

DYER WALTER ALDEN

THE DOGS OF BOYTOWN

Walter Dyer
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Содержание

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| CHAPTER I | 5 |
| CHAPTER II, | 10 |
| CHAPTER III | 16 |
| CHAPTER IV | 21 |
| CHAPTER V | 26 |
| Конец ознакомительного фрагмента. | 31 |

Walter A. Dyer

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CHAPTER I

SAM BUMPUS AND HIS NAN

There are misguided people in this world who profess to believe that only grown-ups can fully appreciate the beauties of nature. Oh, the grown-ups talk more about that sort of thing, to be sure, and know how to say poetic things about winter fields and sunsets that are usually locked in a boy's heart. But for the fullest appreciation of blue skies and autumn woods and sandy shores, and the most genuine enjoyment of broken sunshine on the forest floor, the smell of falling oak leaves, and the song of the wind in the pines or rustling across broad, rolling fields, give me a boy every time. I know, for I have been one.

That is why I am going to begin this story about boys and dogs by telling of a certain crisp October morning – a Saturday morning when boyhood enjoys its weekly liberty. There had been frost the night before and the air was still cool and very clear. It was like drinking cold water to take long breaths of it. The golden sun was rising high above the rounded hills to the east and the sunlight turned to glistening silver the shreds of smoke that drifted lazily up from the chimneys of Boytown in the little valley a mile or so away.

I must digress for a moment to speak of Boytown. You will not find it on the map, for that is not its real name. It is not always wise to call people and places by their real names in a book, and so I have given this name to the Connecticut town where lived all the boys and the dogs that I am going to tell about. It was a nice old town, just about the right size, with a broad main street where the stores and business buildings were, and in the upper end of which a narrow green ran down the middle with a row of big elm trees in it. Most of the people lived on the side streets, some of which ran for quite a distance up Powder Mill Hill to the west. But most of the pleasant places in this part of the world lay to the east. The railroad ran along that side of the town, and beyond it were the brickyards and Hulse's Pond. If you were in search of adventure, you skirted this pond, went up over a long, grassy hill, and at length entered the woods which stretched all the way to Oakdale, broken now and then by farms and open stretches of hilly meadow or pasture land.

Here in the woods there was much to be seen on this fine October day. There were squirrels everywhere, busy with the harvesting of their winter's supply of nuts, and if you were lucky you might catch a glimpse of a cottontail rabbit disappearing into a thicket, or a grouse shooting off among the trees with a great whirring of wings. The autumn foliage was at its finest, the deep green of pine and hemlock mingling with the crimson of the oaks, the flaming scarlet of the maples, and the translucent gold of the silvery-stemmed birches. Above the trees the sky was that soft blue color that you like to lie on your back and look at, with here and there fleecy little clouds constantly changing into all sorts of odd and whimsical shapes. From the branches of a tall pine a flock of sooty crows, alarmed by the sound of human voices, arose all together and floated off over a little clearing in company formation, cawing loudly.

If you had been one of those crows, you would have looked down at the figures of two boys emerging from the woods. One was a slender lad of about twelve, quite tall for his age, with straight black hair and bright black eyes. The other, who was perhaps three years younger, was so plump as almost to deserve the nickname of "Fatty." He had lighter hair and eyes and there were freckles across the bridge of his not very prominent nose. Both boys were dressed in their old clothes and

carried white cloth flour bags which already contained a few quarts of chestnuts. They stood gazing with practised eyes at the tree-tops around the little clearing.

"There ought to be some here, Jack," said the older boy. "The biggest trees always grow near the edges."

"They're the easiest to get at, too," responded Jack.

They walked together around the margin of the clearing and at length located a tree to their liking. With much boosting on the part of Jack, the older boy at last gained the lower branches and was soon making the brown nuts rattle down upon the leafy ground.

After they had stripped three or four trees of their treasure, Jack threw himself upon his back and began squinting up at a hawk sweeping high up in the blue sky.

"I'm tired, Ernest," he said. "Let's go over to the Cave."

"Oh, it's early yet," replied Ernest, "and we haven't got half a sackful."

"We have twelve quarts at home," said Jack. "We don't need any more. Besides, we haven't been to the Cave for two weeks. It rained so hard last Saturday that it may need cleaning out."

"All right," said Ernest. "Come along."

Jack scrambled to his feet and together they set off into the woods again. A walk of half a mile or so brought them to a brook which they followed upstream until they came to a leaky dam of stones and logs which they had built the previous spring and which held back enough water to make a small pond above. This they called their Beaver Dam and Beaver Pond, and in the sandy bank at one side was Trapper's Cave.

Beaver Pond lay just within the edge of the wood, and from the Cave one's eyes commanded a view of an old, disused pasture, now grown up to sumacs and blueberry bushes, which stretched up and over a long hill that seemed to bear the rim of the blue sky on its shoulder. One could sit unobserved in the mouth of the Cave, quite hidden by the saplings and undergrowth of the wood's edge, and watch all that went on outside, with the depths of the dark, mysterious, whispering forest at one's back.

The Cave itself would hardly have housed a family of real Cave-Dwellers. It was neither very large nor very skilfully built, but it amply served the purpose for which it was intended. It was dug out of the soft sand of the bank. Two boards in the ceiling supported by two birch props did not entirely prevent the sand from falling in, and every visit to the Cave was attended by housecleaning. Nevertheless, it was a delectable rendezvous for adventurers.

At one side was a low bench built of fence boards and at the other a soap box with a hinged cover, hasp, and padlock, which served as a treasure chest and which contained, among other things, a hatchet, an old and not very sharp hunting knife, a dozen potatoes, and a supply of salt and pepper. At first the boys had attempted to build a fireplace at the back of the Cave, with a hole cut through the roof to the surface of the ground above to serve as a chimney, but it proved unsuccessful, and a circular pile of stones in front, with a rusty kettle supported on two forked sticks, now served as campfire and cook stove.

