

CANINE SUICIDES.

BY LILLIE DEVEREUX BLAKE.

SOME years ago I met an elderly physician of standing and reputation, who, like myself, was fond of dogs. In the course of conversation regarding our several pets he described the sad fate of a black-and-tan terrier he had once owned. Jack was a puppy when the doctor bought him, and had the usual puppy trick of tearing to pieces any stray garment or bit of carpet that he could reach. Again and again he was punished for this trick until a reformation seemed to be established.

At this time the doctor lived in a village, having his office in a small building on the main street. One day, after a somewhat long absence, on his return to the office he discovered that Jack had fallen into his old ways again and torn to shreds a valuable rug. The doctor, although a kind-hearted man, was seriously annoyed at the wanton destruction, and wishing to give a lesson that would be remembered, struck the little creature somewhat severely. The dog whined and moaned for some time, and then running to the door, signified that he wished to go out. His master opened the door and returned to his desk.

Some time later, when it was growing dusk, the doctor closed the office to go home. Jack was nowhere to be seen. He called and whistled, but as the dog did not appear, he went on, expecting to find the terrier at the house; but Jack had not returned, and the night passed without news of the wanderer.

The doctor, who was sincerely attached to his little friend, started the next day on a search for him. He enquired at the houses of the neighbors, who knew Jack almost as well as they knew the doctor himself, but it was not until nightfall that he found news of the lost favorite.

Then a lady, who lived remote from the doctor, and therefore had not the personal acquaintance of Jack, reported that she was followed home the night before by a little terrier; that when she reached her door he begged to be taken in, but as she feared that the friends of the dog would miss him, and felt that she had no right to detain him, she drove him away.

Again the doctor went home at nightfall, hoping to find that the truant had re-

turned, only to be disappointed, and on the following morning started on a fresh quest, which presently brought him to a grocery store, and there he learned the fate of poor Jack. The night before he came into the shop seeming weary and travel-worn. The grocer, who knew him, gave him something to eat, which was devoured ravenously, and threw down a coffee sack, on which the dog slept all night. On opening the store in the morning the grocer turned Jack out, bidding him to go home.

The little terrier looked at him wistfully for a few moments, and then, instead of turning in the direction of his master's house, he deliberately trotted out onto a railroad bridge near by, and took his stand upon the track. The grocer and one or two other men shouted to the little animal, but he seemed not to hear. A train was rapidly approaching, and as he did not move, one of the men started to drive the dog away, but he was too late; in another moment the engine and cars swept rapidly by, and the tragedy of poor Jack's life was over.

The doctor declared that this was a genuine and unmistakable case of suicide. The railroad tracks ran through the village, the dog was familiar with the passing of trains and always carefully got out of their way. The doctor believed that on this occasion Jack's action was intentional, that he was afraid to go home lest he should be again beaten; that he felt himself to be a homeless and friendless creature, and had deliberately sought death.

At the time when I heard this story I was deeply interested in the earliest of the works of Charles Darwin, and I wrote him a brief account of the case; also adding some points in regard to a pet terrier of my own, who was an instance of the then doubted transmission of mutilations. It was a Skye terrier, and had been born without a tail, its parents and grandparents having had their tails cut off. I received the following letter from Mr. Darwin in reply:

DOWN, BECKENHAM, Kent,

Feb. 18, 1874.

Dear Madame,—I am very much obliged for your kindness in having sent me so

many curious particulars with respect to animals. Formerly I disbelieved in the inheritance of mutilations, but sufficient facts have now been established to render the extraordinary fact credible. With respect to the suicide of animals, I do not think any one of a sceptical frame of mind will believe in such cases. The dog which was killed on the railroad may have been paralyzed with terror, or been on the point of suffering from epilepsy, to which dogs are liable, and such wild explanation seems to me more probable than that a dog should know what death is, and voluntarily incur it. With many thanks for your kindness, I remain, dear madame,

Yours very faithfully,
CHARLES DARWIN.

Notwithstanding this view from so high an authority, the story of poor Jack lingered in my mind, and as similar stories have from time to time appeared in print, I have collected them. This first is from a New Haven paper, I think the *Palladium*.

"Some brutes, with the form of men, captured a small black-and-tan dog in New Orleans a few days ago and doctored him with turpentine. The dog manifested by his actions the intense agony he suffered in consequence of the cruel deed, and sought in various ways to find relief. At last he went up the stairs leading from the ground-floor to the third story, and going to one of the windows, he looked for a few seconds on the crowd below, and then deliberately jumped out. He fell on a projecting awning, and was instantly killed."

