

THE MASTER.

(Second Prize Story—*Free Lance* competition.)

I was sitting alone in front of the old-fashioned grate fire-place in his library, and the gloom and the silence that enwrapped the whole house weighed heavily upon me. I recalled the many long winter evenings that we had spent together in this room, and he had been the soul and life of these evenings. The great arm-chair, where he always sat, was empty, and the voice that once filled the room with its music was silent now and silent forever. Down stairs in the room with the drawn curtains he slept unconscious of the scent of the flowers he loved.

The stillness of the night was broken by cries such as one hears from animals in pain. I sprang from my chair and rushed to the hall. At the door of the room where he slept stood his dog looking wistfully for the door to open.

"Tige," I cried, "Tige, old boy, come here."

With joyful bark the dog bounded up the stairs and ran into the library and up to his master's chair. Pain and disappointment was pictured upon his face when he found that the chair was empty. He looked inquiringly at me and seemed to ask:

"Is it true that my master is dead?" Then he added, "Yes, it must be, for last night when they brought him home and laid him on the bed he called for me and said: 'Tige, the doctor says that I cannot recover. It's my heart, old boy. Mother has promised to keep you, and you must take good care of her, old fellow, for she will be all alone when I am gone. It was like my master to look out for others, but never for himself.'"

Tige and I sat long in silence. Finally, taking his head between my hands and looking into his face, I asked:

"Tige, I was away during two years of the master's life, and when I returned I noticed that he had aged greatly, and that some great sorrow had left its mark upon him. Do you know the cause of the change?"

Tige looked knowingly at me, and then in dog fashion told me