The boys filled the kettle at the little pond, not because they wished to boil anything, but because it made a fire seem more worth while. Then they kindled a blaze beneath it, and when there were enough red coals, they thrust four of the potatoes among them.

"Now for a good feed," said Ernest.

At length, when the potatoes were burned black on the outside, they pronounced them done and drew them out of the coals. They broke them open gingerly, for they were very hot, and disclosed the mealy insides, not at all troubled by the fact that the edible portion was liberally sprinkled with black specks from the charred skins. Adding salt and pepper, and using their jackknives as spoons, they proceeded to eat with a relish which their mother would have found it difficult to understand.

As they were engaged in this pleasant occupation, Ernest suddenly rose to his feet and peered out through the saplings.

"What is it?" demanded Jack.

"Sh!" cautioned the older boy. "It's a man. He's coming down the hill. He's got a gun and a dog with him."

Jack arose and stood on tiptoe beside his brother. Together they watched the approach of a strange figure – a tall, lanky, raw-boned individual wearing a rusty old felt hat and with an old corduroy hunting coat flapping about him. In his hand he carried a double-barreled shotgun which appeared to be the best-kept thing about him. Running ahead of him was a beautiful English setter, speckled white with black markings. Her every motion was swift and graceful as she ran sniffing from one clump of shrubbery to another. Sometimes the man would give a peculiar little whistle, and then the dog would pause and look up, and then dart off to right or to left in obedience to a wave of the man's arm.

Suddenly the dog stopped and stood rigid as a statue, her tail held out straight behind, one foreleg raised, and her neck and nose stretched toward a patch of sheep laurel. The man stealthily approached while the dog stood perfectly motionless with quivering nostrils.

They were quite near the boys now. There was a sudden movement in the sheep laurel, a whirl of wings, and four or five birds rose swiftly into the air and shot off toward the woods.

"Bang!" went the man's gun, and both boys jumped so that they scarcely noticed a bird fall.

"Bang!" went the other barrel almost immediately, and another bird fell fluttering to earth. Then the dog broke her point and brought the birds back to her master in her sensitive mouth.

To tell the truth, the boys were a little frightened at this gun-fire so close at hand, especially Jack, and they watched anxiously as the man reloaded his gun. But the birds had disappeared and the man started off in the direction they had taken. He whistled to his dog, but a new scent had attracted her attention, and she trotted down toward the brook and began sniffing the air.

"She smells our potatoes," said Ernest.

Jack forgot his fears in this new interest.

"Let's call her over," said he.

"Come here, sir!" called Ernest, making a kissing noise with his lips. "Come here!"

The dog lightly leaped the brook and came slowly up the bank toward the Cave, her tail waving in a friendly manner. Ernest scraped out a bit of potato and held it out to her. She stood for a moment, sniffing, as if in doubt. Then she came forward and daintily took the proffered food. In a few minutes both boys were smoothing the silky head, looking into the fine eyes, and talking to their visitor.

"Tryin' to steal my dog?"

They had not noticed the man's approach, he had stepped so softly, and the gruff voice so close beside them startled them.

"Oh, no," protested Ernest, hurriedly. "She – we –"

The man's face was very solemn, but there was a humorous twinkle in his eyes that somehow made the boys feel easier. The dog placed her paw on Jack's arm as though begging for more petting.

"Won't you sit down?" asked Ernest, in an effort to be polite.

The man's face broke into many wrinkles and he laughed aloud.

"Don't know but what I will," said he, "if you ain't afraid I'll hurt your parlor chairs."

It was now the boys' turn to laugh, and the ice was broken. The man squatted down beside the fire as though glad of a chance to rest, and the dog stretched herself out at his feet.

"I'm glad you didn't mean to steal her," said the man, "because then I wouldn't have no one to find birds for me. Then what would I do?"

There seemed to be no answer to this, so Ernest asked him if he had shot many.

"Five this morning," said the man, and tumbled the pretty dead things out of his pockets.

"They're quail, aren't they?" asked Ernest, stroking one of them.

"Yep," said he, "Bob-Whites. They're runnin' pretty good this year, too."

Something in the man's friendly manner inspired a sort of boldness in young Jack.

"Don't you hate to shoot them?" he asked.

The man looked into Jack's frank brown eyes for a moment and then moved a little closer.

"Say," he said, "I'll tell you a secret. I s'pose I've shot more birds and rabbits than any man in this county, if I do say it, and I never bring down a partridge or kill a chicken that I don't feel sorry for it. I ain't never got over it and I guess I never shall. But it's the only thing old Sam Bumpus is good for, I reckon, and it has to be done. Folks has to eat and I have to make a livin'. I don't do it for fun, though I don't know any finer thing in this world than trampin' off 'cross country with a gun and a good dog on a fine mornin'. It's my business, you see."

"Gee!" exclaimed Ernest. "I'd like that business better than insurance, I guess. That's what my father is."

"Who is your father?" inquired Sam Bumpus. "You see I'm very partic'lar who I know."

"He's Mr. Whipple. We're Ernest and Jack Whipple."

"Oh, you live down on Washburn Street?"

Ernest nodded.

"Well, that's all right," said Sam. "I guess you'll pass."

He seemed in no great hurry to be getting on. Taking an old black pipe from his pocket he filled it from a greasy pouch and lighted it. He took a few reflective puffs before he spoke again.

"What do you know about dogs?" he asked, abruptly.

"Why – not very much, I guess," confessed Ernest.

"We like them, though," added Jack.

"Well, that's half the game," said Sam. "There's two kinds of people in this world, them that likes dogs and them that don't, and you can't never make one kind understand how the other kind feels about it. It just ain't possible. And if you don't like dogs you can't never know dogs, and if you don't know dogs you're missin' – well, I can't tell you how much."

