

The Tale of the Pointer Tray

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German

Intermediate
3 min read

In a voyage which I made to the East Indies with Captain Hamilton, I took a favorite pointer with me; he was, to use a common phrase, worth his weight in gold, for he never deceived me. One day, when we were, by the best observations we could make, at least three hundred leagues from land, my dog pointed. I observed him for nearly an hour with astonishment, and mentioned the circumstance to the captain and every officer on board, asserting that we must be near land, for my dog smelt game. This occasioned a general laugh; but that did not alter in the least the good opinion I had of my dog. After much conversation pro and con, I boldly told the captain that I placed more confidence in Tray's nose than I did in the eyes of every seaman on board; and therefore boldly proposed laying the sum I had agreed to pay for my passage (*viz.*, one hundred guineas) that we should find game within half an hour. The captain (a good hearty fellow) laughed again, desired Mr. Crawford, the surgeon, who was prepared, to feel my pulse. He did so, and reported me in perfect health. The following dialogue between them took place; I overheard it, though spoken low and at some distance:—

Captain. His brain is turned; I cannot with honor accept his wager.

Surgeon. I am of a different opinion. He is quite sane, and depends more upon the scent of his dog than he will upon the judgment of all the officers on board; he will certainly lose, and he richly merits it.

Captain. Such a wager cannot be fair on my side; however, I'll take him up, if I return his money afterwards.

During the above conversation, Tray continued in the same situation, and confirmed me still more in my opinion. I proposed the wager a second time; it was then accepted.

Done! and done! were scarcely said on both sides, when some sailors who were fishing in the long boat, which was made fast to the stern of the ship, harpooned an exceedingly large[Pg 43] shark, which they brought on board and began to cut up for the purpose of barrelling the oil, when, behold, they found no less than SIX BRACE OF LIVE PARTRIDGES in this animal's stomach!

They had been so long in that situation, that one of the hens was sitting upon four eggs, and a fifth was hatching, when the shark was opened!

This young bird we brought up by placing it with a litter of kittens that came into the world a few minutes before. The old cat was as fond of it as any of her own four-legged progeny, and made herself very unhappy when it flew out of her reach till it returned again. As to the other partridges, there were four hens amongst them; one or more were, during the voyage, constantly sitting, and consequently we had plenty of game at the captain's table; and in gratitude to poor Tray (for being a means of winning one hundred guineas) I ordered him the bones daily, and sometimes a whole bird.

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