Massett wanted to try four guns and have Fluff absent only half a day, but Brownlee wanted to have me break my shotgun in two and try that on Fluff. He said that according to the law of scared dogs a half a gun, working it out by inverse ratio, would

keep Fluff away for twice as long as one gun, which would be ninety-six hours; and while they were arguing it out Fluff came around the house unsuspectingly and saw us on the porch. He gave us one startled glance and started north by northeast at



"HOW FAR WOULD HE TRAVEL
AT THE SIGHT OF TWO GUNS?"

Struthmann.

was a born idiot, and that Fluff not only *could* do sixty miles, but he could keep on increasing his speed at the rate of thirty miles per gun indefinitely. Then they went home mad, but they agreed to be on hand when Fluff returned. But

what Brownlee said was the most marvelous rate of speed he ever saw. Then he and Massett got down off the porch and looked for guns, but there were none in sight. There wasn't anything that looked the least like a gun. Not even a broomstick. Brownlee said he knew what was the matter—Fluff was having a little practice run to keep in good condition, and would be back in a few hours; but judging by the look he gave us as he went, I thought he would be gone longer than that.

I could see that Brownlee was worried, and as day followed day without any return of Fluff, Murchison and I tried to cheer him up, showing him how much better we all slept while Fluff was away; but it did not cheer up poor Brownlee. He had set his faith on that dog, and the dog had deceived him. We all became anxious about Brownlee's health—he moped around so; and just when we began to be afraid he was going into a decline he cheered up, and came over as bright and happy as a man could be.

"I told you so!" he exclaimed, joyfully, as soon as he was inside my gate. "And it makes me ashamed of myself that I didn't think of it the moment I saw Fluff start off. You will never see that dog again."

I told Brownlee that that was good news, anyway, even if it did upset his law of scared dogs; but he smiled a superior smile.

"Disprove nothing!" he said. "It proves my law. Didn't I say in the first place that the time a dog would be gone was in inverse ratio to the number of guns? Well, the inverse ratio to no guns is infinite time—that is how long Fluff will be gone; that is how long he will run. Why, that dog will never stop running while there is any dog left in him. He can't help it—it is the law of scared dogs."

"Do you mean to say," I asked him,

"that that dog will run on and on forever?"

"Exactly!" said Brownlee, proudly. "As long as there is a particle of him left he will keep on running. That is the law."



HE RETURNED A LONG TIME BEFORE INFINITY

Maybe Brownlee was right. I don't know. But what I would like to know is the name of some one who would like a dog that looks like Fluff, and is his size, and that howls like him, and that answers to his name. A dog of that kind returned to my house a long time before infinity, and I would like to get rid of him. Brownlee says it isn't Fluff; that his law couldn't be wrong; and that this is merely a dog that resembles Fluff. Maybe Brownlee is right, but I would like to know some one that wants a dog with a richly melodious voice.



A Portrait by Robert Henri.

TRUTH is common property, and most artists strive to abide by it; their expression is not affected by their honesty as much as by their training and temperament. Mr. Henri is an innovator who worships modernity, and, in his effort to escape the conventional, has often shown a preference for the odd, which has served to lessen his appeal. In his opposition to the gay portraits of fashion, and with his leaning toward the unconventional, fostered by his admiration for Manet, there has been apparent an overfondness for sombre black, but withal his work shows directness, simplicity, and robust vitality. While a painter of force, as yet he has not shown himself a poet, nor given much evidence of being a psychologist. He has more eye than soul, and his portraits show a stronger sense of vibrant life than of beauty or sentiment. The facts which his vision dwells upon and his brush records are painter's facts, not humanity's. There is wanting that unerring analysis, that keen perception, which goes beneath externals, and in place of life we sometimes get hectic illumination. The deeper side is left untouched. With his robust interest, we feel that lack of sensitive vision, of nerve perception, which goes with robustness, hence his portraits do not suggest those infinite, unimaginable things of the spirit, yet in those sombre, full-length portraits of women there are hints of a grand style. To him life is usually dramatic, seldom elegiac, and he enjoys it keenly. There is never any sense of weariness, of satiety shown, but always a buoyant, heartening breath which reveals the impulse of youth—that impulse which ever refuses the lessons of other men's best experience, but which must find its own path through much travail.

In this portrait of Mrs. Henri, the painter is seen at his best. It shows the absence of eccentricity and a directness and individual force that would render his art distinguishable among the multitude of painters claiming attention.

W. STANTON HOWARD.