My Irish Setter Dogs

By Percival P. Baxter
Governor of Maine

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"GARRY"

Presented

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by

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GOVERNOR PERCIVAL P. BAXTER
AND
HIS IRISH SETTER "GARRY"

My Irish Setter Dogs

By PERCIVAL P. BAXTER
Governor of Maine

N recalling the events of my life from the time I was a small boy until now I am deeply impressed with the fact that the story of my Irish Setter dogs is inseparably connected with my own life story. For thirty-seven years my setters have been my constant companions, and all of them have come from the same Elcho strain. My father gave me my first dog when I was but nine years of age. The day this little ten-weeks-old, tawny-colored pup was brought in a crate to my home always will be remembered by me. As the precious package was placed upon the grass, the tiny inmate poked her nose through the slats and lapped the hand of the one she was ready to acknowledge as her master. She knew little but loved much.

The Price of Dogs

In those days the price of dogs like other prices, whether of luxuries or of necessities, was not unreasonable. The modest sum of three dollars was all that my father paid for the pup, while I voluntarily contributed from my own savings what to me was the large sum of eighty-five cents to cover the express charges from Rockland to Portland.

The First Night

After the unpacking, which was done with great care, I carried my new friend in my arms to the small steamer that plied between Portland and the island in Casco Bay on which was my father's summer home. The first night was difficult for the pup as well as for the family. After much thought I prepared what seemed a most alluring bed, and the pup was placed therein. She, however, being lonesome was not satisfied with my arrangements and before long cried lustily. This became a continuing performance, and after a time the patience of some of the older members of the family was exhausted. Sleep was precious and was being interfered with.

About midnight I heard someone go cautiously downstairs and the poor little pup was put outside into the darkness. It was a warm summer evening, but this cruelty was more than I could stand. Waiting for the house to again become quiet I crept stealthily out of my room, found the little pup crouching outside by the back door, took her in my arms and together we went back to bed. In this way for several nights I outwitted the family, and was up in the morning before anybody else in order to place the pup outside the house where she was supposed to have been all the time. The pup's lonesomeness wore away, and soon she became an orderly member of the family. I was no longer obliged to deceive my elders.

The Family Increases

In the course of time my dog arrived at maturity and the household was blessed with nine pups, all thoroughbreds. Under the tutelage of my older brothers, more experienced in worldly affairs, I

learned quickly. After about a year nine more pups of the same breed arrived and a thriving business was established.

Notwithstanding the market was well supplied, the price of Irish Setter pups did not break, and though not advanced to any great extent above the original figure I felt the need of a small increase. The male pups brought me ten dollars, the female five. At this discrimination between the sexes I revolted. Perhaps this was the beginning of my later desire to help the weaker sex attain equal rights with the stronger, for in after years I became an ardent champion of equal suffrage!

An Uninvited Dinner Guest

As the pups approached the age of about ten weeks the time for separation came. I distinctly remember those sad days. I wept over the departure of each and every one of my small companions as I placed them in crates, took them down to the little steamer and sent them away into the great world to seek their fortunes. They were distributed far and wide.

One in particular went to a well-known manufacturer in central New York state. He must have been a good man. A few days after the pup's arrival he invited several friends to dinner, and for a brief moment forgot about his new dog. As he and his company stepped into the dining room to enjoy their meal, they beheld the pup standing four square in the center of the table; but too late! The large piece of salmon that had been provided for his guests' refreshment had entirely disappeared. He wrote me that he appreciated the humor of the situation and so could not punish the culprit. This self-control made a great impression upon me.

I always was careful to do my best to place my little friends in good homes, and for several years conducted quite a thriving business, for my faithful old dog was a good mother and enjoyed raising large families.

Parental Patience

My father and my mother were unusually patient, for I never had fewer than two dogs at home, and once had five. Boys and dogs were everywhere. I wonder how many mothers today would be as lenient with their children and their children's pets. Occasionally my dogs would be taken sick, and then there was real trouble and much anxiety in the house. Doctors were called, medicine given, and often times more of it found its way onto my clothing than went into the systems of my patients.