"I've known Nan here," he continued, stroking the setter's head, while she looked up at him with adoration in her eyes, "I've known Nan for goin' on seven years, and I learn somethin' new about her every day. I raised her from a puppy, broke her to birds, and lived with her summer and winter, and I tell you I never seen a man or a woman that knows any more than what she does or one that I could trust so far. That's the thing about a dog; you can trust 'em. There's bad dogs and good dogs, and no two is just alike, but if you once get a good one, hang onto him, for you'll never find another friend that'll stick to you like him."

The man seemed so much in earnest that the boys remained silent for a time. Then Jack asked, "Can she do tricks?"

"If you mean sit up and roll over and play dead, no," said Sam. "I don't believe in spoilin' a good bird dog by teachin' 'em things that don't do 'em no good. But what she don't know about huntin' ain't worth knowin'. It positively ain't."

For half an hour more Sam Bumpus told the boys of various incidents that proved the sagacity of Nan and the other dogs he had owned. He told how once, when a burning log rolled from his fireplace in the night and set his little house on fire, a pointer named Roger had seen the flames through the window, had broken his collar, plunged through the mosquito netting across the window, and had wakened his master by pulling off the bedclothes and barking.

"If that dog hadn't known how to think and plan, I wouldn't be here to-day talkin' to you boys."

Suddenly he jumped to his feet.

"That reminds me," said he. "I've been sittin' talkin' here too long. I've got to be about my business and your folks'll wonder why you don't come home to dinner. Come, Nan, old girl."

The setter sprang up, yawned, and then stood ready for the next command. Both boys patted her and then held out their hands to Sam.

"I hope we'll see you again sometime," said Ernest. "We like to hear you tell about your dogs."

The man's tanned face seemed to soften a little as he shook hands with the boys.

"Well," said he, "I guess you can see me if you want to. My social engagements ain't very pressin' just now. I ain't got one of my business cards with me, but you can just call anywhere in these woods and ask for Sam Bumpus. The dogs'll know me if the men don't. So long, boys," and he strode off down the bank with Nan dashing joyously ahead.

"Good-by, Mr. Bumpus," called Ernest and Jack.

He paused in the act of leaping the brook and looked around, with the twinkle in his eyes.

"Say," he called back, "if I ever hear you call me that again I'll set the dog on you. My name's Sam, d'ye hear?" Then he slipped in among the underbrush and was gone.

Talking animatedly about their new acquaintance and about dogs, the two boys hastened to lock up their treasure chest and depart.

"Say, Ernest," said Jack, as they started off through the woods with their bags of chestnuts over their shoulders, "the Cave is a great place for adventures, isn't it?"

That evening, as the family were gathered in the living-room on Washburn Street, and Mrs. Whipple was trying to repair the damage that chestnutting had wrought in a pair of Ernest's stockings, the boys asked their father if he knew Sam Bumpus.

"Bumpus?" he asked. "Oh, yes, he's that queer fellow that lives all alone in a shack in the woods off on the Oakdale Road. An odd character, I guess, from all I hear, but they say he's a wonderful shot and people take their bird dogs to him to be broken. How did you hear about him?"

The boys told their story, and then Ernest asked wistfully, "Papa, when can we have a dog?"

"When your mother says you can," replied Mr. Whipple, with a smile.

Sorrowfully the boys went off to bed, well knowing what that meant. For Mrs. Whipple was one of the people that Sam Bumpus had spoken of – the kind that don't like dogs.

CHAPTER II, SAM'S SHACK

The next Saturday was gray and chilly, but the weather did not deter Ernest and Jack Whipple from starting off early for the woods. They carried their chestnut bags as a matter of course, but this time the chestnut trees offered them very little enticement. The ones they knew best had already been robbed of their nuts, and they soon wearied of a somewhat profitless search. It was Jack who voiced what was in the minds of both boys.

"I wish we could run across Sam Bumpus again," he said.

Sam had said they could find him in the woods, but the woods had never seemed so extensive and it was like hunting for a needle in a haystack. They arrived at Beaver Pond and the Trapper's Cave without encountering any sign of the man and his dog.

Chiefly as a matter of habit they built a small fire in front of the Cave and sat down beside it on their log seat to consider the problem of finding an elusive hunter in the wide woods. They did not even open the treasure chest.

"He said anybody could tell us where to find him," said Jack, "but there's no one to ask. People don't live in the woods, do they?"

Ernest sat pondering. "Well," said he at length, "there's that old woman that gave us the doughnuts one day. Do you remember? She had a lot of white hens that went right into her house, and a little dog named Snider that was so old he could hardly breathe."

"Oh, yes," responded Jack, brightening up. "Where does she live?"

"I don't know exactly," said Ernest, mournfully, "but I think it was over that way. We might find her if we hunted."

The boys arose, put out their fire carefully, as all good woodsmen should, and started off through the woods again. They must have tramped for nearly an hour, but the very uncertainty of the outcome of their quest gave it a touch of adventure and kept them going. At last, after following various false clues, they came out unexpectedly and abruptly into the clearing behind the old woman's house. The cackling of fowls and the wheezy barking of little old Snider greeted them. As they approached, the old lady herself appeared in the doorway of her kitchen, clad in a faded blue dress and leaning on her stick. As soon as she saw that it was boys her face broke into a smile.

"Come right in," she said, "and I'll get you some cookies."

The boys entered and sat in the kitchen chairs to eat their cookies. They were anxious to be on their way in search of Sam Bumpus, but politeness demanded that they linger a few minutes. Ernest inquired after the health of old Snider. The widow shook her head sadly.

"He's failin'," she replied. "I can see he's failin'. His teeth is all gone so he can't eat much and he has the azmy pretty bad. It's what us old folks has to expect, I s'pose, but I don't know what I'll do when Snider goes. He's all I've got now."

