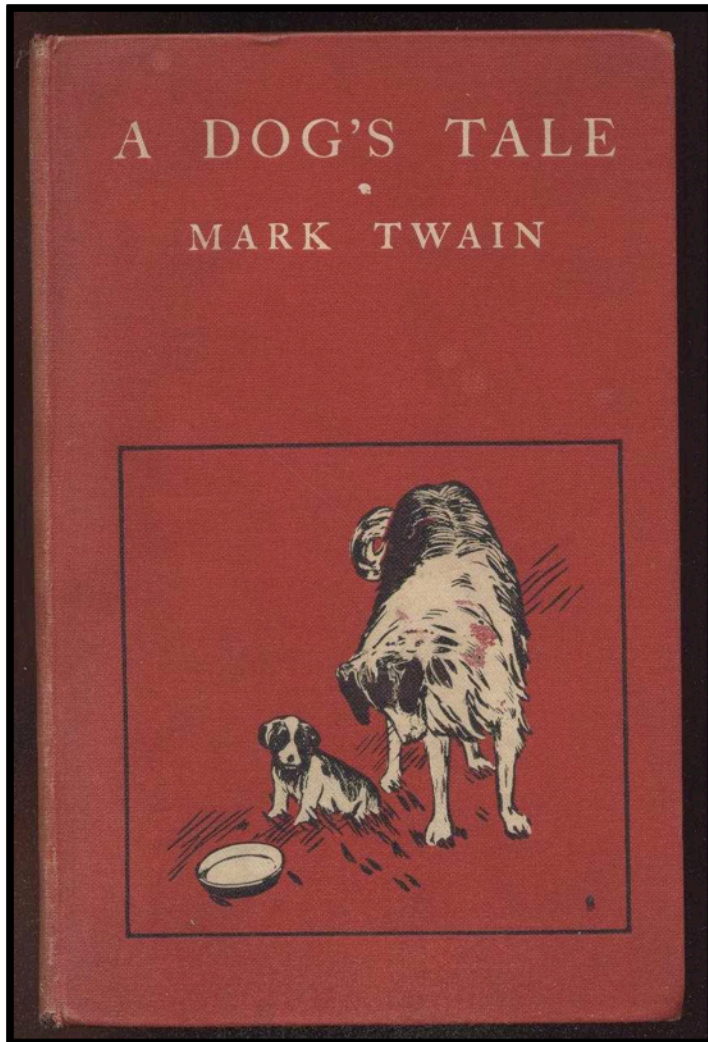


# *A Dog's Tale*

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Adapted by Katherine  
Bussiere*



My father was a St. Bernard and my mother was a collie. This is what my mother told me. When I was well grown, I was sold and taken away, and I never saw my mother again. We said our farewells, and looked our last upon each other through our tears. The last thing she said—keeping it for the last to make me remember it the better, I think—was, "In memory of me, when there is a time of danger to another, do not think of yourself. Think of your mother. Do as she would do."

Do you think I could forget that? No.

My new home was such a charming place! It was a fine great house, with pictures, fancy decorations, and rich furniture. All the pretty colors lit up with bright sunshine! I was just like a member of the family. The Grays loved me and petted me. They did not give me a new name, but called me by my old one—Alexis Jones. My mother had gotten it out of a song and said it was a beautiful name.

Mrs. Gray was thirty, and so sweet and so lovely, you cannot imagine it. Sadie was ten, with auburn pigtails, and fluffy skirts. The baby was a year old. She was plump, dimpled, and fond of me. She never could get enough of hugging me. Mr. Gray was thirty-eight, and tall and slender and handsome, a little bald in front. He had a face that just seems to glint and sparkle with kindness!

I spent hours in the nursery, watching the crib there, when the baby was asleep and the nurse was out doing chores. Sometimes I went visiting among the neighbor dogs. The people in our house were all kind to me and were fond of me. Mine was a pleasant life. There could not be a happier dog that I was, nor a more grateful one.



Then came the winter. One day I was standing watch in the nursery. That is to say, I was asleep on the bed. The baby was asleep in the crib, which was alongside the bed, and next to the fireplace. The nurse was out, and the baby and me were alone. Suddenly, a spark from the wood-fire shot out and landed in the crib. At first, I did not think much of it. But soon I began to smell something burning. I started to think that something terrible was happening.

Then the baby screamed – the crib had caught on fire! Before I could think, I jumped up in fright, went to the crib, reached my head through the flames, and dragged the baby out. We fell to the floor

together in a cloud of smoke. I dragged the screaming baby out the door and down the hall. I was still tugging away, all excited and happy and proud, when the master's voice shouted:

"Get away you awful animal!" I jumped to save myself; but he was very quick. He chased me, striking me with his cane, and hit my left leg very hard. I shrieked and fell. The nurse's voice rang wildly out, "The nursery's on fire!" Then, the master rushed away in that direction.

