

A BLACK DOG AND A BLACK OWNER.

“R. GRAHAME, the cattle-dealer, is outside, sir, with a strange gentleman. They want to look at our young cattle.”

The speaker was Jock Howieson, familiarly known as the “laird’s man,” being what is known in Scotland as an “orra body,” that is, one that does anything that is required of him, and the gentleman he addressed was Laird Hayslap, one of the most popular men in the whole west country.

“Want to look at our young cattle, do they, Jock? It’s rather early for a man to be on the cadge for heifers, but, no doubt whatever, he’ll be after pedigree stock, maybe for Australia and New Zealand. However, tell them I’ll be out in half a second, I’m just finishing a letter to Mr. Black, o’ *Bell’s Life*, to say (and you’ll agree with me) that the black dog ‘Charlie’—‘Prince Charlie,’ of course, as his running name is—never was in better condition, and that he’ll take a lot o’ beating in the Waterloo.”

“Well I wot that, sir, I’d like to see the dog that will beat him, that’s all I say, but I think, sir, it’s high time he was scuin’ a hare.”

“I don’t know but what you are right. I think he looks a little sick for want of a good trial: so, Jock, you’ll better bring them out along with the fawn this forenoon, and, as Grahame likes a course, you’d better come over the hill when we’re looking the beasties.”

“His friend has a dog with him, but it’s a dirty black poacher’s sort, no muckle quality about it whatever. However, no matter, we’ll let Grahame see the black, and, if we get a nice outlying hare on the Lugar meadow, a trial that he’ll not forget.”

Laird Hayslap was one of the old-fashioned school of Scottish landlords who refused to be modernised by mail trains, and the only London Season he knew was the Smithfield Show week, when Jock, his faithful henchman, and himself took up their quarters regularly at the Tavistock, in Covent Garden.

His acres yielded him a couple of thousand per annum of a free rental, and he made another thousand out of the ground round the old home. His great pride was his flock of black-faced sheep, his Ayrshire cows, and his greyhounds, which were all of the old-fashioned rough-sterned Scotch type, well known on the plains of Altcar at Waterloo times. He was exceedingly social and agreeable; and it was generally agreed in the country-side that the laird was "one of the guid auld sort," and so he was. Having more money than a bachelor well knew what to make use of, he bestowed liberally, and (perhaps it was a fault in the eyes of some) betted freely; in fact, no man in all Scotland backed his opinion, if it was represented by a greyhound, freer than the laird. As to Jock Howieson, also a bachelor, he had ideas exactly like his master, and believed that the sole aim of man in this world should be to drive a gig, breed and win prizes with an Ayrshire cow or a black-faced ram, or run a good greyhound. He believed in a future state, "but," as he told the parson, "there maun be some sheep on the hills, kye-beasts in the glens, and hares and hounds, if it is to be a heaven o' happiness," besides, he used to add, "if there's to be milk and honey and sic cauld sickening stuff to a Scotchman, there maun be cows and bees and the like, so ye needna preach to me." He was a rare hand at bringing out a greyhound, and what Jock Howieson, "the laird's Jock," had in the slips was generally something that people at coursing meetings did not care to wager against. "Jist a saxpence, sir," was the extent of his betting, but when Jock Howieson's "saxpence" was "on," men knew that it was on something which was literally bound to win.

Having written his letter, enclosed it in an envelope and stamped it, the laird laid it aside for the postman, and joined Grahame and his English friend, whom Jock had brought in also. He did not need to be told the rules of hospitality in the little back parlour at Turf Tower, as the old place was named.

"How are ye, Laird?" said the cattle-dealer, who was one of the cleverest and, as a Scotchman might say, the quirkiest in the whole trade. "I just brought a friend from the South with me, a greyhound courser like yourself, who wishes to have a look at your Ayrshires, as he wants some good milkers for the London dairymen."

"Glad to see you, sir; always glad to see anyone who wishes

to invest in stock, more especially if he's a courser. Has your dog run much? Been in public, eh?"

"Oh, well, I think he has seen a hare, but——"

"Oh, I'll let him see one this forenoon, if you don't mind, and a dog of mine will show him the way too, if ye have no objection."

