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The Story of Five Dogs





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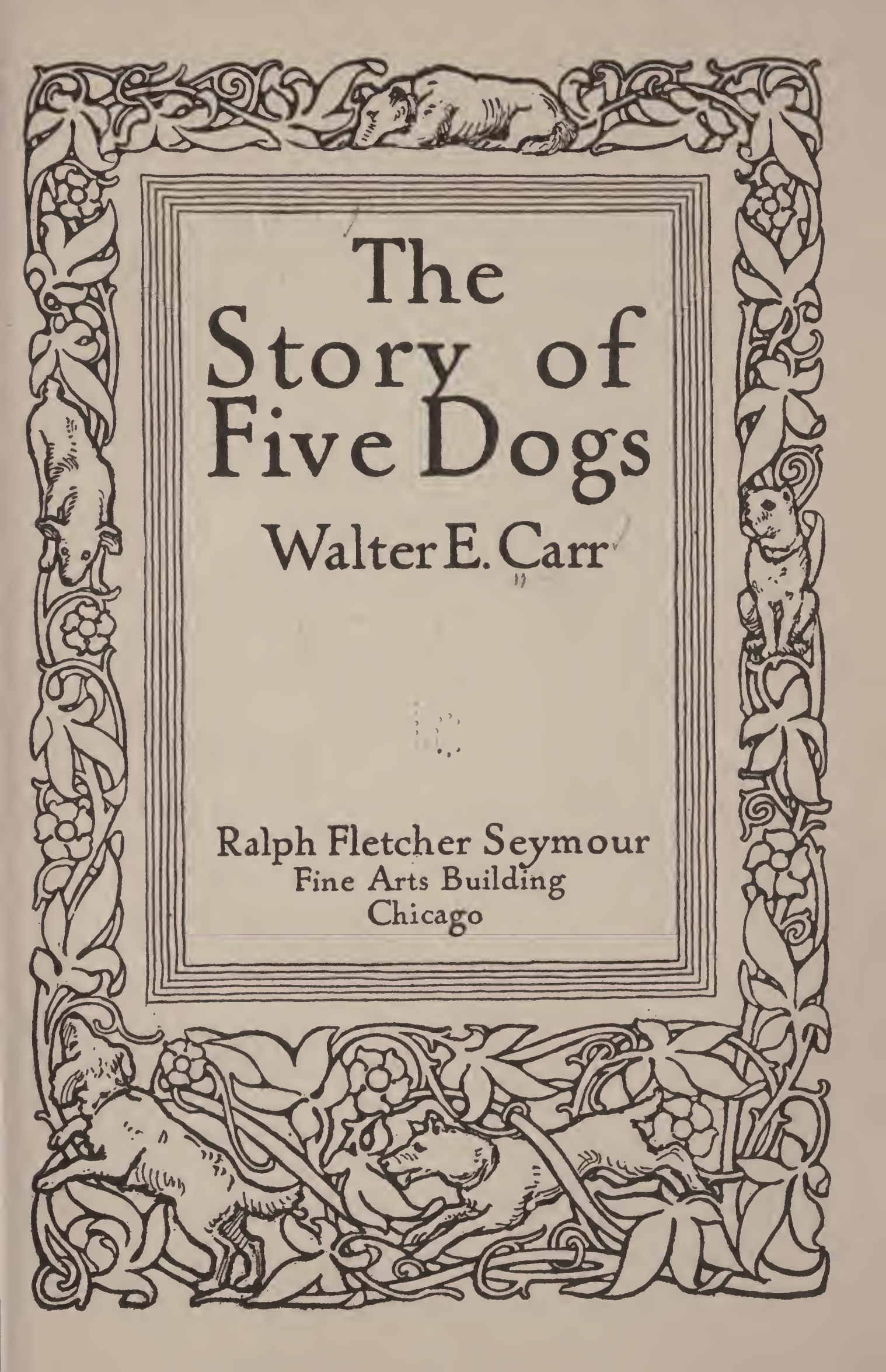
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THE STORY OF FIVE DOGS



T H O R N Y C O T E

The book cover features a decorative border with floral and dog motifs. At the top, a dog is lying down. On the left side, a dog is standing and looking up. On the right side, a dog is sitting. At the bottom, two dogs are shown in a dynamic, running or playing pose. The border is filled with stylized leaves and flowers.

The Story of Five Dogs

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Fine Arts Building
Chicago

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*The
Story of Five
Dogs*

MAJOR DUMPY

MY earliest recollection of my first dog, and one of my boyhood friends and companions, was of him as a chubby puppy, black and tan in color, with all of the appealing comical helplessness of puppyhood.

