

DRUMMOND HENRY

THE MONKEY
THAT WOULD
NOT KILL

Henry Drummond

The Monkey That Would Not Kill

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PREFACE

A few years ago, the readers of "Wee Willie Winkie" detected a new vein running through the Editorial Notes and announcements which prefaced the monthly collection of juvenile literary efforts, which made up their little Magazine.

There was an originality and a humour which they had not noticed before, and Competitions were suggested to them of a type for a repetition of which they clamoured.

And then presently a new serial story began, and the hairbreadth escapes of that immortal Monkey which it recorded were breathlessly followed by Wee Willie Winkie's army of bairns all over the world; and when it was concluded, so numerous were the entreaties for a sequel, that compulsion had to be resorted to in order to secure the revelation of the later life of the hero under a new name.

And now at last the Editors who were responsible for the periodical referred to have to make a confession.

Once upon a time they both, mother and daughter, forsook their office and went away to Canada for several months in 1891, and during that time their joint editorial chair was occupied by no other than Professor Henry Drummond.

And now our readers will understand to whom they are indebted for the quaint sayings and funny stories and Competitions betokening someone who "understood" boys – and girls too. And they will be grateful to a certain contributor who failed to send his copy in time for the monthly issue on one occasion, and so forced the then Editor to sit down and write "something." It was the first time he had ever tried to write fiction, and as the story grew under his pen, he began to realise the joy of creation. And so it was that, in spite of his playful deprecation of "such nonsense" being printed, the adventures of "the Monkey that would not kill" came to be told, and we know that we can do our old friends and readers no greater kindness than to dedicate these chronicles to them in permanent form, in memory of one to whom "Wee Willie" and his bairns were ever a subject of affectionate interest.

THE MONKEY THAT WOULD NOT KILL

CHAPTER I

There is no such thing as an immortal monkey, but this monkey was as near it as possible. Talk of a cat's nine lives – this monkey had ninety! A monkey's business in the world is usually to make everybody merry, but the special mission of this one, I fear, was to make everybody as angry as ever they could be. In wrath-producing power, in fact, this monkey positively shone.

How many escapes the monkey had before the run-away slave presented it to the missionary – from whom I first heard of it – no one knows. It certainly had not much hair on when it arrived, and there was an ominous scar on its head, and its ears were not wholly symmetrical. But the children were vastly delighted with it, and after much kind treatment the creature was restored to rude health, and, I must confess, to quite too rude spirits. The children wanted him baptized by the time-honoured title of 'Jacko'; but by a series of exploits in which the monkey distinguished himself at the expense of every member of the household in turn, it became evident that only one name would fit a quadruped of his peculiar disposition; and that was 'Tricky.' Tricky, therefore, he was called, and as Tricky he lived and – did *not* die.

There was no peace in the home after Tricky came. He ate everything, upset everything, broke everything, stole everything, did everything that the average monkey ought not to do. If they shut him up in a room, Tricky got out by the chimney. If they put him out of the room, Tricky came in by the chimney. What could you do with such a creature? He could not be kept in, and he could not be kept out; so a court-martial was held, and Tricky was sentenced to be given away.

But by this time the whole place knew Tricky, and no one would have him. Such an unusual refusal of a present was never known before. Even the run-away slave smiled sweetly when his old friend was offered to him, and protested that, to his deep regret, he was unable to buy nuts enough to keep him.

The idea of 'wandering' Tricky in the woods, of course, occurred to the genius of the village, and a detachment of boys set off one Saturday to carry it into effect. But you might as well have tried to wander a carrier pigeon. Like Mary's little lamb, everywhere these boys went, that monkey went. When they ran, it ran, when they doubled back, it doubled back; and when they got home, dead tired, it was only to find Tricky laughing at them from the church roof.