She wiped away a tear with the corner of her apron while the boys fidgeted in their chairs. They felt sorry for her, but they didn't know what to say on an occasion like this. Ernest reached down and patted the little dog's head.

"Poor old Snider," he murmured. Somehow that seemed to comfort the old lady.

At last Ernest found it possible to ask her if she knew Sam Bumpus.

"Lor', yes," she responded. "Queer old codger, Sam is, but the best-hearted man in the world. Many a good turn he's done me. He was here only this mornin' with some bones to make into soup for Snider."

"Where did he go?" inquired Ernest.

"He didn't say where he was goin', but I reckon if you was to go over to the Poor Farm you could find out. He was headed that way."

The boys had ridden by the Poor Farm on several occasions but had never visited it, and they felt a slight hesitation about doing so now, but the woman assured them that the inmates were all quite harmless and gave them directions for a short cut. Thanking her for her kindness, and patting Snider good-by, they set off along a rutty woods road and in a little while came to the Poor Farm. They crossed an inclosed field where a small drove of hogs were feeding, and went around to the front of the big white house.

They did not have to inquire for Sam Bumpus, for there he was, as natural as life, sitting on the steps of the veranda with Nan stretched out beside him. As the boys turned the corner of the house he arose with alacrity and held out his hand to them.

"Well, well," he cried in his gruff voice, his face wreathed with smiles, "this is a sight for sore eyes. Come right up and set down here. I can't invite you in because this ain't my house. I'm just a visitor here myself. I have a lot of old cronies here, and besides, I want to get familiar with the place because I may have to come here to live myself sometime."

He rattled on so that the boys didn't have a chance to answer. He led them up on the veranda to an old man who sat in a rocking chair, bundled up in a blanket, smoking a pipe carved wonderfully in the form of a stag's head.

"These are my friends Ernest and Jack Whipple," he said to the old man, "and they like dogs."

At this the old man took his pipe from his mouth with a thin, trembling hand, looked at them out of pink, watery eyes, smiled, and nodded his white head.

"This is Captain Tasker," Sam told the boys. "He don't talk much, but he's forgotten more than you or I ever knew. Some day I'll tell you about his dog that followed him to war. He's a Civil War veteran, and he got wounded at Antietam. Show 'em your Grand Army badge, Captain. See?" he added to the boys. "I told you I was partic'lar who I knew."

Nan got up and stretched herself and looked up at her master inquiringly.

"Yes, old girl," said Sam, "it's time we was gettin' along." Then, noticing that the boys looked disappointed, he added, "Come walk a piece with us, won't you? I'd like to talk with you."

The boys readily acquiesced, and bidding good-by to Captain Tasker, they set out with Sam along a leafy woods road, with Nan ranging ahead. All about them the forest beckoned alluringly, and Sam told them of spots where grouse and quail abounded, or where one might reasonably expect to "jump" a rabbit.

Arriving at length at the Oakdale Road, Sam and the boys seated themselves for a little while on a fallen log, while the former concluded a discourse on bird dogs and hunting.

"Setters," he was saying, "are usually supposed to be the keenest and pointers the strongest, but in my opinion it all depends on the partic'lar dog. Nowadays I hear a good deal about the pointer bein' the best dog, and I've owned some good ones myself. There's nothing prettier than a strong, wiry pointer doublin' and turnin' in the brush and freezin' to a steady point. But for my own part, give me a well-bred Llewellyn setter; they're the humanest dog they is. They've got the bird sense, too. Oh, you can't beat 'em."

"Is it hard to train them?" asked Ernest, who was of a practical turn of mind.

"Not so hard, if you know how," said Sam. "They have so much brains that they learn about as fast as you teach 'em. But you've got to know how to go at it. I've seen good sportsmen make a mess of it. First off, you've got to find out if they've got a nose. That's easy enough if you live with 'em and watch 'em. Hide something they want and see how quick they find it. You've got to take 'em when they're young, of course. You can't teach an old dog new tricks, you know. But a good bird dog has got it bred in him, and he picks it up quick enough if you can only be patient and if you show half as much sense as the dog does."

Then he told, in his own peculiar fashion, how he started with the puppies, teaching them to retrieve objects such as sticks and balls, and later dead birds that they must learn to carry gently without using their teeth.

"Never let 'em think it's just a romp they're havin'," he continued. "I like to play with puppies as well as anyone, but when I'm breakin' 'em I let 'em understand that it's business. Never let 'em have their own way if they want to do the wrong thing, and never give 'em an order without seein' that it's carried out if it takes all day. That's where the patience comes in. Teach 'em to obey, and you can do most anything with 'em."

"Do you whip them if they don't obey?" asked Ernest.

"Never whipped a dog in my life," said Sam, decidedly, "except a fox terrier I had once. They're different. A whipped setter is a spoiled setter, and if you can't make 'em do what you want 'em to without whippin' 'em or bribin' 'em, you'd better get out of the business. Of course, I sometimes give a puppy a piece of cookie or something to show him he's done what he ought to, but I never use the whip. There's other kinds of punishment that work better and don't break their spirits. Just keep 'em from havin' what they want, and tease 'em into wantin' it awful bad, and you can make 'em do most anything."

He then went on to explain his method of teaching a young dog to hold his point in the field. He used a long rope tied to a stout collar, and led the dog to a thicket where a dead bird lay. When the dog got the scent and started to dash in, a sharp jerk on the rope restrained him, and in time he was thus taught to stand rigid when the scent came strong to his nostrils.

"That's one way to teach a dog not to chase chickens, too," he added. "But a puppy born of trained parents gets the pointin' habit almost by instinct, and retrievin', too. The main thing is to make him understand that he's got to do the trick and not something else that happens to pop into his head. After that, you can teach 'em to answer your whistle or a wave of your hand and hunt just where you want 'em to."