No boy can have a better playmate than a dog and especially one that has come into the boy's life as a puppy and has grown with him; and certain it was that the black-and-tan more than fulfilled his mission in life,—provided the dog has no greater end to serve than to be of use and pleasure to man.

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In size Major, or Major Dumpy as he was formally called, while not large, was no puny lap-dog. Simple out-of-doors life, devoted to the sports of healthy boys who lived in the days when the woods and streams of southern Wisconsin abounded in game and fish, developed Major into a sturdy, vigorous, little hero of about fifteen pounds weight.

In courage he was a lion. Never did I know him to show fear, and in battle he cared not for the size or nature of his foe. His pet antipathies were Newfoundland dogs and cats. Towards the former he was an enemy live and aggressive. Regardless of the difference in size, for the Newfoundlands were several times that of Major, the black-and-tan always made vicious attack upon his curly haired enemy at sight. Many times was he pulled away from the combat with his mouth full of hair from his enemy. Often

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did he bear the marks of the great teeth of the large dogs, and once, upon a return from a little trip, I found poor little Major laid out upon the grass under a blossoming apple tree, unable to move, as the result of a bite through his back. Even then his spirit did not desert him and as he looked up into my eyes he seemed to say, "Never mind; the next time I'll fix him."

But not on account of his undaunted courage alone did he win and keep our love and admiration, but because he was a keen sharer of all of our sports, and especially those of the field and forest, where he developed remarkable skill.

In those days, wild plover, pigeons, ducks, and prairie chickens were in great abundance, and in the woods were many squirrels and rabbits, with an occasional coon, woodchuck and wild-cat. All boys were enthusiastic sportsmen and his mas-

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ters were no exception. Major was not a hunting dog by breed or education, but through his intense entering into all of the life of his companions and his intelligence he became an all round field-dog of really unusual quality.

One of our favorite hunting grounds was up Turtle Creek, which served as feeding ground for many ducks in season. Along the banks we boys would hunt while Major took to the woods on either side. In case a gun was fired, a small black-and-tan would come running from the woods at the top of his speed to see what had happened and, in case a duck had been shot, into the water he would plunge, regardless of how cold it might be, to retrieve the bird. If perchance the duck were dead, the task was not so hard; but if the victim proved to be a wing-tipped mallard, it was a sight to see the little dog after a long chase and struggle,

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many times diving after the escaping bird, until finally triumphant he brought it and delivered it to his master.

Sometimes, too, he would be the first to discover game, and we came to distinguish something of the nature of his quarry from the character of his bark. A bark at some intervals from a stationary spot indicated a treed squirrel. Sharp yelps in progression told of chasing a rabbit in full run; while occasionally, loud, very excited barks brought us boys on a run in the direction because we knew that our fellow-hunter had found something of very unusual interest, requiring our attention,—and he never deceived us.

But perhaps the most unusual development of Major as a hunting dog was in the pursuit of prairie chickens. In the hunting of this game, as is well known, bird-dogs, setters or pointers, are commonly used, which, because of their

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breeding, naturally take to the work of finding the birds through their being able to catch the scent which is not distinguishable to other breeds of dogs. But to Major game birds were all alike desirable prey, and he soon became as good in hunting prairie chickens as he was in retrieving from the water, although it must be confessed that he was quite apt in his interest and excitement to flush and chase a covey of the chickens, instead of standing stanch, as he should.

To him, as to his friends, school was but a useless institution standing in the way of true sport, and to him Saturday was eagerly welcomed as devoted to real life. He loved the gun as an emblem of sport, and taking it down from its rack caused him to cry with joy.

Never have I seen any other dog so good for as great variety of game as this little black-and-tan, who by breeding

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should not have been interested in any other game than rats.

Never did boys have a more loyal, loving, enthusiastic playmate than little Major Dumpy.

His end none of us knew, but he disappeared in the prime of life, full of energy and the joy of living. His life is now in the happy hunting grounds, where he is without doubt as brave, busy little hunter as he was in the good old days when he was with us.







II

GIPSEY

MY second intimate friend among the dogs was a curly-haired female spaniel of very different character from the little friend of boyhood.

GipseY was a long-eared, pretty puppy when she was given to me; of just the right size to be put in a market basket and sent by express to the old home and care of my father and mother.

By heredity the puppy should have developed into a retriever, with love for the water and the gun, but through environment she became a companion of two who were passing quietly down the shady side of the hill.