That night the worst happened. When the people assembled for the weekly meeting, there was not found in that church one whole hymn-book. Some one, apparently, had been pelting the pulpit with them. The cushions were torn; the blinds were a wreck; two stops in the harmonium were pulled out bodily. After the service the missionary was solemnly waited on by a deputation. They were closeted for an hour and a half, but no one, except themselves, ever knew what was said or done. The only circumstances that one could in any way connect with this mysterious council was that about midnight a small boat was seen stealthily putting out to sea. It contained two figures – one, who rowed, was the senior elder; the other, who sat in the stern, looked like a very small boy.

CHAPTER II

The day was not yet broken when the 'watch' of the ship *Vulcan*, lying becalmed off the – coast, was roused by a peculiar noise aft. Going to the spot he was surprised to find a much-bedraggled monkey rubbing itself on a pile of sail-cloth. The creature had evidently swum or drifted a long distance, and was now endeavouring to restore circulation. Jerry, being a humane man, got it some biscuit, and a saucer of grog, and waited developments. These were not slow to show themselves; within twenty-four hours the commander of the ship *Vulcan*, 740 tons register, was a monkey named Tricky.

Time would fail me to tell of the life that monkey led them all on board the *Vulcan*. After the first week only two things lay between him and death at any moment. One was his inventiveness. Tricky's wickedness was nothing, if not original. Every day he was at some new villainy; and anything *new* on board ship is sacred. There is no *Punch* published on board ship; but Tricky was all the comic papers rolled into one. But that was not the main reason. There is a good deal of quiet quarrelling on board ship. The mate spared Tricky because he thought he would some day give the Captain a 'turn'; the Captain let him live, hoping he would do something dreadful to the mate. Everybody waited to see Tricky do something to somebody else. So he rose to the highest rank in the merchant-marine, and was respected almost to idolatry by all on board the *Vulcan*.

One day Tricky was hanged – formally, deliberately, and judicially hanged. What had he done? He had killed the ship cat. It was a deliberate murder, with no extenuating circumstances, and a rope, with a noose, was swung over the yard-arm, and Tricky run up in the presence of all the crew. This happened about eight bells, and at dusk Tricky was still hanging there, very quiet and motionless. Next morning Tricky was still there – as live as you are. Tricky was not hanged, he was only hanging; and, as everybody knows, monkeys rather like hanging. In fact, though Tricky was still up there, he had got his hands well round the rope, and was on the whole fairly at home. The rope round a neck like Tricky's was a mere boa.

The executioners were rather ashamed of themselves when they saw how matters stood; but instead of softening them, this dangling mockery of a dead monkey still further roused their wrath, and the boatswain was told off to end the drama by tossing Tricky into the sea. The boatswain was up the shrouds in a moment, and loosening the rope with one hand, and catching the monkey by the tail with the other, he swung poor Tricky a good yard over the ship's side into the Atlantic.

When the boatswain descended upon the deck he was greeted with a sudden deluge of rain. It was only Tricky shaking the salt-water off. The monkey had climbed up the stern rope, and reached the deck before him. What would have happened next is hard to predict, but at this point the Captain, attracted by the scream of laughter which greeted the drenching of the boatswain, came up and was told the sequel to the hanging. Now the Captain was a blunt, good-natured man, and he avowed that neither man nor monkey who had ever been hanged on board his ship should ever be put to death again. This was the law on shore, he said, and he would see fair-play. So Tricky received another lease of life, and thus the ship *Vulcan* was kept in hot water for two months more.

About the end of that period there came a crisis. The ship was nearing port, and a heavy cleaning was in progress. Among other things the ship's boats had to be painted. In an evil hour one of the men went below to dinner, and left his paint-pot standing on the deck. If Tricky had lost such a chance he would not have been a monkey at all. Needless to say he rose to the occasion. That his supreme hour was come was quite evident from the way he set to work at once. He began with the parrot, which he painted vermilion; then he passed the brush gaily along the newly varnished wood-work – daubed the masts and shrouds all over, obliterated the name on the life-buoys, and wound up a somewhat successful performance by emptying the pot over the Captain's best coat, which was laid in the sun to get the creases out.

