

CENTRAL PARK'S DOG DEMON

ROUND THE ICE-COVERED RESERVOIR RUNS THIS CURIOUS CUR.

HE HAS BEEN THERE FOR FOUR DAYS AND NO AMOUNT OF COAXING OR CURSING CAN PERSUADE HIM TOWARD THE SHORE—THE PARK KEEPERS ARE IN A DILEMMA.

The reservoir in Central Park was the centre of interest to a multitude of people yesterday, and from early morning until the fast-falling shades of night concealed moving objects from view across its ice-covered expanse pretty much every foot of the mile and a half of stone coping which incloses the lake had its occupant, a large proportion of the sightseers being women and children.

What they saw was a tiny, black ball, viewed from the furthest extreme, moving rapidly, yet with a rhythmical motion, and which as it approached the shore disclosed itself to be a gaunt and famished-looking canine of the water spaniel breed, as nearly as could be made out with the aid of a powerful glass. Not a few among the women onlookers were insistent in the assertion that the vagrant quadruped was a fox, and earnest in the declaration that "it's because it is wild, don't you see, that the poor thing won't come ashore or let itself be caught."

"'Poor thing,' indeed!" responded a Park keeper to one of these. "He's no poor thing; he's a devil, that dog is, and no mistake. I'd like to enter that cur in a race against time and everything else, I would, and back him to run 10,000 miles in 10,000 hours, with never a stop for eating or sleeping. 'Poor thing,' indeed!"

As a matter of fact, there are not a few among the Park employes who are disposed to regard the tramp cur which has taken possession of the reservoir as being something uncanny. For four days now the dog has been their *bête noire*, steadily keeping up his interminable round of circling about the middle of the lake while it was light, and successfully defying every effort to cajole or entrap him at all hours of the day and night.

The Central Park reservoir, it should be understood, covers an area of 107 acres, and is seven-eighths of a mile at the narrowest portion of the lake, which is covered with a sheet of glassy ice, but not sufficiently thick or strong enough to bear the weight of a man. It is directly in the middle of this ice field that the canine which is the occasion of anxiety on the part of Park policemen, officers of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and employes of the Department of Public Works, has taken up its quarters, and from which it declines to be dislodged. The agents of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals are on hand in force to see to it that the unfortunate brute—which is, to all appearances, the victim of its own temerity and obstinacy—is not subjected to unnecessary suffering, the Park keepers lurk in convenient nooks with the fell purpose of putting a pellet of lead in the canine carcass, while the Public Works employes and the curious among the public linger in order that they may be in at either the rescue or the death of the disturbing cause.

"I seen him first on Thursday afternoon of last week," said the Park keeper who made the discovery, as he began the recital anew to each group of inquirers, a recital which lost little in the repetition. "He was a-chasin' about the lake like all possessed, and as if he didn't have no idea about his bearin's. So I watched him for awhile, and then I fetched him a halloo and a whistle, and he come a hurryin' long to where I was standin' at the upper gate house, and I thought I'd got him for sure."

"But that wasn't his game. Soon's he got within almost reachin' distance of me, off he goes and away out in the middle of the lake again. If it wasn't for the fact of having a dog around in the reservoir, dirtying up and polluting the water the people in the city has got to drink, I should say let the brute go. He ain't much of a cur to look at, when you get close to him, and he'd never take a prize in the Westminster Kennel Club competitions, but he can do damage just the same."

"And so I said to myself that off he must come, and so I worked, and worked, coaxin' and cussin' by spells. But whether you swore at him or spoke sweet to him, it was no go. He was bound to stay on the ice in the reservoir, and stay he did. As the best thing that could be done, I got a plank and put it across from the ice to the coping of the reservoir, so's he could get ashore if he wanted to. But do you know, although that bloody beast has been seen on the plank since Thursday, he went right back on to the ice as soon as he discovered that he was seen. That dog ain't right, sure. He may look so, but he's no ornery cur. There's something wrong about him."

The domain which the tramp has assumed to himself, and over which he maintains his ceaseless journeyings, lies midway of the extreme confines of the reservoir between the upper and lower gatehouses, and covers an area of about a quarter of a mile square. At its westerly edge runs a ridge of hummocky ice. The course of the cur is invariable. Starting at the lower extremity the beast trots rapidly with a sharp, snappy, and graceful stride toward the north for several hundred feet, then turns abruptly to the right, describing a series of eccentric curves to the northeast corner of the course, then takes a zigzag track to the opposite corner on the west, and follows the ice ridge before alluded to to the starting point.

There is no hesitation or lack of vigor in the movements of the animal. Occasionally the tail droops as the tramp is staid for a moment while the cur takes a casual survey of the surroundings, or pricks up an ear at the sound of a particularly forceful whistle, but hour after hour the round is made with an alertness which is simply amazing when it is considered for what a length of time it has been maintained.

Frequently, when "coming down the wind," the brush is raised, and then it appears as if the animal had ceased to employ its limbs for locomotion, but was enjoying a slide over the glassy ice. As this phenomenon is always exhibited at a particular point in the course, there were not wanting among the park employes those who declared that the reason why the animal staid on the ice was that he had made a sliding pond which he didn't want to give up.