Instead of following the master with

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gun, her walks were to the village stores and return. Her summer recreation was in the garden and among the flowers, watching the birds and occasionally tipping over the toads so strange to her eyes. Her winters were spent by the stove except for her daily walk to the village.

But during all of those days she was developing in the qualities which go to make of the dog the loyal, loving companion of whomever is appreciative.

There is, of course, a difference in the brain power of dogs as in man, and probably there are dogs which would never develop into intelligent, thinking animals regardless of their environment; but such are exceptions.

Gipsey was not unusual intellectually and neither she nor any other of my dogs became a trick dog, chiefly because I do not care for such displays, but in her development of affection and sympathy with

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the moods of her aged friends she was remarkable.

Her affection was inborn, but her sympathy and interest in the humans upon whom she depended were a matter of development.

The affection shown toward her was more than reciprocated, and although she could not talk as do men, she was most expressive and never deceitful.

Her methods of expression were ample and although at times one could see in her wistful brown eyes the great desire to express in words what was in her heart to say, we always understood her in substance.

To anyone who appreciates and knows the dog, the wag of the tail, the twist of the body, the expression of the eyes, and the tone of the whine, growl or bark, are full of meaning.

To even the unobserving, the difference

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is apparent between the growl and display of teeth of the dog in play and the vicious snarl and showing of fangs of the protector of the life or property of his master; but there are more subtle expressions which are full of meaning to the dog lover. All of the common emotions are easily expressed, but the finer and deeper feelings of our friends, the dogs, are not appreciated by the careless or indifferent.

How much the dog knows, or thinks, or reasons, is open to argument, but it does not require the tales of a nature-faker to convince the open-minded sympathetic observer that the dog possesses qualities of mind not generally appreciated.

As I have before said, none of my dogs was a trick dog, but every one developed human qualities of mind and soul of greater or lesser degree. Gipsej was no exception but her characteristics were more feminine in nature than those of

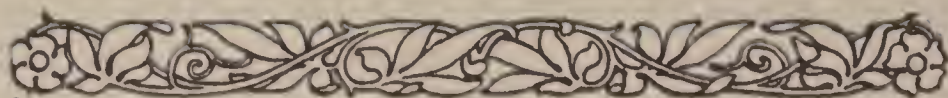
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Major or her successor in the family circle.

Of her intelligence a single case will perhaps suffice. At times the white haired mother at the old home would say to Gipsy, "Your master is coming to-morrow!" From that moment the spaniel would be tremulous with the excitement and as the hour approached for the arrival of the train on the following day she would take a position in the window where she could look down the street and watch for the approaching hack, which she would welcome with a wild scramble and barks of joy.

Such was the life of the second of my friends, the dogs; and so she passed her days as a gentle, dignified companion and worshipful follower of the old, as Major was a romping sport among the boys.





III

JOHNNY AND TINK WINK

JOHNNY came into the family as a red cocker spaniel pup of the larger or field type.

He was kennel bred and therefore his forbears had not had the advantage of that closer association with humankind, with the mellowing influences incident to home life.

From the first, he was an independent, boisterous character, full of life, fond of sport, and hard to control. He developed affection for his master and mistress, but he was ever headstrong and sport was easily first with him.

When but six weeks old he would growl in displeasure when not allowed to do exactly as he wished, and he would

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have his own way if in any way possible. If shut up in a room by himself, he would dig away at the door with his strong paws, in a fury, and nothing but release would stop him. In the house or on the street he was a whirlwind of activity, and in his company there was always something doing.

On one occasion, when about one year old, when his mistress had taken him to a near-by drug store on an errand, he suddenly began howling and making wild dashes among the varicolored bottles with foam flying from his mouth. Naturally there was a panic in the pharmacy, but with the assistance of one clerk who was braver than his fellows, the poor dog was finally shut in a dark closet, where he crouched in apparent terror for some time, but finally emerged in normal condition except for some nervousness. The trouble was not hydrophobia, as many

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would have thought, but only a worm-fit, a trouble common to young dogs and which is the direct cause of many of the mad-dog scares featured by the daily press.

He had an innate fondness for the gun, and the first and only time he was taken hunting he retrieved some birds from the swamp. Here his instinct led him to do as his ancestors had been trained. Passionately fond of the water, he would swim out into the lake, regardless of the roughness of the water, and would retrieve sticks large and small as long as they were thrown in.

In fact, retrieving was his specialty. Every evening upon the return of his master, Johnny insisted upon his game. If I sat down before the fun, Johnny would tug at my trousers until something yielded or his purpose accomplished. The game was not to retrieve an article

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thrown in the room but when found in some hiding place. In playing, Johnny would sit still and wait until something was hidden in an adjoining room or upstairs; then when told, "All ready!" he would shoot like a rocket round and round behind cushions, under rugs and every place within doors until his keen scent located the object. This he would bring in triumph to me and would expect the same process to be repeated without limit.

