



In the Roar-

By
Albert M. Treynor-

I HAD just opened an office on upper Broadway, and it was not long before my attention, like that of hundreds of others, was drawn to the quaint figure of a gray-haired old man who presided over a small news stand tucked away in an angle of a building facing Longacre Square. He sat behind the stand on an old packing case, and never seemed to rise or move. He leaned forward slightly, his hands folded over the knob of a stout cane. On the stand in front of him was a little box into which his customers dropped their money and from which they made their own change. On the packing case with the old man sat a dog, a small Scotch terrier.

Perhaps it was the dog that drew some people's attention first, for the little fellow was exceptionally keen-eyed and evidently vitally interested in the business of the stand. But for me the dog's master was the chief interest. Despite the badly trimmed gray beard and mustache, his face was strong, rugged, and full of character, not to say purpose; yet there was in it, too, a strange pathos.

You will understand the meaning of that pathos, and why people made their own change from the little box; the old man was blind. And

that was why the dog took such a vital interest in his master's business. From their positions on the stand the dog knew how many pennies you should put down and what change you should make from a nickel or a dime. If you did not put down the right amount, or if you made the wrong change, the dog would bark furiously, thus informing his master that all was not well.

It was through a dispute with the dog over the correct change from a dime that I made the acquaintance of the old man. "Gibs thinks you took a *Planet*," he explained, laughing, "and that's three cents. I put the *Planet* on the wrong side of the stand. That's how Gibs made his mistake."

"I took a penny paper," I said. "There was nine cents' change."

The news dealer's eyes positively twinkled. "Gibs thinks he runs this stand. Sometimes I switch the papers just to show him I'm still in charge. Sit down, Gibs! Behave now!"

I hesitated a moment, for Gibs did not seem entirely placated, and I had no wish to be bad friends. Dogs have memories. However, Gibs consented to have his head stroked, so I turned toward the subway.

II.

THE news dealer's name was Williams. He appeared to do a remarkably thriving business. He seemed to draw his customers by the restful appeal of his patient, wrinkled face. The space about his stand was a quiet backwater in the great, tireless surge of city life, and many a hurrying pedestrian pulled out of the throng to buy papers.

I watched them toss their pennies into the little box, their eyes softening at sight of the quaint figure behind the stand. A pretty, but tired-looking girl, who, perhaps, had been working in some crowded department store all day, stepped out of the hurly-burly and tucked a paper under her arm. She left a half dollar in Williams' box and took no change. I looked at Williams, forgetting that he could not see. Then I looked at the dog, and I had to smile. Evidently a half dollar for a paper was a new one on Gibbs. His eyes were blinking in a puzzled way, his head, cocked on one side, as if he were trying to figure out whether or not something was being "put over" on him. Finally he suppressed a growl, and decided to wag his tail gratefully.

After that I found time every day to stop at Williams' stand. Before long he began to take me into his confidence, and told me a little about himself. He was from Iowa, and he hungered for the spacious prairies, the fresh smell of corn in the tassel, and the night whispering of big, growing fields. All this he mentioned diffidently, like a boy who shrinks from ridicule. Although he had lived for years at the very hub of metropolitan turmoil, I found him untouched by the spirit or creed of crowds. At heart he was still a denizen of the open country, and his unseeing eyes yearned always toward the West.

"Good morning, Daniel. And how. are you and Gibbs?" became the form of my daily greeting.

"A fine morning, sir; and we're doing first rate, thank you," was his customary reply. Then the unfailing smile lightened his rugged features, and even the sightless eyes seemed to sparkle. Presently he learned to know my step in the other thousands, and often hailed me by name before I had addressed him.

But Gibbs refused to make friends. Whenever I paused at the stand for a moment's chat he

would poke his face in the air and leer at me, with his little white teeth showing.

Some intuitive sense told Williams of the dog's silent hostility. "Gibs mistrusts people," he said. "He has never cared for but two men—his first owner and me. I think he tolerates me only because—because of this." And he placed his seamed thumb and forefinger lightly upon his eyes. "Some dogs are like that, you know."