Several people, principally women, among the onlookers yesterday claimed to have identified the wanderer as a pet canine of theirs, which had strayed or been stolen, and which had become terrified by the unaccustomed surroundings to which it was subjected. There was one old lady who was positive that it was her Topsy, after gazing long and fondly at the distant animal through a pair of opera glasses. But when it was intimated that the park officers would hold the owner of the dog responsible for its removal from the reservoir without further delay her certainty gradually vanished, and after the experience of the old lady became noised around there were no further identifications.

How the dog subsists is a mystery which has puzzled everybody. The animal has not been out of observation for a minute in the daytime since its discovery, and its incessant motion has precluded all possibility of its getting anything to eat even were food at hand. Numerous attempts have been made to induce it to come within gunshot or in range of a lasso by offers of meat and food, but without avail. The condition of the animal indicates that it is not suffering to any considerable extent, and affords ground for the theory of one of the officers of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

"Ever since the case was reported at the office of the society," said he, "I and my associates have been on the lookout to get a shot at the dog. There were a good many shots fired at the beast on Monday morning, but they didn't do any good. And what's the use, when you can't get the cur within range? He don't come closer than a quarter of a mile to the shore, and that's beyond us. Some one suggested that we go down to the city to get some of the Seventh Regiment experts to come up and do the act. But those military rifles, with their big bullets, will kill at a couple of miles, and it won't do to take any such risks as that with all the people who are coming up to the park to see the show."

"Then, you see, if the dog wasn't killed outright, only wounded, he would bleed all over the ice, and then the people would up and say they were drinking blood, and there'd be a time. Yes, perhaps it would be better to try it than to let the pollution go on that must naturally follow from the dog living in the reservoir, but some one else has got to take the responsibility."

"Some people think that this dog must be bewitched, to be able to keep up the way he has without eating or sleeping. I don't know about the eating part of it, although it is my opinion that some one is feeding the cur at night in order to keep the fun a-going; but I do know that the miserable beast which has given us so much trouble hasn't gone without sleep. I found out on Sunday night that the dog had a shelter under the coping in the neighborhood of the upper gatehouse, and it is proposed to hunt him out to-night if there is a moon."

"It was suggested that a bigger dog be turned loose on the ice of the reservoir to drive the little black devil out. But that was given up as a bad job for fear that we might get two animals to deal with instead of one. There is nothing for it but to catch the rascal at night or shoot him. If he can be got within range and killed, then we will take a boat, cut the ice ahead of it, and so get to the carcass to remove it. There was an old gentleman here who wanted us to try catching the dog with an iceboat, and offered to furnish the boat, but it would be too dangerous. An ordinary boat couldn't be used to advantage until there is a thaw, of which there is little likelihood just at present, and so we've come to the conclusion that what has got to be done is to resort to strategy. We're bound to have that dog out of the reservoir dead or alive within the next four-and-twenty hours."

"Keep the tramp moving," was the order issued when the sun went down and darkness settled over the reservoir. "Keep him moving, and it is possible that one of two things will

happen—either he will run his tireless legs off or he may come ashore, and good riddance to him." Thus spoke the Superintendent to his subordinates.

Care was taken to preclude the unfortunate quadruped from gaining the shelter in which he was supposed to have taken refuge the three nights previous, and extra provision made for his getting ashore by the placing of planks at each confine of the lake adjoining the gatehouses. With the coming of night, the dog appeared to take on new life and strength, instead of adhering to the steady trot which had characterized his movements throughout the day, he frequently broke out into a gallop, quickening into a run, and made his accustomed circuit, describing every circle, curve, and zigzag with machine-like precision. But at no time did a sound escape him, and it is one of the singular features of the incident that no one can be found who has heard so much as a whimper from the beast.

Three times in the course of the evening did the wanderer make what looked like a break for the shore, but each time he was frightened back. It was only occasionally, however, that a glimpse could be caught of the swiftly-moving animal, and as the sky was cloud-laden, the light was too poor to permit of accurate marksmanship even when he came within range.

"Wait a bit," said the man with the rifle; "the moon will be out soon, and then we'll settle the hash of my fine young gentleman." But when Fair Luna emerged from under the fleecy canopy, only to hide herself in deeper obscurity the moment after, Tray, Blanche, or Sweetheart, whichever it might be, was in the far distance, safely beyond the danger zone.

It was reaching toward midnight, and the spitting snow betokened a coming storm. "Say," queried the companion of the man with the rifle, "do you know what I think? Well, I think this here dog has got a mission. Who knows? Maybe his master committed suicide and is under the ice—that is, his body is—and the dog knows it, and that's the reason he won't go away when he's got the chance. That's what I think."

"Blest if I don't think that may be so," responded the man who carried the Winchester. "Dogs is mighty intelligent animals, and they're faithful, too, faithfuller than men. It would be a pity to fill him full of lead if it is so. And besides, its snowing, and no one can't see to shoot straight in this kind of weather. Let's give him a chance. If he comes ashore, all right. If he don't we'll have another look for him in the morning. He ain't doing no harm where he is, so far as I can see, but if he's here at daylight he dies sure."