I Learned of Animals

During all these years I was learning of animals at first hand, their habits and their possibilities. I accepted responsibility for those under my charge, understood and respected their rights, even though they were only the rights of dumb animals. I regret certain things done in my ignorance, but notwithstanding my inexperience my first dog lived longer than any that came after, for she attained the ripe age of fourteen years and finally died of poisoning.

During these thirty-seven years I have lived with my companions, and except when away from home on business or pleasure trips, not a day of my life since I was nine years old, have I been without my Irish Setters. The members of my family, my father, mother, brothers and sisters, all were fond of dogs and some loved them as much as I did.

"Deke" Went to College

My dog "Deke" went to Bowdoin college with me, where we both had many interesting experiences. The professors were patient and human. I recall an occasion when the professor of history, held in awe by his pupils, was holding class in a room shaped like an amphitheatre. My dog, lying in front of the professor's desk and in full view of everybody, suddenly was taken very sick, as often happens after over eating. I was tremendously embarrassed. The dog was withdrawn, and the class adjourned, while I apologized to the professor for what had happened. With a kindly smile he said to me: "Mr. Baxter I know the dog was much more uncomfortable than any of us; you need not apologize for him."

"Deke" was a regular attendant at the class rooms, and during lectures sat beside me on the benches. Often he would bound into chapel during services, rush up onto the platform, speak to the President or Professor who was presiding, and then lie down beside the pulpit. One Sunday afternoon he brought a large bone to the chapel and laid it carefully at the President's feet without interrupting the opening prayer. I do not recall that the college authorities ever objected to the dog, and I always shall remember the friendly and tolerant spirit they displayed.

A Serious Accident

Before the advent of the automobile I invariably was accompanied on the streets of my native city of Portland by at least two dogs. On one occasion, however, while crossing the main street, one dog became confused, turned back, and a swiftly approach-

ing trolley car cut off one of his front paws. He was in great pain, but as soon as I lifted him in my arms he stopped crying and I hailed a passing express wagon and took him to a veterinarian. This man was so shocked at the condition of the dog's leg which he said could not be "patched up," that he suggested chloroforming him. I insisted that I wanted the dog treated just as though he were a human being, and explained to the veterinarian that an injured man would be given every chance of life, and why not so with a dog. Although it took six months to heal the wound, the dog lived with me for nine years afterwards and was a faithful friend.

"Garry" at Home at the Capitol

The dogs I own today are worthy descendants of those of my boyhood. "Garry," nine years old, is my constant companion in the Governor's House and in my office at the State Capitol. He goes back and forth with me between Portland and Augusta, both by train and automobile, and understands the duties of the Governor's Office as well as could be expected of any dog.

My eight months old pup, "Eirie," is a trifle too impetuous to remain long in the Executive Chamber, but every day Mr. Chadbourne my Secretary and myself, with the two dogs walk together through the woods and over the hills back of the State House. My human friends and my relatives are obliged to take me with my dogs, or not at all, and most of them seem really fond of my canine companions.

Children and Animals

To appreciate dogs, in fact to appreciate anything, one must learn and understand. A child should begin early to know animals and its life is

not complete unless it has associated with them. Pets develop the character of children and make them kindly and considerate. It is just as true that every child needs a dog as it is that every dog needs a child.

Dumb animals are placed in this world for a purpose, and we should not shirk our responsibilities toward them. These helpless creatures serve us, comfort us and put us to the test. They acknowledge us as masters, and their loyalty, devotion and gratitude is unquestioned. Many humans, realizing how often they have failed to serve their Master, have reason to be humbled in spirit when they witness the unselfish devotion of a faithful dog to his master.

"He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small,
For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all."