"Aren't they afraid of a gun at first?" asked Jack, who had never learned not to jump when a gun went off.

"Some of 'em are," said Sam. "If a dog is gun-shy he's got to be broken of that before he's any good in the field. Some folks say you can never break a dog that's really gun-shy, but I never seen one yet that I couldn't cure."

"How do you do it?" asked Ernest.

"Well, one way is to give the dog something he wants every time you shoot off a gun. You can shoot over his dinner, and not let him have any till he comes up to where you and the gun are. Keep at it, and after awhile he begins to connect the sound of the gun with things that he likes. Always take a gun when you go out for a walk with him, and after awhile he will bark and act happy every time you take it from the rack. The whole idea of breakin' a bird dog is to make him think that the thing you want him to do is the thing he wants to do, and never let that idea get away from him."

The boys continued to ply him with questions, for this was a subject that they had never heard about before, and Sam willingly added more details of the process of training. At length he took a big dollar watch from his pocket and consulted it.

"Jumpin' Jehoshaphat!" he exclaimed. "I didn't know it was gettin' so late. I'll have to be hurryin' along. Say," he added, a little wistfully, "come up to my house and see me sometime, won't you? I ain't got anything very elegant up there, but I could show you something in the line o' dogs and guns that might interest you."

"Oh, we'd love to, if our folks'll let us," said Ernest. "Where do you live?"

Sam gave them careful directions.

"First and third Tuesdays used to be my days for callers, but nobody came," said he, as he started up the road with Nan. "So now any old day will do – if I'm home."

"How about next Saturday?" asked Ernest.

"Saturday it is," said Sam Bumpus, and with a wave of his hand he vanished around a bend in the road.

Clothes do not make the man, and boys are apt to overlook certain superficial peculiarities and defects which seem more significant to their elders. In Sam Bumpus they saw only a man of good humor and wonderful wisdom, a man whose manner of life was vastly more interesting than that of the common run of people, whose knowledge of the lore of woods and fields, of dogs and hunting, entitled him to a high place in their estimation. They overlooked the externals, the evidences of poverty and shiftlessness, his lack of education, and saw only his native wit and shrewdness, his kinship with the world of nature, and his goodness of heart. They considered it a piece of rare good fortune to have made the acquaintance of so wise and sympathetic a person and they felt indebted to him for permission to visit him, to hear him talk, and to glean from him something of the knowledge that had come to him through experience.

To Sam Bumpus, however, the obligation seemed to be on the other side. The boys did not know it, but Sam Bumpus was a lonely man and craved human companionship. He lived like a hermit in his little shack in the woods and his peculiarities had set him somewhat apart from the world of men. He had no living relatives, and apart from the old lady in the woods road, the inmates of the Poor Farm, and a few other out-of-the-way people with whom he had been able to win his way through his natural generosity and kindness, he had practically no friends but his dogs. He understood dogs better than he understood men, and, to tell the truth, he esteemed them more highly; yet he sometimes hungered for human comradeship. That two frank-hearted, unspoiled boys should seek him out and seem to desire his company gave him a feeling of unaccustomed satisfaction, and he looked forward to their promised visit fully as eagerly as did the boys themselves.

This proposed visit was such an unusual affair that Ernest Whipple considered it advisable to speak to his father about it. Mr. Whipple was reading his paper and made but little comment, but Mrs. Whipple, who was in the room at the time, raised objections.

"Don't you think it might be unsafe for the boys to go away off there alone?" she asked anxiously. "We don't know anything about this man. He may have a bad influence on them, even if nothing more serious happens to them. He's a very uncouth person, I should say, and hardly a fit companion for little boys."

"Oh, I don't think he'll hurt them," said Mr. Whipple from behind his paper.

But the mother wasn't satisfied, and after the boys had gone to bed she again brought the matter up.

"Well, mother," said Mr. Whipple, "he probably isn't the sort of guide, philosopher, and friend that we would have picked out for the boys, but parents can't always do the picking. They are getting older all the time, and sooner or later they must be thrown on their own resources. Self-reliance doesn't come from constant protection and hemming in. We can't keep them from striking up acquaintances, and before we raise objections we should be sure that they're well grounded; then we shall be able to make our objections count for more."

"But I should think there was good ground for objection in this case," she persisted. "This man seems to be so crude and rough, if nothing worse."

"Oh, he's all right," responded the father. "Don't think I'm careless about these things. I've made some inquiries, and though I find that Bumpus is unconventional and queer, as they say, and improvident and uneducated, he's honest and law-abiding. So far as I can find out, the worst thing he ever does is to give tobacco to the inmates of the Poor Farm. I know people right here on Washburn Street that would do the boys more harm. Just because he doesn't live like folks on Washburn Street doesn't make him bad."

"Well," said Mrs. Whipple, doubtfully, "I suppose you know best, but for my part I would much prefer to keep them safe home with me, for some years to come."

"That's because you've never been a boy," said Mr. Whipple, with a smile in his eyes. "I have, and it doesn't seem so very long ago, either."

Mrs. Whipple was not satisfied, but she did not forbid the proposed visit. The next Saturday, therefore, found them early on their way, filled with joyful anticipations.

Sam's shack, when at last they arrived, proved to be a forlorn affair, built of boards of different widths, some red, some white, and some unpainted. The sagging roof was of corrugated iron and the only chimney was built of cement pipe guyed up with wires. But to the eyes of the boys it was a most attractive abode. Never before had they seen such an interesting house. There must be an element of sport in living in a cabin like this, they thought.

Sam heard their footsteps and met them smilingly at the door. He ushered them at once inside, where he had a wood fire roaring in his stove, for the day was chilly, and he promptly set before them glasses of milk and hot corn bread. Though they had breakfasted only two hours before, they fell to with gusto, for that is the way of boys.

