



**A**ND the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. 2 The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: 3 But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. 4 And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. 5 And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: 6 And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. 7 And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. (2 Sam 12:1-7)

Even as God has given man dominion over the animal kingdom, I believe He expects man to rule over that kingdom with the same compassion He exercises over man. Cruelty never has a place in the heart of God, and he will not look with favor upon it in the hearts of men. The Lord has given us a variety of animals to make our lives brighter – beasts of burden, meat for sustenance, fish for food, and wonderful domestic animals as pets. Even those creatures of the wild serve a purpose under God's heaven in maintaining a balance in nature.

Wherever Christianity has prevailed in the hearts of men, a gentle compassion and care of animals has been practiced. Deliberate pain and torture of animals is beneath the dignity of man, and the character of our Godly heritage. Note the love the man in the introductory text had for the little lamb that supped at his table. He loved it as one of his daughters. I do not equate animal life with that of the human creation of God; however, one major difference in the human model is that the heart of man is capable of foresight and compassionate care of the animal – and that is his duty. If

animals are to be slaughtered to feed the hungry, so be it; however, not in cruel and in humane ways.

I ran across this story of a mother deer (doe) in my Jones Fifth Grade Reader designed to convey the need for compassion on all life. Please read to the end to grasp its full impact.

### **A-Hunting of the Deer**

by Charles Dudley Warner

Early one August morning a doe was feeding on Basin Mountain.

The sole companion of the doe was her only child, a charming little fawn, whose brown coat was just beginning to be mottled with beautiful spots. The buck, its father, had been that night on a long tramp across the mountain to Clear Pond, and had not yet returned. He went to feed on the lily pads there.

The doe was daintily cropping tender leaves and turning from time to time to regard her offspring. The fawn had taken his morning meal and now lay curled up on a bed of moss.

If the mother stepped a pace or two farther away in feeding, the fawn made a half movement, as if to rise and follow her. If, in alarm, he uttered a plaintive cry, she bounded to him at once.

It was a pretty picture, — maternal love on the one part, and happy trust on the other. The doe lifted her head with a quick motion. Had she heard something? Probably it was only the south wind in the balsams. There was silence all about in the forest.

With an affectionate glance at her fawn she continued picking up her breakfast. But suddenly she started, head erect, eyes dilated, a tremor in her limbs. She turned her head to the south; she listened intently.

There was a sound, a distinct, prolonged note, pervading the woods. It was repeated. The doe had no doubt now. It was the baying of a hound — far off, at the foot of the mountain.

Time enough to fly; time enough to put miles between her and the hound before he should come upon her fresh trail; yes, time enough. But there was the fawn.

The cry of the hound was repeated, more distinct this time. The mother bounded away a few paces. The fawn started up with an anxious bleat. The doe turned; she came back; she couldn't leave it.

She walked away toward the west, and the little thing skipped after her. It was slow going for the slender legs, over the fallen logs and through the rasping bushes. The doe bounded in advance and waited. The fawn scrambled after her, slipping and tumbling along, and whining a good deal because its mother kept always moving away from it.

Whenever the fawn caught up, he was quite content to frisk about. He wanted more breakfast, for one thing; and his mother wouldn't stand still. She moved on continually; and his weak legs were tangled in the roots of the narrow deer path.

Suddenly came a sound that threw the doe into a panic of terror, — a short, sharp yelp, followed by a prolonged howl, caught up and reechoed by other hayings along the mountain side. The danger was certain now; it was near. She could not crawl on in this way; the dogs would soon be upon them. She turned again for flight.

The fawn, scrambling after her, tumbled over, and bleated piteously. Flight with the fawn was impossible. The doe returned and stood by it, head erect and nostrils distended. Perhaps she was thinking. The fawn lay down contentedly, and the doe licked him for a moment. Then, with the swiftness of a bird, she dashed away, and in a moment was lost in the forest. She went in the direction of the hounds.