I draw a veil over what happened on the *Vulcan* during the next quarter of an hour. There was never such a muster of the crew since they left port: Everybody seemed to have business on deck. When the Captain came up you could have heard a pin drop. I shall not repeat his language, nor try to compare with anything earthly the voice with which he ordered every man below. All I will record is – and it is to his everlasting honour – that in that awful hour the Captain was true to his vow. 'Do you see land?' he roared to the steersman. 'Aye, aye, sir,' said the man, 'land on the larboard bow.' 'Then,' said the Captain, 'put her head to it.'

That night, late, the ship stood close in to a small island on the north coast of Scotland, and a boat was solemnly sent ashore, and after that Tricky was no more seen by any of the crew of the *Vulcan*.

CHAPTER III

The island on which the Captain of the *Vulcan* exiled Tricky was marked on the chart 'uninhabited.' But the chart was wrong. Ten years before, a shepherd had come there, and now lived with his wife and family near the top of the great sea-cliff. You may judge of the sensation when a real live monkey appeared in the early morning in this remote and lonely spot. The shepherd was watching his sheep when the apparition rose, as it were, from the ground. He had never seen a monkey before, any more than the sheep; and sheep and shepherd bolted like wildfire. Tricky, of course, followed the biped, for he had always been accustomed to human society; and, as the shepherd fled towards the hut, he saw the monkey close at his heels. So he made a rush at the open door, and pulled it after him with a bang which almost brought down the house.

The fugitive had just got inside when, in a moment, he felt himself seized from behind. It seemed as if a powerful hand was dragging him backward, and he threw himself down on the ground, and roared with fear. What had happened was that the flying end of his plaid had got jammed in the door, but he felt sure the evil spirit was holding him in its clutches, and it was some time before his startled wife could convince him that there was nothing there. The good woman gathered him up, and soothed him; and as soon as he could speak he told her in a shivering voice about the awful monster which had come to slay them all. He had scarcely got out the word 'monster,' when there was a scurrying in the chimney, and the monster presented himself before them, and calmly sat down on the meal-barrel. 'It's just a puggy!' cried the shepherd's wife (she had been to Inverness), and began to stroke Tricky on the back. As she did so, she noticed that the creature had a strand of an old ship's rope round its neck, and to this was attached a small piece of paper. She opened it and read four words, scrawled in a hasty hand: —

'Won't Hang

Won't Drown.'

The shepherd seemed more frightened than ever at this revelation. 'Won't hang, won't drown,' he muttered. 'Then, we'll see if it won't *shoot*,' and he reached over the fireplace for the gun which he killed the rabbits with. As he loaded it it seemed to the shepherd's wife as if all the powder and shot in the house was being poured into the barrel. She pleaded with her husband to spare Tricky's life, and it almost looked as if she had succeeded, for the shepherd lowered the gun from his shoulder and stood for a moment as if in doubt. But it was not because of his wife he stopped. It was partly because he was quite too shaky to aim straight; and partly because he was too much of a sportsman to shoot offhand a thing which was sitting quiet and still on his own meal-barrel; but the main reason was that he was afraid to shoot the baby, whose crib was just beside it. So he gave the meal-barrel a kick with his foot to dislodge the monkey. He thought it would make for the door, and there, in the open air, he would shoot it fair and square.

But the monkey had other views. What it wanted was something to eat; and the children's porridge being handy, it put its paw in and began breakfast. The shepherd was too much petrified to interfere, and it was only when Tricky next spilt the milk-jug over the baby that he roused himself to do his duty to his family. He raised the gun once more, and, watching his chance when Tricky was exactly opposite the door, aimed straight at its heart, and pulled the trigger. Now, the next moment that monkey ought to have been scattered all over the hillside in multitudinous fragments. On the contrary, it was up on the table, imitating the click of the gun with a spoon. Not that the shepherd

missed. For the first time in its life the rusty lock had 'struck,' and the dazed shepherd was more than ever confirmed in his belief that the monkey was a witch.

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