

A TRIUMPH OF SURGERY

BY – JAMES HERRIOT

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Alfred Wight (3 October 1916 – 23 February 1995), known by the pen name **James Herriot**, was a British veterinary surgeon and writer, who used his many years of experiences as a veterinary surgeon to write a series of books each consisting of stories about animals and their owners. He is best known for these semi-autobiographical works, beginning with *If Only They Could Talk* in 1970, which spawned a series of movies and television series.

THEME

The story "A Triumph of Surgery" is about a dog named Tricki. The theme of the story is about the blind love which we possess for the one whom we love the most. Mrs. Pumphrey had no idea that her blind and extreme love for her dog Tricki took him to trouble. Excessive love made Tricki sick and became a reason for his illness. It can be concluded after reading the story that excessive love can take the form of extreme consequences.

MESSAGE

The moral of the chapter is that anything in excess is not good for us. Even food, if given more than it is required will harm the body, but if in time you come into proper routine that problem can be resolved without any surgery.

SYNOPSIS

Tricki, a small dog, is pampered and overfed by his rich mistress. He falls seriously ill and his mistress consults a veterinary surgeon. Does he perform an operation? Does the dog recover?

This story is about Tricki, a dog who is the pet of a rich lady named Mrs. Pumphrey. She loves her dog very much and is unable to refuse him anything he wants. Tricki, is fond of eating cream cakes and chocolates. So one day when Mrs. Pumphrey is out with Tricki for a walk the narrator sees them and stops to talk. While talking to Mrs. Pumphrey he realises that she has been overfeeding Tricki and also had been giving him things that he shouldn't eat due to which Tricki had started looking like a bloated sausage. Soon Tricki got unwell and Mrs. Pumphrey has to call Mr. Herriot (narrator) for help. She does not want to send him away but the only way suggested by Mr. Herriot is to get him hospitalised for 15 days. Then the story unfolds into how he gets well.

GLOSSARY

- Mistress- a woman in a position of authority or control.
- Bloated- excessive in size or amount.
- Sausage- an item of food in the form of a cylindrical length of minced pork or other meat encased in a skin, typically sold raw to be grilled or fried before eating.
- Bloodshot- (of the eyes) inflamed or tinged with blood, typically as a result of tiredness.
- Rheumy- watery.
- Lollid- sit, lie, or stand in a lazy, relaxed way.

- Hastened- be quick to do something.
- Listless- lacking energy or enthusiasm.
- Malnutrition- lack of proper nutrition
- Cod liver oil- oil pressed from the liver of cod
- Relent- become less severe or intense.
- Lumbago- pain in the muscles and joints of the lower back.
- Severe- very great; intense.
- Regime- a system or ordered way of doing things.
- Tottering- move in a feeble or unsteady way.
- Tweed- a rough-surfaced woollen cloth
- Wardrobe- a large, tall cupboard or recess in which clothes may be hung or stored.
- Harness- a set of straps and fittings
- Distraught- very worried and upset.
- Bouts- a short period of intense activity of a specified kind.
- Rug- a floor covering
- Panting- breathing with short, quick breaths; out of breath.
- Fortnight- a period of two weeks.
- Swooned- a partial or total loss of consciousness
- Wailings- crying with pain, grief, or anger.
- Marched- walk quickly and with determination.
- Roused- cause to stop sleeping.
- Maids- a female domestic servant.
- Rushed- done or completed too hurriedly; hasty.
- Supper- an evening meal, typically a light or informal one.
- Despairing- showing loss of all hope.
- Glanced- take a brief or hurried look.
- Patted- touch quickly and gently with the flat of the hand.
- Wag- (especially with reference to an animal's tail) move or cause to move rapidly to and fro.
- Surged- move suddenly and powerfully forward or upward.
- Motionless- not moving; stationary.
- Sniffing- the action of drawing in air audibly through the nose.
- Whimper- make a series of low, feeble sounds expressive of fear, pain, or unhappiness.
- Trotted- run at a moderate pace with short steps.
- Engulfed- sweep over (something) so as to surround or cover it completely.
- Slopped- spill or flow over the edge of a container, typically as a result of careless handling.
- Liable- likely to do or to be something.
- Licking- pass the tongue over (something) in order to taste, moisten, or clean it.
- Pleased- feeling or showing pleasure and satisfaction
- Jostling- push, elbow, or bump against (someone) roughly, typically in a crowd.
- Scrimmages- a confused struggle or fight.
- Trampled- tread on and crush.
- Squashed- flat, soft, or out of shape as a result of being crushed or squeezed with force.
- Shaggy- long, thick, and unkempt.
- Hovered- remain poised uncertainty in one place or between two states.
- Anxiously- feeling or showing worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.