She descended the slope of the mountain until she reached the more open forest of hard wood. She was going due east, when she turned away toward the north, and kept on at a good pace.

In five minutes more she heard the sharp yelp of discovery, and then the deep-mouthed howl of pursuit. The hounds had struck her trail where she turned, and the fawn was safe.

For the moment fear left her, and she bounded on with the exaltation of triumph. For a quarter of an hour she went on at a slapping pace, clearing the bushes with bound after bound, flying over the fallen logs, pausing neither for brook nor ravine. The baying of the hounds grew fainter behind.

After running at high speed perhaps half a mile farther, it occurred to her that it would be safe now to turn to the west, and, by a wide circuit, seek her fawn. But at the moment she heard a sound that chilled her heart.

It was the cry of a hound to the west of her. There was nothing to do but to keep on, and on she went, with the noise of the pack behind her. In five minutes more she had passed into a hillside clearing. She heard a tinkle of bells. Below her, down the mountain slope were other clearings broken by patches of woods. A mile or two down lay the valley and the farmhouses. That way also her enemies were. Not a merciful heart in all that lovely valley. She hesitated; it was only for an instant.

She must cross the Slide Brook valley, if possible, and gain the mountain opposite. She bounded on; she stopped. What was that? From the valley ahead came the cry of a searching hound. Every way was closed but one, and that led straight down the mountain to the cluster of houses. The hunted doe went down "the open," clearing the fences, flying along the stony path.

As she approached Slide Brook, she saw a boy standing by a tree with a raised rifle. The dogs were not in sight, but she could hear them coming down the hill. There was no time for hesitation. With a tremendous burst of speed she cleared the stream, and as she touched the bank heard the "ping" of a rifle bullet in the air above her. The cruel sound gave wings to the poor thing.

In a moment more she leaped into the traveled road. Women and children ran to the doors and windows; men snatched their rifles. There were twenty people who were just going to shoot her, when the doe leaped the road fence, and went away across a marsh toward the foothills.

By this time the dogs, panting and lolling out their tongues, came swinging along, keeping the trail, like stupids, and consequently losing ground when the deer doubled. But when the doe had got into the timber, she heard the savage brutes howling across the meadow. (It is well enough, perhaps, to say that nobody offered to shoot the dogs.)

The courage of the panting fugitive was not gone, but the fearful pace at which she had been going told on her.

Her legs trembled, and her heart beat like a trip hammer. She slowed her speed, but still fled up the right bank of the stream. The dogs were gaining again, and she crossed the broad, deep brook. The fording of the river threw the hounds off for a time. She used the little respite to push on until the baying was faint in her ears.

Late in the afternoon she staggered down the shoulder of Bartlett, and stood upon the shore of the lake. If she could put that piece of water between her and her pursuers, she would be safe. Had she strength to swim it?

At her first step into the water she saw a sight that sent her back with a bound. There was a boat mid-lake; two men were in it. One was rowing; the other had a gun in his hand. What should she do? With only a moment's hesitation she plunged into the lake. Her tired legs could not propel the tired body rapidly.

The doe saw the boat nearing her. She turned to the shore whence she came; the dogs were lapping the water and howling there. She turned again to the center of the lake. The brave, pretty creature was quite exhausted now. In a moment more the boat was on her and the man at the oars had leaned over and caught her.

"Knock her on the head with that paddle!" he shouted to the gentleman in the stem. The gentleman was a gentleman, with a kind face. He took the paddle in his hand. Just then the doe turned her head and looked at him with her great appealing eyes.

"I can't do it! I can't do it!" and he dropped the paddle. "Oh, let her go!"

But the guide slung the deer round, whipped out his hunting knife, and made a pass that severed her jugular.

And the gentleman ate that night of the venison.

*ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Charles Dudley Warner (1829-1900) was an American author. He had a keen, wholesome sense of humor, a sympathetic nature, and much literary taste. Among his entertaining books are "My Summer in a Garden" and "Back-Log Studies."*