This is from the New York *Sun*, 1883, re-written evidently from some other paper.

"Barnaby was intelligent, even for a dog, but when he was sold and sent to the house of a new master, he seems not to have understood it. Naturally he left on the first opportunity, and went again to the only home his affection could recognize. Four times he did this. Four times he was returned to the purchaser, and then they shut him in a room on the fifth story—only the window was open. He looked out of the window and saw the height. Then he went to the other side of the room and took a running start, and shortly after the police called the people to clean him up from the sidewalk. Whether Barnaby miscalculated the distance or whether it was a real case of suicide, the psychologists have not yet determined."

Here is a story that parallels in some re-

spects that of poor Jack. It is from the *Sun*, March 22, 1887:

"As a railroad train rounded a curve near Bristol the other morning, the engineer saw a large black Newfoundland standing by the side of the track. He waited until the engine was within a few yards of him, and then deliberately stepped on the track, and trembling all over, with tail between his legs, head turned away, waited for the death stroke from the pilot. The engineer says that if ever anyone committed suicide, that dog did."

This item is from the New York *Tribune*, February 4, 1884. It is entitled "A Dog's Suicide from Jealousy:"

"Warwick, N. Y., February 3.—What is generally believed to have been a deliberate case of suicide by a dog occurred in this village last week. The animal, a valuable and intelligent bird-dog, was owned by S. Silker, a well-known resident of Warwick. Mr. Silker recently purchased a new dog, and finding some difficulty in domesticating him, he treated the new dog with unusual kindness and attention. The old dog manifested most positive disapproval of this treatment of the new comer, and developed a case of unmistakable jealousy. His master persisted in making much of the new dog, despite the protests of the old one, and finally the latter attacked his rival and, after punishing him severely, left the premises where he had been so long, and going to the Wawayanda House, took up his quarters there.

He was treated kindly at the hotel and refused to return to his old home. He had always been active and good-natured, but after leaving his master he became morose and sulky. He rarely left his place in the hotel. After he had been there a day or so it was discovered that he seemed to find a singular fascination in railroad trains. Every train that passed would find him standing close to the track, where he would gaze apparently with great interest on the rolling wheels. One day last week he was standing in his usual position beside the track as a train approached. As it was passing the spot where the dog stood, he suddenly sprang on the track between the front and rear wheels of a car and was crushed to death."

A lady friend adds a story of a similar suicide from jealousy. They had had a poodle in the family for many years, when a young dog was brought home and much caressed. The old pet tried in vain to attract all attention to himself, grew very

unhappy, and, finally, one day, when all the children were fondling the new favorite, leaving him neglected, the poodle ran to the edge of a cliff on which he had often walked, and jumped down, a distance of fifty feet, being instantly killed.

If it is possible, as this accumulation of

stories would seem to indicate, that our canine friends have such warm and sensitive hearts that when cruelly treated they prefer death to a life of torture or the loss of affection, it behooves all lovers of the "noble brute" to see that their dog friends are kindly treated.

MY LADY SLEEP.

IN cool gray cloisters walks my Lady Sleep,
Telling her smooth beads slowly, one by one ;
Along the wall the stealthy shadows creep ;
Night holds the world in thrall, and day is done.

Sometimes while winds sigh soft above her head,
Down the long garden path my Lady strays,
And kneeling by the pansies' purple bed,
Counts the small faces in the moonlit haze.

Sometimes she lies upon the silver sands,
Following the sea-birds as they wheel and dip ;
Or idly clasps in still persistent hands,
The shining grains that through her fingers slip.

Or paces long, with flowing locks all wet,
Where the low thunder booms forevermore,
And the great waves no man hath numbered yet,
Roll, one by one, to break upon the shore.

Sometimes she numbereth the twilight stars,
The daisies smiling in the meadow grass,
The slow kine trailing through the pasture bars,
The white sheep loitering in the mountain pass.

But evermore her hands are cool and calm—
Her quiet voice is ever hushed and low ;
And evermore her tranquil lips breathe balm,
And silent as a dream her garments flow.

She comes, she goes—whence, whither—who can tell ?
Angels of God, do ye her secret keep ?
Know ye the talisman, the sign, the spell,
The mystic password of my Lady Sleep ?

Julia C. R. Dorr.