

The Dogs of Couching Lion Farm

With special reference to Professor Monroe's Sheltie, Richard of Anahassit, and observations on his Collie, Saint Bernard, Landseer Newfoundland, and Great Pyrenees

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A S GUEST correspondent this month, we have asked Professor Will S. Monroe, of Couching Lion Farm, near Waterbury, Vermont, to give his reactions on the mental characteristics of the Sheltie. Mr. Monroe was for many years at the head of the department of psychology at the State Teachers' College at Montclair, New Jersey. He retired ten years ago to his farm on the slopes of the Green Mountains where he shares his home and his affections with his dogs. Besides Richard of Anahassit, his little Shetland sheep dog, he has four other dogs representing as many different breeds.

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Regarding his dogs Professor Monroe writes: "Guests at the farm invariably express surprise that my five dogs should be so essentially companionable, and particularly that my little Shetland, Richard, sired by the famous Ch. Wee Laird O' Downfield, should fare so well with the four large dogs—Sir Hector of Arken, a collie; Bebe Alpine, a St. Bernard; Landseer, a Newfoundland; and Basque of Basquerie, a Great Pyrenees. All of my dogs, Sir Hector excepted, are thoroughly companionable and Little Richard has a finely developed social sense.

"While not distinctly anti-social, Sir Hector avoids companionship with the other dogs—although very fond of his master—and when they seek to be friendly with him, he intimidates them with the result that the other dogs fear him. This apparent anti-social trait, I hasten to add, is not characteristic of collies generally, but seems due to a serious derangement of the nervous system, doubtless inherited, and superimposed upon this neuro-pathic taint, quite probably, an abnormal puppyhood.

"Another marked trait in my Shetland is the persistence of the play instinct. He is in his fourth year, but is quite as sportive as a young puppy. His devoted play-fellows are Bebe Alpine, also in his fourth year, and Basque, now one year old. Bebe Alpine weighs 140 pounds and Basque

120. In spite of the fact that Richard balances the scales at only 21 pounds, he holds his own with his two big companions in all sorts of rough and tumble games. For reasons above noted, Sir Hector never allows himself to play with the other dogs, although he was only one year old when he joined our fraternity; Landseer, a dozen years old, seems to have completed his play cycle.

"Another characteristic of Richard is his devotion to his master, given without obsequiousness. Towards friends who visit the farm, however, he gives expression of a detachment that suggests the one-family dog. He overcomes this apparent timidity if the guests are with us a few days.

"On our long walks together up the mountain trails that radiate from my farm, and more particularly when guests are with me, I have noted what I thought might be a persistence of the herding instinct that must hark back many generations, since Richard or his immediate ancestors have not served as sheep dogs. If the party tends to get separated, following the narrow mountain path Indian fashion, Richard shows marked uneasiness and runs back and forth from the leader to the rear laggards, with the obvious suggestion that he is trying to keep the herd together.

"Another trait suggesting mental likeness to his remote progenitors is a habit of climbing to the summit of high rocks and cliffs when we are walking through the fields, especially when such elevations give good outlooks. He will stand on the cliffs for some time, in a watchful position, suggesting that he might be looking for scattered sheep.

"He has slept with me on an enclosed porch, Summer and Winter, for two and a half years, or since the day he came to me when a year old. My house is 1,500 feet above sea level, and the Winters are generally bitter cold, and long, the thermometer sometimes reaching 30 below zero. But he never manifests discomfort for cold weather. As a bed companion, he scarcely moves during the night and I have wondered if his quiet and restful nights by the side of his old master may not be attributed to his settled good will and attachment for me and perhaps the wish not to disturb my sleep."

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