"Oh, none in the least, Laird; in fact, I would like very well to see what he could really do alongside of a crack, such as some of your Waterloo dogs."

Having partaken of the laird's hospitality, the party proceeded together to the fields, in which were grazing numerous young Ayrshire cows, the famous milk-making animals of the North, which have the reputation of filling their milking-pails to overflowing. They did not, however, seem to be so very anxious to deal as the laird would have liked, and the stranger seemed to take a great interest in the greyhound, mongrel though he asserted it to be, never letting it go free for a moment.

At last, when all of the cows had undergone a critical inspection, Jock Howieson appeared on the scene, leading the famous black, with a boy leading a fawn and white kennel-companion and carrying with him a pair of slips. The whole party crossed, at his suggestion, a heather hill to a nice meadow where he said there was certain to be a hare or two. It was indeed a rare place for a trial, the meadow-grass not being too long, while there was plenty of what a sailor would call sea-room.

"And now, sir," said the old fellow, halting on the edge of it, "if ye dinna mind, ye may have a trial of your black, though I don't think he'll ever get a chance with old Rory, and after then I'll put in the black."

The stranger lost little time in putting his dog into the slips, and the dog itself seemed only too anxious to be so placed, cocking its ears and straining its neck, while it mewled as if certain that a hare was not very far off.

"And now, Laird," said Grahame, "you'll no doubt be of opinion that the fawn and white old dog will make rings round the other one; I would not mind, if ye care to lay me, taking three five-pound-notes to one that the other has the best of it."

"With all my heart, and I don't think I can make a five-pound-note easier—but hey, Jock sees her!"

Jock, with both dogs straining madly, was at the time sidling away to the left, as if to try and get Puss between himself and the onlookers, who had sat down on a dry peat-stack, about two hundred yards away. In a moment or two more, Puss was seen to leave her form, and, scared by the noise of the dogs, went off at full speed straight for the heather-hill. Running behind her, with the greyhounds neck and neck, the old trainer gave the hare a good long lead; then, with a short race, he let out a ringing "So ho!" as the slips flew empty back to his hand. Neck and neck did the two dogs gallop to their game; but, to the surprise of the laird, as also of his man, the low-bred black that had "seen a hare I believe," stretched out two clear lengths for first turn, came round smartly in the wake of his game, and, after a couple of wrenches, killed cleverly, by beating the fawn and white dog pointless.

"Well," said the laird to Grahame, while the stranger went off to pick up his champion, "if I had not seen that with my own eyes, I could scarcely have credited it. However, the black that the laddie is holding is a dog of different metal, as you'll see directly."

"Well, laird, will you repeat the bet?"

"Repeat the bet! yes, and that I will. I owe you fifteen, so I'll wager ye forty-five to that, or, if ye don't mind, I'll make it a hundred to thirty."

"A hundred to thirty then; and, look here, mind I'll leave it to yourself, but it must be a clean and fair victory."

"Clean and fair I know it will be, as you'll see, John; but the black is against the stranger, and there's my handkerchief for a distinguishing collar."

The old trainer soon put the two dogs in the slips as requested, muttering remarks all the time about "Rory's" defeat and expressing his opinion that "Prince Charlie" would soon show the stranger the road. "I only hope," he said, "that I get a good straight going hare, one that will make the watter flee frae her tail when she rises."

After walking about two hundred yards or so up the meadow, he detected, evidently sewed in amongst the rushes, the object he was in search of. Gently he slipped up behind her, then, with a loud *whirro* and the flinging of his shepherd's crook, he managed to get Puss to rise from her form. Seeing she



Dickinson

Whirroo! shouts
Jack Howieson.

was discovered, she broke off up the meadow at a great pace while the old man steadied the straining couple. It was a long straight slip on level ground, and away they dashed neck and neck, the laird's black not, however, being able to draw its white collar clear of the other. In the last twenty strides the latter swept out again with the same old fire, and, without even giving "Prince Charlie" a chance, defeated him, pointless. The laird was dumbfounded, while Grahame, and his English friend chuckled with apparent delight. As to Jock Howieson, he said that Charlie was fastest; but that the hare went to the stranger. The laird was silent as to this, for he knew his dog had been beaten fairly.

