

Gone to the Dogs

S. Trainor, '39

Dear Madam:

At approximately nine o'clock this morning I sat down to breakfast. I was in excellent spirits. I had had a good nights sleep, my toast was done to the exact crispness of my liking, and the sun was shining beautifully. Then I read your letter and lost my appetite.

You wrote asking my financial assistance in a worthy project. As I understood it, the project was the erection of a painless death chamber for animals. Any poor dog or cat which happened to be maimed, strayed, or starving, was to be put to death with the comforting technique of advanced science. Under the influence of gas the creature simply fell into a long sleep (we might even suppose it died wagging its tail). Your letter concluded with an eloquent plea for financial assistance. You felt quite sure that "an idea so noble and humane would meet with the energetic support of every true, warm-hearted Christian."

Now, madam, I am not a cold-blooded pagan, and I *do* try to practise the virtue of charity. But you spoiled a promising day, to say nothing of a perfectly good breakfast. I will not assist you in your worthy project. The more I think of it, the more maudlin and ridiculous it seems. In fact, if I may indulge in expressive Anglo-Saxon, I consider your painless slaughter-house damned nonsense.

God (who knows more than you or I, madam) created the animal kingdom and placed it under man's dominion. He who first took milk from "Bossy" did not violate the rights of the cow; Bossy had no rights. On the contrary this was part of the divine plan; animals were created for man's use and benefit.

Please do not misunderstand my attitude. I do not assert that man is *absolutely* free in his treatment of animals. Heavens no! If, for example, someone should saw the leg off a thoroughly good hound merely to see if his carriage, would suffer, he should be given some such similar treatment. I will join your cause, good lady, to the extent of preventing *unnecessary* cruelty to animals. We may use, but not abuse them.

There is, however, a proverb which says that "Charity begins at home." I believe in this little proverb, and

always will, providing "home" is not so stretched as to include the dog kennel. I do not think I am being old-fashioned or narrow-minded when I say that our duties to our neighbour take precedence over any we might have to his dog or cat. Heaven knows there is scope enough for the application of charity in the present-day living conditions of many of our fellow-men.

Have you ever visited the slums of our city, madam? I did. When on social service work I once came across a family of seven living in a room. The father was sick, and the rest of the family were cold, hungry, and dirty. They literally devoured the food we gave them. You should visit homes of this kind sometime, madam; it would be enlightening.

You will pardon me, I hope, if, to bring out my point, I go a little beyond your worthy project.

About a month ago I nearly got into trouble; I am sorry now that I avoided it. While walking through the city one day I came across a little chap who was crying bitterly. To my inquiry what the trouble was the lad told me his hands and feet were cold. I took his address and told him I would send him mitts and stockings in the morning.

I had gone scarcely two blocks farther when I met the temptation. Walking in my direction was a member of your campaign committee. She was finely dressed, as was the dog she was leading on a leash. The animal, I should say, was about the size of four pairs of hands, and was smugly clad in a little fur jacket, which was lined on the inside with wool.

My reaction was an almost irresistible urge to strip the dog of his finery and to ask the lady to convert the cute coat into mitts and stockings. But, oh, the shame of it, madam! I merely growled at the smug little cur.

Nor is this just an isolated case. Well dressed dogs are becoming quite the vogue on our streets today. They are given special food, a little cot complete with blankets, and more baths than many a poor youngster who lives in the slums.

Do not think that I am condemning any society which, within reasonable limits, tries to prevent *unnecessary* cruelty to animals. Youngsters, for example, who tie cans to dogs' tails, should be soundly spanked. In stamping out occurrences of this kind you have my sup-

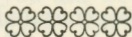
port; I will send you money, hire a spanker, or even send my man, James, to dole out the punishment.

Please, be advised. Stop coaxing tears for the poor suffering dog or cat. Some day an ungrateful cur who doesn't believe in bathing will bite you. Then you will want to shoot every dog on sight.

Direct your campaign on behalf of the cold and hungry, the crippled, the sick, the orphans — all those who need your help. Then, madam, will your efforts be noble and humane. You will be amply repaid by bringing happy smiles to sad faces. In such a project I warmly assure you, madam, that you have my hearty support and best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

Paul Reynolds.



That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:
That high man with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.

—Browning.

A good discourse is that from which nothing can be retrenched without cutting into the quick.

—St. Francis de Sales.