The Almighty's Purpose

The finest men and women are those with the broadest sympathies. Some small-minded persons either pretend to, or do dislike dogs, but something worth while is lacking in the characters of such people, and they probably never will know what rewarding companionships they have missed. The Almighty had a distinct purpose in putting all his creatures in the world together, and man should take no pride to himself just because he is superior to his dumb brothers. Rather should he thank God for the greater opportunities for service that have been given him.

Bishop Doane's poem always has appealed to me:

"I am quite sure he thinks that I am God—
Since He is God on whom each one depends
For life, and all things that his bounty sends—
My dear old dog, most constant of all friends;
Not quick to mind, but quicker far than I
To Him whom God I know and own; his eye
Deep brown and liquid, watches for my nod;
He is more patient underneath the rod
Than I, when God His wise corrections sends.
He looks love at me, deep as words e'er spake;
And from me never crumb or sup will take
But wags thanks with his most vocal tail;
And when some crashing noise wakes all his fear
He is content and quiet if I'm near,
Secure that my protection will prevail;
So, faithful, mindful, thankful, trustful, he
Tells me what I unto my God should be."

Dogs express themselves in many ways, though not by speech. I am grateful for what they have taught me and have done for me. Always faithful to the end they would, if they understood, gladly forgive their masters for performing the sad duty that often becomes necessary when the time for parting arrives.

A Dog Cemetery

On my island where my summer home is located I have a little cemetery for my setter friends. A large boulder bears a copper plate with the inscription:

"To my Irish Setters
Life-long Friends and Companions
Affectionate Faithful and Loyal
Percival P. Baxter
Governor of Maine"

followed by the names and dates of the births and deaths of all my dogs. A stone wall encloses a small

tract of land with the boulder in the center and with trees encircling it. The friends of my childhood and of my mature life are entitled to a quiet resting place, and provision has been made that they never shall be disturbed.

My life has been fuller, happier, and more useful because I have owned and lived with my dogs. I hope I always may be blessed with the companionship of my faithful Irish Setters.

Percival P. Baxter

"EIRIE"

In Memoriam

"GARRY"

"Garry," Governor Baxter's faithful friend and companion died Thursday, June 1, 1923, after a long illness. Last September (1922) a swelling appeared on "Garry's" jaw, the result of an unknown injury, and it failed to respond to treatment. Local veterinarians were consulted and two trips were made to the Angell Memorial (Animal) Hospital in Boston; all to no purpose.

"Garry" and his ancestors have been in the Governor's family continuously for 37 years, and since he and the Governor came to Augusta in 1921 they have lived together at the Blaine Mansion. "Garry" visited the Capitol daily, and had friends in every office on whom he called as he passed by. In the Executive Chamber a special couch was provided for him, and he remained faithfully at his post hour after hour, waiting for his Master to finish his work and go to walk with him over the hills and through the woods back of the Capitol.

An Irish Setter, with a wonderful coat like rich burnished copper, "Garry" was unusually intelligent and was friendly to everybody, especially to the small children who daily pass the Blaine House on their way to a nearby primary school. During the Legislative session, notwithstanding his affliction, "Garry" kept faithful guard over his Master, and never seemed disturbed at the constant goings-out and comings-in at the Governor's Office.

During his long illness he was given the same care that a human being receives from loving friends. He was like the Governor's shadow, always with him. "Garry" had a special permit, granted him by the President of the Maine Central Railroad and thereby was not obliged to ride in the baggage car. He was a most unusual, affectionate dog and when matters of State became troublesome his master found in him a true friend. Everybody at the State House will miss his friendly greetings for he was a prominent and popular member of the "State House Family."

"Garry" was taken by the Governor to his Island home in Falmouth, near Portland, where he was buried at the base of a large granite boulder on which is a bronze tablet bearing the names of all of the Governor's dogs. This little dog cemetery overlooks Casco Bay and is walled in by a stone wall and surrounded by trees. Out of respect for "Garry's" memory by order of the Governor the State House flags were placed at half mast for the period of the journey home and the burial ceremony.