"You say your dog never ran in public to your knowledge?"

"Well, I'll not say that," said the Southron, "I believe he has picked up a small stake, but I know little about him, I don't know even the name he ran in."

"Ahem!" was the remark, "you wouldn't mind selling him?"

"I'm barely at liberty, but I might give you the first offer, when free to do so."

"I'll be glad if you will, and if you come down to the house, Mr. Grahame, I'll let you have a cheque. I'd like, however, if you would say nothing about this trial."

Half an hour afterwards the cattle-dealer and his English friend might have been seen driving down the road from Hay-slap Hall, both like to roll themselves out of the dog-cart with laughter. "I will never forget that owd callant's face when my dog took first turn, I think we've left them mighty uncomfortable. *Ha! ha!* so that's their Waterloo dog that stands in the betting at 8 to 1."

Though the laird was of opinion that nothing would be divulged about the trials in the meadows, he was astonished to find from his next week's *Bell's Life* that his nomination had dropped away down in the betting to 20 to 1, while that of a Mr. Dockenleaf had risen to 6 to 1. What dog the latter gentleman had got hold of, it was said, was not known, but rumour gave out that, though it had not been seen much in public, it was a regular flyer and had been very highly tried. "They were a very sharp lot behind it," the report said, "and the way they have been shuffling things will make their victory, should they secure such, a very unpopular one."

The night before the Waterloo saw Jock Howieson at Formby with "Prince Charlie," vowing that the black dog from Hayslap would make rings round everything at the Adelphi in Liverpool; the laird was not less slow to express his confidence and backed his dog both for the individual courses and the "Long Shots." Next morning at sunrise saw all of them on the drive to Altcar Flats, where, at nine o'clock, the first brace of dogs were placed in the slips. "Prince Charlie" in the fourth trial made rings round his opponent as the old trainer asserted he would, and was backed more freely, though the one that seemed to perform best of all was Mr. Dockenleaf's NS. Mr. Byteall's "Black Swan," which won his courses in splendid style, both in the first and second round.

"It strikes me laird," said Jock Howieson, "that I have seen that dog run before, but, let me try however I can, I canna get a look at him."

"The same thing has been passing through my mind, but oh, that's nothing uncommon, merely an impression. Dogs, I daresay, run very much alike. If both stand, 'Prince Charlie' and he will meet in the final."

"Then we'll win, laird."

"I'm not so sure about that. 'Black Swan' has great speed and is a smart worker, while he uses his teeth cleverly."

At last came the final day, and the crowd at the Engine House were keen to see the final trials. The two blacks were the favourites, but Mr. Dockenleaf's party accepted every and any offer which was made against 'Black Swan.' The confect hawkers alternately called out "Prince Charlie drops" and "Black Swan drops," and the Scotch cornet-player struck up "Charlie is my darling," to be replied to by "Wae's me for Prince Charlie," by a Yorkshire hostler in Mr. Dockenleaf's 'bus. At length the Cup brace were placed in the slips, and the two dogs were carefully steadied on a great big striding hare, and amidst a roar that might have been heard away out at sea, the two stretched out to their game. Fortune was slightly in favour of the Scotch dog, and it had fire enough to take advantage of Fortune's favours, for it stretched out a clear length to its hare, came round after it, making two or three very clever points, and sending Puss into the jaws of his opponent, who killed and lost amidst Scottish cheers.

The Dockenleaf party were dumb, and their confusion was heightened by the Laird of Hayslap walking up to them and confronting their leader, Mr. Grahame's companion, who was none other than the Mr. Byteall, the owner, saying:

"You very near succeeded, gentlemen, but had you won the Waterloo Cup I would have brought you before the National Coursing Club for disgraceful and dishonest practices. You, sir, know what I mean. As to Grahame the cattle-dealer, he shall be a marked man in the West of Scotland in future, and if he is wise he will join you in the South. Come to look at my cattle indeed, with a strange greyhound that 'had but seen a hare.' But you have been properly served, so I will say no more. You've got a black dog, but he has got a blacker owner!"