"How do you like my corn bread?" asked Sam.

"M-m!" murmured Jack, taking a fresh bite.

"Do you bake it yourself?" inquired Ernest.

"Sure," said Sam.

"Gee!" exclaimed Ernest, looking up at him with admiration.

After they had fully refreshed themselves, Sam took them out through a back door, from which they could see a number of small structures that looked as though they had been made out of dry-goods boxes. The sound of excited barking smote their ears, a chorus of canine cries and yelps. Old Nan came bounding forward to greet the boys, for she knew them now, and behind her loped a big pointer.

"This is Hillcroft Dick," said Sam, by way of introduction. "He's a famous dog, a champion on the bench and at the trials. He ain't my dog, though. I'm just boardin' him for a man that's gone to California. I wish I owned him, though. He's a great dog."

The boys didn't understand the reference to bench shows and field trials, but they gathered that Dick was some sort of nobleman among dogs and they were visibly impressed.

"Now we'll go out to the kennels," said Sam.

There were seven dogs, all told, besides Nan and Dick. There were two cocker spaniels, in the first place, that Sam said he was training for a man in Oakdale.

"I like a bigger dog, myself," said he, "but there's a lot of good dog wrapped up in these small bundles. They're smart as whips, and though I've got to make 'em forget their foolin' and parlor tricks, I'll soon have 'em able to find and retrieve. Sometimes you can even teach a spaniel to point."

The other five were all Sam's dogs, another pointer, a little smaller than Dick, and four beautiful English setters.

"They've got the best blood in the land," said Sam, proudly, "and every one of 'em is letter perfect on his job. This is Rex and this is Robbin and this is Rockaway."

The boys patted and spoke to each in turn, hugely enjoying this introduction to Sam's family.

"And this one over here is the best of all," he continued. "That's Nellie, own sister to Nan, and what she don't know wouldn't hurt a flea. But I guess I'd better keep you away from her to-day. She ain't feelin' very well."

After they had fondled and played with the dogs to their hearts' content, the boys followed Sam again into the house, where they spent the rest of the morning smoothing Nan's silky hair and listening to wonderful stories about the sagacity of Nellie and the other dogs.

So pleasantly was the time employed that it was eleven o'clock by Sam's big watch before they thought it possible, and as they had promised to be home in time for dinner, they were obliged, reluctantly, to take their departure.

As they turned the bend in the road they looked back and saw Sam standing in his low doorway with Nan sitting picturesquely beside him.

"Come again soon," called Sam.

"We will," the boys shouted in reply.

CHAPTER III

ROMULUS AND REMUS

They did call again, once on the Saturday before Thanksgiving Day and again in December, when the woods and fields were white with snow and they wore their warm sweaters and arctics. On each occasion they became better acquainted with Sam's dogs and learned something new about training dogs and finding game, and Sam showed them the mechanism of his shotguns and rifles. He also explained to them his method of curing the pelts of muskrats and the beautiful silver-gray fur of the little moles that the people in charge of the Poor Farm were very glad to have him trap in their garden. And as the boys came to know Sam's dogs better they began to see how each differed from the others in character and disposition and in the way they understood and did things.

"Just like people," said Sam; "just like people."

Even Mrs. Whipple was unable to discover that the boys' manners had been damaged greatly by their association with Sam Bumpus, though she was surprised at their continuous talk about dogs and the strange jargon, as it seemed to her, which they used in that connection. She was no less surprised to find that her husband appeared to understand the meaning of "bird sense" and "freezing to a point" and "retrieving" and "blood lines" and "cross-breeding" and to be able to discuss these mysterious matters with the boys.

"But what is the good of their filling their heads with all that stuff?" she asked him.

"My dear," replied Mr. Whipple, "you may not believe it, but it is just as much good as arithmetic and geography, and you're always worrying because they don't take more interest in those things. There are more ways than one to get an education."

But Mrs. Whipple only shook her head perplexedly.

It was on the day before Christmas that the great event occurred that I have been leading up to. Ernest and Jack Whipple had returned from an hour's coasting on the long hill over by the brickyard and were standing on their sleds beside the front gate bemoaning the fact that the snow had melted so badly and speculating on the surprises which the morrow might have in store for them. It was vacation, and they were considering how best to spend the long hours that would intervene between dinner and time for lighting up the Christmas tree, when Ernest stopped abruptly in the middle of a sentence and stood looking up the street.

"Jack!" he exclaimed. "Look who's coming!"

Jack turned and beheld the familiar, lanky figure and long, easy stride of Sam Bumpus. Both boys set up a yell and started on a run up the street.

"Merry Christmas, Sam!" they cried. "Merry Christmas!"

"Merry Christmas, men," replied Sam, grinning.

One on each side of him, they escorted Sam down the street.

"Have you come to see us?" inquired Ernest.

"Why, no," said Sam. "I came to see the President of the United States, but I found he wasn't in town, so I thought I'd drop in on you. You haven't seen anything of him around here, have you?"

The boys laughed delightedly; they had come to understand Sam's kind of joking.

"Well, you must come into our shack," said Ernest. "We'll introduce you to mother, and father will be home soon."

"Well, I don't know as I'll exactly go in," replied Sam, doubtfully. "Maybe your mother ain't asked to be interduced to me. Anyway, I can talk better outside."

"Where's Nan?" asked Jack.

"I left her home, doin' up the dishes in the kitchen," said Sam. "The city don't agree with Nan. It don't agree with me much, either. I won't stop but a minute."

"Aw, come on in," pleaded Ernest.

But Sam shook his head. "No," said he, "I just want to show you something, and then I must be goin'. Can't we go over to the barn?"

"Sure," said the boys, and led the way to the stable in the yard that was now used only as a tool house and garage.

"We'll show you our carpenter shop," said Ernest.