The pain was horrible, but that did not matter. My only thought was that I must get away from the master. I limped on three legs to the other end of the hall, where there was a dark little stairway leading up into an attic. I climbed up there and searched my way through the dark among the piles of things. I hid in the most secret place I could find. It was foolish to be afraid there, yet still I was. I licked my leg, and that helped me calm down.

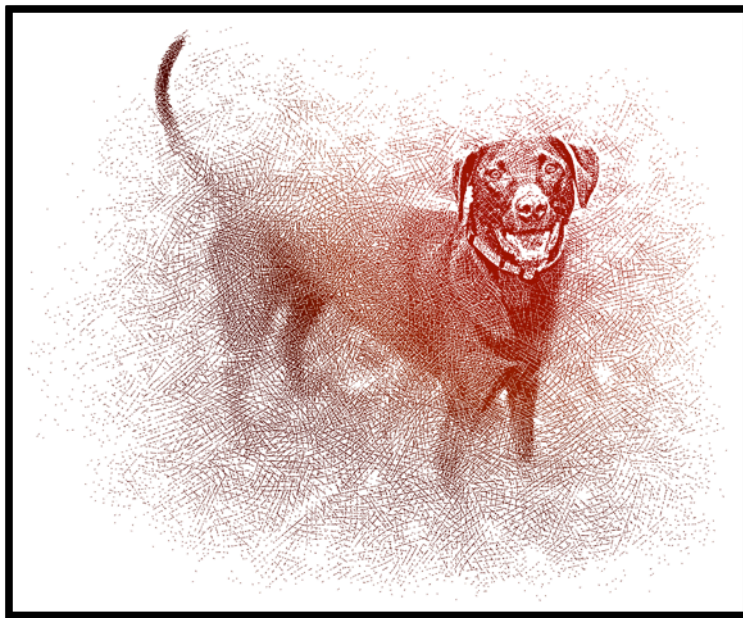
For half an hour there were shouts downstairs, and then there was quiet again. Then came a sound that froze me. They were calling me—calling me by name—hunting for me! But I said to myself, the master will never forgive. I did not know what I had done to make him so bitter and upset with me; however I figured that it was something a dog could not understand.

They called and called—days and nights, it seemed to me. So long that the hunger and thirst nearly drove me mad. I was getting very weak. Once it seemed to me that the calling was right there in the attic! And so it was: it was Sadie's voice, and she was crying. I heard her say:

"Come back to us—oh, come back to us, and forgive—it is all so sad without our—"

I broke in with SUCH a grateful little yelp. The next moment Sadie was walking through the darkness and shouting for the family to hear, "She's found, she's found!"

The days that followed—well, they were wonderful. The mother and Sadie and the nurse—why, they just seemed to worship me. They made me a fine bed, fed me delicious food, and every day the friends and neighbors visited to hear about how I rescued the baby. A dozen times a day Mrs. Gray and Sadie would tell the visitors that I risked my life to save the baby's. Mr. Gray pet me the most, and apologized for hurting my leg. I think my mother would be proud to know that, in a time of danger to another, I saved someone that I loved.



Soon came my little puppy, and then my cup was full, my happiness was perfect. It was the cutest little thing, and so smooth and soft. He had such little awkward paws, and such a sweet and innocent face. It



made me so proud to see how the children and their mother adored it. Life was just too lovely to—

And then came one morning when everything changed. Mr. Gray placed my puppy into a brown box, like he did with packages, and a van drove up to the house. I was glad, because my puppy loved to play in boxes. The man from the van walked up to Mr. Gray, greeted him with a handshake, and passed him money from his pocket. Mr. Gray took the money from the man and shut the box inside

the van. I stood in the driveway, watching the van drive away, thinking how exciting it was that my puppy was going for a ride!

I have watched two whole weeks, and he still hasn't returned! I am beginning to feel very frightened. I have a terrible feeling. I do not know what it is, but the fear makes me sick. I cannot eat the delicious food the nurse brings me. She comes outside to me in the night and says, "Poor doggie—do give it up; don't break my heart!" All this makes me more scared, and makes me think that something very bad has happened.

And I am so weak. I cannot stand on my feet anymore. And soon the nurse comes, and watches the sun go down. She said things I could not understand, but her words carried something cold to my heart.

"You poor dog! You did a brave deed, and now your dearest little one is gone."