



C H A P T E R 7

WHEN MY MOTHER DIED IN OCTOBER 1890 SHE WAS IN HER eighty-eighth year, a mighty age, a well-fought fight for life for one who at forty was so delicate of body as to be considered an **invalid** and soon to die. I knew her well during the first twenty-five years of my life; but after that I saw her only at wide intervals, for we lived many days' journey apart. I am not proposing to write about her but merely to talk about her.

What becomes of the many photographs which one's mind takes of people? Out of the millions of this, my first and closest friend, only one clear one of early date remains. It goes back forty-seven years; she was forty years old then, and I was eight. She held me by the hand and we were on our knees by the bedside of my brother, two years older than I, who lay dead, and the tears were flowing down her cheeks.

She had a slender, small body but a large heart—a heart so large that everybody's grief and everybody's joys found welcome in it. The greatest difference which I find between her and the rest of the people whom I have known is this: those others felt a strong interest in a few things, but to the very day of her death she felt a strong interest in the whole world and everything and everybody in it. In all her life she never knew such a thing as a halfhearted interest in affairs and people,

or an interest which drew a line and left out certain affairs and was indifferent to certain people.

Her interest in people and other animals was warm, personal, friendly. She always found something to excuse, and as a rule to love, in the roughest of them—even if she had to put it there herself. She was the natural friend of the friendless.

One day in St. Louis she walked out into the street and greatly surprised a cartman who was beating his horse over the head with a handle of his heavy whip; for she took the whip away from him and forced him to promise that he would never be cruel to a horse again. That sort of action in the cause of mistreated animals was a common thing with her all her life, and her manner and intent always carried her point and sometimes won the friendship of the very people she challenged. The homeless, hunted, and meanest of cats followed her home, and were welcome. We had nineteen cats at one time, in 1845. And there wasn't one in the lot that had any character, not one that had any merit. They were a vast burden to all of us—including my mother—but they were out of luck and that was enough; they had to stay. However, better these than no pets at all; children must have pets and we were not allowed to have caged ones. My mother would not have allowed a rat to be imprisoned.