Yet Johnny was not all a boisterous bit of life devoted to sport. He was fond of his friends and could not bear to be kept by himself. At one time, when moving into a new home, it was thought best to put Johnny's basket in the kitchen and to let him sleep there and guard that portion of the house. But he thought otherwise. For seven nights Johnny howled the most unearthly howls that ever came from dog

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or coyote, and he would not stop. Time after time I came downstairs and talked, implored, and whaled him, but without effect, until at the end of the week Johnny's haggard, sleep-requiring master and mistress capitulated and placed the basket upstairs at their bedroom door, and Johnny was content.

It was this dog who was the least developed in affection and intelligence of all of my canine friends, who had an experience different from that of any of the others, so far as my observation went. One evening, after his romp, Johnny became very uneasy and exhibited great disturbance of mind, with mixed fear and anger. His eyes followed something in the air above our heads, to me unseen. What it was I do not know, but it was some time before Johnny could be quieted and reassured. That he saw something,

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and that not a mere shadow, is sure, but what, he could not tell.

For three years Johnny was our care and amusement and the subject of much admiration. Then one day he disappeared. Searching the city dog pound, inquiry, and offering liberal rewards in the newspapers, continued during almost six months' time, failed to find him, and we never knew his fate.

Johnny's successor came to the house from the stable, where he had been in possession of the coachman. The occasion was one Fourth of July evening when, very apparently much frightened by the fire-works, a small fox-terrier suddenly appeared on the porch and with a single bound landed in my lap as a shelter from the, to him, terrible noises of the hour. His appealing way immediately won for him a home in the house and for us another little friend.



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Tink Wink was a small, smooth-haired terrier, with tan-colored head. Although from a breed characterized by noisy combativeness and love for wandering, he was in character the opposite. He was the most gentle little individual, quiet and undemonstrative and yet full of affection and very loyal to the family. In contrast with the tearing, romping Johnny, he was as a spring lamb to a pit-bred terrier in a combat. While the cocker could not be suppressed and was bold and impudent, the terrier was extremely sensitive and very conscientious. A cross word would cause his spirits to fall and him to retire from sight. He was by nature appealing and supplicant. Someone taught him to sit up and beg for his dinner, and he quickly caught the idea and amplified it to his own purposes. No one could scold him very much, not only because there was but very little cause, but because he

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immediately assumed his begging posture and looked up with such an appealing gaze that the scolding at once became a caress.

Tink Wink but rarely got into any trouble because that was not his nature, but once at least he fell from grace. He was very fond of sweets, and one day when left alone he helped himself so freely to a basket of fudge that about one half of it was devoured. By the time his master and mistress returned, he was in distress and the cause was in evidence. For about an hour the small culprit passed a wretched time, drinking water which quickly reappeared through his mouth carrying with it some diluted fudge. Before long the back yard had many little puddles of fudgy water, until the patient was normal in size, even though depressed in spirits. For some time afterwards, the mention of fudge was sufficient to make

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Tink Wink shudder. Other punishment he did not require.

But this terrier had not lost all of the instincts of his breed, as was proven when he was really aroused. Contrary to the habit of fox-terriers, the little fellow cared not in the least for rats, until one day he was bitten by a caged rodent. Then the fighting spirit became evident, never to disappear and ever after, in the hunt for rats, the gentle little terrier became an active, ferocious little hunter, as many a dead rat evidenced.

An incident will show Tink Wink's cleverness and tends to prove the reasoning power of the dog: Upon one occasion, when he was passing a few weeks in the country at the home of my mother, he so far forgot himself as to remain out very late at night, which was very contrary to his habit and principles. When he returned home, the house was dark and

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everyone was asleep. Apparently receiving no attention in response to his bark at the customary entrance, he went around and barked under my mother's window until she was awakened and let the culprit in. He was not in the habit of coming to that window for any purpose, but he knew which room was occupied by his friend and he thought that if he could make her hear she would come to his relief.

Johnny and Tink Wink! Different in character and disposition, but both of them full of interest and both of them loyal little friends. Their wants were few and easily satisfied. A place to sleep, a little to eat, and a little play and talk with the human beings upon whom civilization had made them dependent. Never critical; never complaining. To them it was sufficient that their home was with their master and it mattered not whether it was a flat or a mansion.