I regarded Gibbs with an entirely new feeling of respect, and suddenly wished he would learn to tolerate me also; but the brown eyes continued to glower inexorably. To relieve an uncomfortable pause, I ventured a question concerning Gibbs' first master.

Never have I seen such a terrifying change in a man's face. The smiling mouth closed like a clasp knife, and grew hard and cruel; the eyelids drew almost shut. Through the brown of the clenched hands the tightened knuckles shone bloodlessly. The old man's breath came rasping and sharp, and for a moment I feared a seizure. But he suddenly leaned forward and grasped my arm. The touch seemed to steady him.

"That man is some place on this earth—alive," he said, and I felt him hold the words steady by a deliberate effort of the voice. Then I learned why Daniel Williams had sat for seven weary years in the uproar of Longacre Square.

III.

I CAME to New York to look for my little girl," he said with the simple directness of a child. "I followed her here, but I never found her, and I never got a trace of the man. He was an actor named Earl Lawlor."

He paused and slid his fingers softly under the terrier's chin. The little beast lifted his head slowly beneath the stroke, and closed his eyes. "Gibs here is all they left me. Lawlor owned him. He went away in such a hurry that he had to leave the dog behind. Gibbs wasn't in any way to blame, so I kept him for mine.

"Alma—that's my daughter—and I lived near Creston, Iowa. I worked the farm and she kept house for me. Her mother was dead, so there were only the two of us. I had my sight in those days, and I think back on that with gratitude. The

picture of Alma, the way she used to sit across the table from me evenings, smiling and shaking her short, dark hair as she talked, is pleasant to remember. I don't feel that I'm missing so much by being blind now. There are so many, many feet always passing here. If I could see the crowds and the lights and all that is going on about me, I believe I'd be terribly frightened. Sometimes I think if you've got to sit at this corner it's a blessing to be sightless."

He stooped and cuddled the terrier between his knees. "Gibs helps me find my way about, and that's all I need," he went on. "There was a time when I felt I ought to kill him, but that would have been so foolish. I expect him to be of real service to me some day."

"What happened to his first master?" I ventured gently

"He ran away," Williams answered. "Alma met him while he was appearing at Creston with some musical company. You know how it is with girls. The best of them are apt to know the least about men like Lawlor. I never knew how he got around Alma—never even knew that she cared anything about him until she failed to come down to breakfast one morning. Then I learned that Lawlor had sent her to Chicago with a promise to follow later.

"That night I caught him at his hotel," the old man continued. "He was packing to leave town. When I told him my errand he laughed at me, and I tried to throttle him. But he wrenched away, and struck me across the face with a chair. I regained consciousness twenty hours later, but the blow had left me sightless. As soon as I was able I sold the farm and started out to find Alma. Lawlor had abandoned his dog at the hotel, and they were glad enough to let me have him; so I took the little fellow with me.

"How we searched! In Chicago I finally traced her to the place where she had been living, but the people there told me she had gone on to New York. So I caught the first train here. For many weeks I spent all my time tramping the streets with Gibs, hoping Alma might see me some day and speak, but she never did. The most of my money I gave to an eye specialist, but he could not help me. Finally, when I realized that I would have to make a living, I bought this stand. Here I've been sitting ever since."

I could find nothing to say to him, but I laid my hand gently upon his shoulder as I turned to go. He smiled bravely, and Gibs got down from the packing case and watched me around the corner.

IV.

A FEW days later I was called from town. I spent the autumn weeks far from the tumult of Broadway, and when I at last came home I plunged shiveringly into a veritable Eskimo village of furs and icy streets and drifting snow. It was late in the evening when I climbed from the subway and started to battle the storm at Times Square. The theaters had disgorged their audiences, and the white thoroughfare teemed with midnight traffic, while diamond flashes from a million street lights played "winken-blinken" with the driving sheet of snow.