- Dozen- 12 in number
- Bulletins- a short official statement or broadcast summary of news.
- Convalescing- recover one's health and strength over a period of time after an illness or medical treatment.
- Brandy- a strong alcoholic spirit distilled from wine or fermented fruit juice.
- Constitution- the composition of something.
- Reverently- with deep and solemn respect.
- Temptation- the desire to do something, especially something wrong or unwise.
- Compelled- bring about (something) by the use of force or pressure.
- Awaiting- wait for (an event).
- Gleaming- reflecting light, typically because very clean or polished.
- Chauffeur- a person employed to drive a private or hired car.
- Clapsed- grasp (something) tightly with one's hand.
- Trembled- shake involuntarily, typically as a result of anxiety, excitement, or frailty.
- Fetch- go for and then bring back (someone or something) for someone.
- Hurtling- move or cause to move at high speed, typically in an uncontrolled manner
- Midst- in the middle of.
- Lithe- thin, supple, and graceful.
- Startled- feeling or showing sudden shock or alarm.
- Swarmed- move somewhere in large numbers.
- Shone- a quality of brightness produced

QUESTION AND ANSWERS

Q1. What kind of a person do you think the narrator, a veterinary surgeon, is? Would you say he is tactful as well as full of commonsense?

Ans. The narrator, a veterinary doctor is a very compassionate and an honest man as he does not unnecessarily operate upon Tricki. He goes out of the way to guide Mrs. Pumphrey that she should start keeping a strict check on Tricki's diet and his exercise schedule. He is tactful because he knows how to get Tricki to the hospital and his common sense can be seen by the simple fact that he just changed the eating and exercise schedule of Tricki which helped him recover from his problems. He did not unnecessarily put him on medicines.

Q2. Do you think Tricki was happy to go home? What do you think will happen now?

Ans. Yes, Tricki was as happy to go home as much as he was staying in the surgery. He was happy staying in the surgery because he got many friends which he did not have at home and was happy to go back home because he did not have his lavish lifestyle at the surgery. His excitement to go back home can be seen from the fact that as soon as he saw his mistress, he jumped back into the car and started licking her face and roaming around in excitement. I think now he will be fine at home as well because earlier Mrs. Pumphrey did not take Mr. Herriot's advice seriously which led to Tricki's hospitalization.

Q3. Do you think this is a real-life episode, or mere fiction? Or is it a mixture of both?

Ans. I feel that this story is a mixture of both because it is not a new thing that rich people overfeed their dog or maintain excessive wardrobes for their pets but for a doctor to go out of his way to help another person who doesn't want his advice is unusual. A doctor being so honest that he doesn't wrongly treat the dog and instead, just works on him by keeping him in his surgery and trackS his health by feeding him less and maintains a regular exercise schedule seems to be more of a fiction.

Q4. Why is Mrs Pumphrey worried about Tricki?

Ans. Mrs. Pumphrey was worried about Tricki as Tricki was not eating anything, not even his favourite dishes. Tricki was vomiting and lied down on the rug, panting. He did not even want to go out for walks or anything.

Q5. What does she do to help him? Is she wise in this?

Ans. She calls the doctor to see him as he was unwell. Yes, she was wise this time as earlier, she was acting foolish by overfeeding him. The doctor told her that Tricki needed to be hospitalized. She was crying over it but later accepted that she needed to listen to the doctor.

Q6. Who does 'I' refer to in this story?

Ans. "I" refers to the narrator who is a veterinary doctor, Mr. Herriot.

Q7. Is the narrator as rich as Tricki's mistress?

Ans. According to the story, the narrator is not as rich as Mrs. Pumphrey because Mr. Herriot is able to provide Tricki with a box bed whereas in Mrs. Pumphrey's house he has his own bed, different bowls to eat and servants at his disposal. Then Tricki's mistress used to send two dozen eggs, wine and brandy everyday for Tricki's recovery. Towards the end of chapter, Tricki's mistress comes in 30 feet of gleaming black metal which is obviously a luxury car. So, it can be seen that Tricki's mistress used to live a very luxurious life in comparison to the narrator.

Q8. How does he treat the dog?

Ans. He treats the dog very well. He knows that Tricki does not need medicinal treatment but requires a change in his lifestyle. He gives him only water for two days and then he sees that Tricki has started licking the empty food bowls and started mixing up with other dogs. Then he gives him food and Tricki starts to recover well. Then soon after living there for a few days, he is much better and goes back home.

Q9. Why is he tempted to keep Tricki on as a permanent guest?

Ans. He is tempted to keep Tricki as a permanent guest because Mrs. Pumphrey wants Tricki to recover quickly. So she used to send two dozen eggs, wine bottles and brandy everyday. Mr. Herriot knew that there was no need of giving Tricki all that so he used to eat the extra eggs and drink the wine with his partners. With all that food and drinks coming in, Mr. Herriot used to be very happy so he was tempted to keep Tricki on as a permanent guest.

Q10. Why does Mrs Pumphrey think the dog's recovery is "a triumph of surgery"?

Ans. Tricki had recovered completely in two weeks. He had been turned into a hard muscle animal. Upon seeing Mrs. Pumphrey, Tricki ran towards her, jumped on her lap and started licking her face. She was overwhelmed to see Tricki all well and so she says as a token of gratitude that it was "a triumph of surgery".