

All these were introduced in due form. "Mars" (here the bulldog held out his paw and put out his tongue as though he regarded me as a doctor who had come to diagnose his symptoms). Again the mysterious whisper, "First prize at the Agricultural General Booth (don't you see the likeness?)" Here the monkey reached down his hairy paw. "Count Orloff."

It was with fear and trembling that I shook the bear's huge paw. But I reflected that it would not do to offend him.

"You see," said my host as he led the way into the dining-room, "that I have them all under perfect control. All done by kindness and firmness."

"You don't happen to have a crocodile or a boa constrictor anywhere about?" I inquired anxiously.

"I *did* think of a crocodile," replied Jiff with a sigh, "but this climate is too cold."

"Thank goodness for that," was my mental comment.

"We dine *en famille*," said Jiff. "You don't mind it?"

"On the contrary, it will be very curious."

The creatures seated themselves round the table; I facing my host. On my right and left hand sat General Booth and Count Orloff. Then came Queen Mab, who faced Mars, for whom Jiff gave me to understand she entertained a hopeless passion, he looking languishingly at Bella. Even among dogs the course of true love does not always run smooth.

"For what we are to receive," began my host, when he was interrupted by a yell from me. What I had already received was a stab in the calf of my leg.

"That's Pluto!" cried Jiff, making a dive under the table and hauling forth a large raven. "Oh, you bad bird! Out you go! Mary, open the window."

The pretty parlour maid, who waited on us, choked down a giggle and opened the window, and Pluto was expelled therefrom with much flapping of wings and indignant croaking.

"He's the only one of the lot who sets me at defiance," said Jiff ruefully.

After dinner I went into the paddock to make a pencil study of one of the horses. I was speedily absorbed in my work when I felt a blast on my neck, and starting up, found that it came from a cow who had been inspecting my sketch. She danced round me with horns lowered. On the principle of facing the enemy, I danced opposite to her, trying to increase my distance. Now, I don't object to dancing in the abstract, but a *pas de deux* with a cow looks undignified, and might lead to unpleasant consequences, so I climbed into an apple tree, around which my tormentor trotted until Jiff, attracted by her bellowing, came to my rescue.

"Sorry you had such a fright," quoth he, "but Daisy never hurts anybody. That's only her play. See here!" and at a wave of his hand the wretch charged down on him just as she had done with me, stopping short when her horns were within a foot of his body.

I had no more adventures that day, and as I lay in bed soothed by the scent of roses and new-mown hay, I congratulated myself upon my snug quarters. Alas for the transitory nature of earthly bliss! In the morning, just as I was about to step out of my bath, I heard a squeak, and behold, a huge rat sitting on its haunches and rubbing its face with its forepaws and glaring at me with its fierce little eyes.

I have always had a horror of rats, even when dressed—myself I mean, not the rats. But to be assaulted by one now that I was clad only in conscious innocence, without even boots wherewith to kick at him, was too awful. For some minutes I stood shivering in the water, his ratship running round and round the bath regardless of my "shooing!" at him, which he evidently regarded as part of the game. At last I shouted "Jiff! Jiff! Help! Help!" till, after what seemed a century of suspense, Jiff rushed in, his face covered with lather and a razor in his hand.

"What is the matter?"

"Matter! Why, *that's* the matter," cried I, pointing to the rat. "Drive it away! Kill it!"