As I staggered around the corner of the Times Building I almost collided with Williams, muffled to the ears in a long black coat and bending against the shivery blast. He had just closed his stand, and, with his mittened fingers twisted in Gibs' lead strap, was starting home for the night.

We both stopped, and were exchanging greetings, when suddenly Gibs, straining furiously at his leash, broke into a series of joyful, ecstatic yelps and barks and plunged at the legs of a man who was just passing along the outer edge of the sidewalk. The man's head was buried in the collar of his overcoat, and his soft hat was pulled down over his eyes. He paused, startled, as Gibs, with a final lunge, tore the leash from Williams' hand, flung himself against the man, and stood up, pawing his overcoat with every demonstration of glad welcome; but the man only kicked out savagely at the dog and tried to move on.

Then something happened. I had leaned over quickly, intending to grab the dog's leash, but before I could grasp it I was flung aside violently. As I staggered to my feet I saw Williams struggling with the man whom Gibs had stopped. Williams had him by the throat, and before I could interfere I saw the news dealer's right arm shoot up and then down, his horny fist striking the other's face with a smashing blow. The man went

down into the snow like a log. In a flash I understood the meaning of the scene; Gibbs had found his former master.

V.

THE news dealer dropped to his knees beside the inert form, and again his arm shot up, but now I was fully alive to what I should do, and I intercepted the blow, though I knew how richly the man in the snow deserved it.

A crowd had gathered, and two policemen came hurrying up. They helped me drag the old man to his feet. "Why, it's Williams!" exclaimed one of the policemen.

"I've found Lawlor! I've found Lawlor!" cried Williams, his face working convulsively. "He's there in the snow. 'Don't let him get away!'"

"Lawlor—so you got your man at last, Dan!" said the policeman who had spoken before.

The other officer was down beside the figure in the snow. "That was a knock-out blow, Dan," he said. "Too bad we couldn't let you finish the rat!" He got up and turned to his fellow patrolman. "I'll ring for an ambulance, Ed."

"Don't let him get away! Don't let him get away!" repeated the old man pathetically.

"Don't worry, Dan," said the first policeman. "We'll take mighty good care of the bird."

Just then an alert-looking man pushed his way authoritatively through the crowd. He glanced at Williams, nodded to the policemen, and knelt quickly beside the figure in the snow. He looked at the face a moment. "Dan has done a good night's work," he said, addressing the patrolman. "It's just as we suspected down at headquarters. We want this fellow for several things besides what he did to Dan. He gave me the slip a few blocks back, and I thought I had lost

him."

The ambulance came. Lawlor was placed in it, the detective jumping on the seat with the driver. As it went off up Broadway, a little dog, whining and yelping, raced after it.

One of the policemen dispersed the crowd; the other looked at Williams and then at me significantly. I nodded. "Dan," I said, taking his arm, "Gibs has deserted. I'm going to take you home."

"Thank you, sir," he said quietly. "I'll have to impose on you that much. I—I don't know what I'll do now without Gibbs. I'll have to hire the landlady's little boy—until I can get another dog."

I took Williams home. I saw the door of his rooming house close behind him, and I came down the steps and turned up the street. Then suddenly I found myself confronted by a girl—the pretty, tired-looking girl who had dropped a half dollar in Williams' box. Her lips were trembling, and she put a hand on my arm. "I followed you," she said, as I looked at her in wonderment. "I—I did not know where he lived."

"You followed us?" I echoed. "Why did—"

"I'm his daughter."

I looked at her in amazement as the truth of the thing flashed on me. "So you're Alma!" I said at last. "But why have you kept away from him?"

"I—I have been led to believe that he—he hated me; that he did not so much as want to hear my name again. That man, Lawlor—oh, I can't tell you! But somehow tonight the truth dawned on me—when I saw him all alone, without his little dog. He needs me! And just today I got a good job; I can take care of him at last. He—he will forgive me?"

In a few words I told her how the old man had vainly searched for her, how his one hope in life was to find her. She did not wait for me to finish, but broke away with a sob and ran up the steps of the house.