But Sam did not stop long to examine the carpenter shop. There was something very mysterious about his attitude which aroused the boys' curiosity to top pitch.

"Come over here," said Sam, stepping toward an unused stall.

He began fumbling in his capacious pockets, and the boys crowded close about him, expecting to see some unusual sort of game he had shot. Suddenly before their astonished eyes there appeared two fuzzy, dappled puppies, running and sniffing about the floor of the stall.

"Puppies!" cried the boys in unison.

"Yep," said Sam. "English setter puppies."

"Where did you get them?" demanded Jack, catching up one of the sprawling little dogs in his arms.

"Nellie gave them to me," said Sam.

A look of comprehension began to dawn in Ernest's eyes. "So that's why you wouldn't let us go near her kennel last time we were there," said he. "She had them all the time."

Sam grinned. "They're pretty young to take away from their mother," said he, "but she has three more. She's a good mother, Nellie is. You ought to see her chase the other dogs away. I had a job of it gettin' these two weaned before Christmas."

"Why did you have to get them weaned before Christmas?" asked Jack.

"Now you jest think that over, and see if you can tell *me*," said Sam.

Ernest had already half guessed the wonderful truth, but he didn't yet dare to say what he thought.

"Don't be afraid of 'em," said Sam. "They won't bite – or leastways, not serious. Besides, they're your own dogs."

"Our own dogs?" gasped Jack in astonishment, the glad light beginning to break in upon him.

"Sure," said Sam. "What else would they be here for? I thought Santa Claus might happen to forget you, and so I brought 'em down."

"Oh!" cried Ernest. "Christmas presents! To be our very own dogs! I guess none of the other boys will have such fine presents as these, Jack."

But Jack was speechless with joy.

"Have they got names?" asked Ernest.

"Sure," said Sam. "I told you how I name all my dogs with names beginning with the same letter. All my own puppies, I mean. It's for good luck. There's Rex, you know, and Robbin and Rockaway. These two are Romulus and Remus and they're twins. This one with the black ear is Romulus, and this one with the little map of Africa on his side is Remus. That's how you can tell 'em apart."

"Which is mine and which is Ernest's?" inquired Jack, at last finding his voice.

"Well, now, I hadn't thought of that," confessed Sam. "Suppose you draw lots for 'em. Here, I'll hold these two broom straws so you can't tell which is longest. You each draw one, and the one that gets the longest straw can have first choice of the puppies. Is that fair?"

The boys agreed to the plan and drew the straws. Ernest's proved to be the longer one.

"Well, he's older, anyway," said Jack. "Which one do you choose, Ernest?"

"I'll take Romulus," said Ernest promptly, having noted that the one with the black ear was a shade the larger of the two.

"All right," said Jack, "and Remus is mine." And he asserted stoutly that he would have chosen Remus anyway.

"That's good," said Sam. "Then you're both satisfied. Grown people would have made more fuss about it, I'll warrant you.

"Well, I must be steppin' along," he continued. "Take good care of the puppies, because they're valuable. Remember that they're used to sleepin' close to a warm mother and see that they have a good bed. I'd put some rags in a box for 'em if I was you. Let 'em have fresh air and sunshine and a chance to stretch their legs, but don't let 'em get wet or chilled through and put their bed where they ain't no draughts. Remember they ain't got their warm coats yet.

"Give 'em a saucer of milk with the chill taken off, six times a day, and break a little bread into it at supper time. In a few weeks you can cut down to three meals a day, with more solid food, but I'll be down to see you before then, if you don't get up to see me, and I'll tell you just how to manage. Let me know if you have any trouble of any kind, but I guess you won't."

The clicking of the front gate announced the return of Mr. Whipple to his noonday meal. The boys ran to the stable door and shouted, "Father! Oh, father, come see what we've got for Christmas!"

They dashed toward him and dragged him by main force to the stable. But when they got there, Sam Bumpus had mysteriously disappeared, without giving the boys a chance to thank him or to wish him another Merry Christmas.

Mr. Whipple examined the puppies with interest and watched their clumsy antics with amusement. Like most people he could not resist the charm of a wet-nosed, big-footed, round-bellied, fuzzy little puppy. Presently, however, a look of doubt came over his face.

"What do you propose doing with them?" he asked.

"Why, having them for our dogs," said Jack, surprised that his father should ask so obvious a question.

"I mean, where do you plan to keep them?"

"Why, in our room, I guess," said Ernest.

But Mr. Whipple shook his head doubtfully. "I don't imagine they've been taught yet how to behave themselves in the house," said he. "And anyway, I don't believe your mother will want them there. She doesn't like dogs, you know."

"Aw, she wouldn't mind little bits of soft dogs like these," protested Ernest.

"Well, you can try it and see," said Mr. Whipple, "but I wouldn't get my hopes up too high, if I were you."

Mrs. Whipple did object quite decidedly, and for a time it looked as though Romulus and Remus were unwanted guests in that household and that their young masters would be forced to part with them. Tears were shed, but of that we will say little. At last Mrs. Whipple was persuaded to grant a truce in order that the Christmas Eve festivities might not be entirely spoiled. Besides, it was too late now to take the puppies back to Sam Bumpus, and even Mrs. Whipple was not hard-hearted enough to think of merely putting them out into the cold. The upshot of it was that, Delia having been given the evening off, Romulus and Remus were banished to the kitchen for the night, with a bed prepared in a box and another box of sand placed hopefully near by. The boys insisted on serving their supper in two separate saucers with the idea that each would recognize his own and observe the rights of the other.

Occasional stealthy visits to the kitchen that evening disclosed two remarkably wakeful and active puppies engaged in unexpected explorations, but at last they curled up together in their new bed, two innocent little balls of fluff, and Ernest and Jack bade them goodnight with much ceremony.