THE FLAG, THE DOG AND THE GOVERNOR

Governor Percival P. Baxter of Maine Answers Those Who Objected to His Half-Masting the Flags at the State Capitol, Augusta, Upon the Death of His Faithful Irish Setter Dog, "Garry."

"I yield to no one in my respect and reverence for our Flag. It flies over us all, grown-ups and children, civilian and soldier, rich and poor, and none have rights in it not possessed by all. Our flag recognizes no distinction of race, creed, occupation, or station, and every living creature that serves man is entitled to its protection. Its spirit is all embracing.

"Loyalty and unselfishness are the crowning virtues, and where can these be found in purer form than in man's best friend, the dog! He never falters in his devotion; never questions nor complains. Hunger, thirst and privation to him are nothing if he can share them with his master, and comfort him in his distress. A dog asks no reward other than to be in the presence and confidence of his human companions.

"The loyalty and unselfishness of a dog well may put most men to shame, for few are as loyal to their Heavenly Master as is the humble dog to his earthly one. My faithful dog, unlike many of my human friends, never betrayed, nor believed ill of me. In all his life he never was mean or dishonorable; can this be said of many humans? If all men would acquire the outstanding virtues of the dog, great happiness soon would be spread broadcast over this sordid world.

"My 'Garry' was a part of my life, for my dogs constitute my immediate family. Moreover he was recognized as a member of my 'State House Family' as much as any of us who work beneath the dome of the Capitol. There was no reflection upon human kind, nor was any desecration done, by the lowering of our flag for a few short hours while I bore my trusted companion to his last resting place.

After it all was over and a chapter of my life closed, I issued orders to raise the flag to its accustomed place.

"Our flag pre-eminently is the emblem of peace, rather than the battleflag of war; for peace is eternal and is more noble than war. Its record in war is inspiring, but its record in peace equals, if not surpasses it. It has protected the weak from the strong; it has stood for justice among nations, and it is *our* flag that ultimately will bring peace to the world. Our flag is the standard of the civilian equally as it is of the soldier, both of whom have endured sufferings and made sacrifices that it may fly freely in the breeze. It symbolizes the virtues of peace, as it does the heroisms of war. The civilian has the same claims upon it as has the warrior, and the humblest citizen shares its glory equally with the proudest general.

"Dogs have played their part in peace and war. From the earliest ages they have been man's protectors and friends. History records that in our recent conflict, dogs saved countless lives, performed many acts of bravery and devotion, and in their death were fittingly honored by their human companions. Unlike men, however, dogs always are loyal and unselfish, and daily they perform acts of service and heroism that add new laurels to their fame.

"The fair names of our State and Nation have not been tarnished because their flags were placed at half-mast out of respect to one of God's humble, but noble, creatures. A fitting tribute has been paid to my dog and to the dogs of ages past; a tribute well deserved but long deferred.

"I doubt if many would criticise our President should he order the White House flags lowered in memory of his 'Laddie Boy'; nor do I believe many will take exception to the Governor of Maine's doing likewise for his faithful companion 'Garry.' I seek to offend the feelings of none, but I yield to none my right to act according to the dictates of my heart.

"It was my desire and my plan to have the flags lowered during the period of 'Garry's' journey homeward to the graves of his ancestors at my Island home. This desire was fulfilled and this plan executed. It may be that the comments made upon my action will arouse our people to a new realization of their responsibilities to dumb animals;

if this be so one of my purposes will have been accomplished.

"I firmly believe that when the men and women of this State and Nation think through what I have done, they will see that a lesson in the appreciation of dumb animals has been taught, and that my act heightens the significance of our flag as an emblem of human achievement that has been made possible largely through the faithful services and sacrifices of dumb animals.

"I should esteem it an honor, when my time comes, to have the same Capitol flags that were lowered for my dog, lowered for me. It is my prayer that I always may be as unselfish, and as loyal to my Master, State and Nation, as was 'Garry' to me."

Percival P. Baxter

Governor of Maine.

"EIRIE"