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For the little trouble they made, they repaid manyfold in the qualities characterizing them which cannot be realized except through association and then by those who are appreciative of animals which cannot articulate and which are not classified as humans.

The little fox-terrier had such confidence in man that he did not look for harm from him or anything controlled by him, and so one day a scorching automobile crushed out his life.







IV

GINGER SNAP

“FOR SALE: A bat-eared Boston terrier having a dark seal coat with perfect markings. Very active and perfectly house-broken.

“Enquire.....”

THE above advertisement brought my reply and the sight of the dog convinced me that he was to be mine, regardless of the price.

The description was fair of the subject so far as externals were concerned, but no brief words could tell of the boundless life and spirit that were expressed in those ears, eyes and general appearance.

He was not a blue ribbon specimen because too “leggy,” as the judges would say; but as an object of beauty and grace, especially in action, he would have been

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hard to equal. In movement he was as if made of springs and india-rubber, and as graceful as a gazelle, while mentally he was equally acute. His registered name was "Snap," but he was re-christened Ginger, as appropriate, and less suggestive of an undesirable quality.

In disposition he was all that was admirable and he was everyone's friend. There was not a child in town who did not know him and call him by his name. He had no enemies and his admirers were many.

He was both hospitable and neighborly. Whenever the bell indicated a caller he was always the first one to reach the door, impatiently waiting to welcome the guest. With the neighbors he was on intimate terms and often called upon some friends across the street at breakfast time, when he was quite apt to receive a little on the side.

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He was not serious minded but was always eager for play. Every evening at train time he waited at the entrance door the coming of his master whom he greeted joyfully, and always expected a romp before dinner. He was so full of life that action was necessary, but withal he was a gentleman. He was allowed to remain in the dining room but he never indicated his hunger or expectancy except by gently nudging the arm of the person from whom he felt he had the most to hope.

At night he always went to his basket upstairs at the same time the rest of the family retired. In the morning he always went to his master's room for an early romp, but he never forgot his consideration, despite his eagerness. Often would he enter the room quietly, and seeing no one moving would stand up by the side of the bed, and if his master seemed to be sleeping would quietly return to his bas-

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ket. If, however, the rising time seemed to him to be too long delayed, he would nudge the sleeper with his paw and give a little bark.

But Ginger's special hobby was riding. So fond was he of this recreation that he would take delight in a wheelbarrow, cab, delivery wagon, carriage or automobile. On one occasion he jumped into a public cab, rode all day, and then went home with the cab-driver and remained for two days. On another occasion he went down to the Railroad Station and jumped on a Chicago bound train but was put off at the next stop, whence he was returned to us. These trips did not evidence want of fondness for his own home nor the wander-lust spirit, but the independence which characterized him and his love for a ride. His fondness for horses was probably on account of their usefulness in drawing a vehicle.

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Ginger lacked some of the qualities of some of his predecessors, but he was probably the most loved of all.

If some soul was reincarnate in him, it must have been that of some beautiful, gay being of the Latin race, full of laughter and song, care free, brimful of the joy of living.

He was the liveliest of companions, a thing of beauty, and with a way of his own which gave him the affection of all who knew him and led his best friends to prize him above price. But why otherwise? Why should anyone consider selling a true friend for the matter of a few hundred dollars?

Then one day came the word that Ginger had been run over by an automobile, as he was crossing the street to call upon his friends.

When I reached home he was lying upon a couch, with a broken leg but with-

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out other apparent injury. So later in the evening he was placed carefully in a basket and was carried into the city for treatment. The doctor being out, we placed him in the basket by a warm fire and left him, regardless of his fruitless effort to follow. The next morning came the telephone message that he had died in the night from internal injury.

It is more than five years since that night, but I cannot forgive myself for having left him among strangers in the hour of his need.







V

EPILOGUE

GINGER was sincerely mourned, and those who know what a friend a dog may be, appreciate that his loss caused real grief in our home.

We knew that he could not be duplicated, for dogs are as individual as people; and we also vaguely realized that those who possess children have treasures which we had not enjoyed. So we were led on to the better things, and our next pet was the blue-eyed baby girl for whom this little story has been written.

Hearts are still loyal to the memory of the four-footed friends, but there is a joy to be realized in a little girl, who runs with outstretched arms, calling "Daddy! Daddy!" which is over and beyond that which comes from the possession of the

Epilogue

most devoted friend with the natural limitations of the dog.

So you, dear girl, came into our lives as the direct result of little Ginger's death; and so often the greatest joys spring from what at the time seems only trouble.

May your life be rich in friends as true, loyal and loving as were the five little dogs to your "Daddy"!

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