On Christmas Day there was trouble from the start. In fact, it was one of the liveliest Christmas Days in the history of the Whipple household. In the first place, when Delia came back early in the morning to get things started for the Christmas dinner, she discovered the two little strangers in her kitchen, and promptly made known the fact that they were puppies whose manners were not at all what they should be. Mr. Whipple averted a domestic storm by taking the puppies out into the yard, where he had his hands full to keep them out of the snow.

By this time the boys had finished the examination of their bulging stockings and the larger contributions of St. Nicholas which stood beside the fireplace, and bethought themselves of Romulus and Remus. They dashed pell-mell out into the yard where their father was pondering what he should do with them next. The boys promptly solved this problem by picking up the puppies, each taking his own, and carrying them forthwith into the house.

Mrs. Whipple was in a good humor that Christmas morning, and she really wanted her boys to be happy all day, so although she added one admonition to another, she allowed the boys to play with the puppies in the sitting-room. They would have to part with them soon enough, she thought, and meanwhile they might as well have as much fun as they could.

But as the day wore on her good nature and kind intentions were sorely tried. Romulus and Remus appeared to think that the house was some sort of hunting ground especially provided for little dogs, and that it was their duty to pursue, worry, and kill every sort of strange creature they could find. Evidently they were imaginative puppies, for they discovered enemies in overlooked corners of the room, on closet floors, and everywhere. These enemies might be the discarded paper wrappings of Christmas presents, or they might be perfectly good balls of darning cotton. It mattered not to Romulus and Remus so long as their primitive impulse to catch and slay was satisfied. They were very bloodthirsty little dogs.

But it ceased to be a joke, even to the boys, when Mrs. Whipple, for awhile put off her guard by a period of unusual quiet, discovered Romulus and Remus engaged in the joint pastime of reducing to small woolly bits a new gray felt slipper which she herself had presented to her husband that very morning. Hastily she cleared out the bottom of a closet, thrust the puppies inside, and ruthlessly closed the door, deaf alike to the piteous little squeaky whines of Romulus and Remus and the louder protests of Ernest and Jack.

"Now you see what they've done!" cried Mrs. Whipple, holding up the forlorn and tattered remnants of the slipper. "I guess this will about finish it. Wait till your father comes home."

Mr. Whipple had gone out for a little while that afternoon, and the boys awaited his return without much optimism. When his key was at last heard in the latch they looked at each other with eyes big with apprehension.

Somebody had given Mr. Whipple a big cigar, and a lot of people had wished him Merry Christmas, and he was in a very jovial mood indeed. Mrs. Whipple and the boys expected to see this mood suddenly change when he observed the ruined slipper.

Mrs. Whipple handed it to him without a word. He took it, examined it carefully with a puzzled expression, and then (strange to relate) began to grin. (I wonder if the fact that Mr. Whipple detested felt slippers could have had anything to do with it.)

The grin broke into a hearty laugh, and Mr. Whipple sank into a chair, still holding the slipper before him.

"Well," said he, "they certainly made this look like a last year's bird's nest. My eye! I should like to have seen them at it. The little rascals! How did they ever escape your eagle eye, mother?"

But Mrs. Whipple did not reply. Two red spots glowed in her cheeks and her eyes were snapping. She turned and left the room. Mr. Whipple puffed thoughtfully at his cigar for a moment and then rose and followed her, leaving the boys to engage in whispered conjectures as to the outcome of the affair.

I don't know what Mr. Whipple said to his wife in the other room, but he doubtless apologized for his ill-timed mirth and then talked over certain things with her. The upshot of it all was that a compromise was reached in that household. It was decided that Ernest and Jack might keep the puppies they had so set their hearts upon provided they were kept entirely away from Mrs. Whipple and were not permitted to intrude themselves upon her affairs. The boys must assume entire charge of them and be responsible for their actions, must feed and care for the dogs themselves without bothering their mother, paying for their food out of their own earnings and savings, and must on no

condition bring them into the house. That was the ultimatum; Mrs. Whipple vowed that she would never allow another dog to enter her doors.

"It's up to you, boys," said Mr. Whipple.

Strangely enough, the boys did not feel that these restrictions imposed great hardship. In fact, it gave them a sense of pride and not unpleasant responsibility to be given sole charge of Romulus and Remus. Nothing, indeed, could have suited them better. And they were so relieved to find that they were not to be deprived of their new possessions after all that they were quite excitedly happy.

The only question that now seriously concerned them was to find a warm, dry place to keep the puppies in during the cold weather, while they were still so delicate and helpless. It was here that their mother came to their rescue. Having won her main point about keeping the dogs out of the house, she was mollified, and perhaps her conscience troubled her a little. She was really a very tender-hearted woman, and it occurred to her that her ultimatum might be the cause of real suffering on the part of the puppies. So it was she who sent for a carpenter and had him make a sort of room out of one of the old stalls in the stable, quite tight against draughts, and with a door in the front for convenience.

When Mr. Whipple learned of this he laughed and patted his wife on the shoulder. "I always knew you were a cruel monster," he said.

He inspected the new abode of Romulus and Remus and expressed his approval.

"It's the best thing in the world for them," he said to the boys. "They will be really better off here than in a heated house. They'll grow up sturdier and stronger. They only need to be protected against draughts and dampness, as Bumpus said. But you mustn't forget to keep both doors closed and to warm their milk and water a little, while their stomachs are still tender. They'll curl up close together and never mind the still, dry cold. They'll be all right here."

CHAPTER IV IN ROME

Furnishing and decorating the new home of Romulus and Remus proved to be a most enjoyable task. They took a good-sized box over to the planing mill and got it filled with sawdust, and dragged it home on Ernest's sled. They swept out the old stall carefully and sprinkled the floor liberally with sawdust, holding the rest in reserve, so that there might always be a clean, fresh supply. Housekeeping was thus made easy by simply hoeing out the old sawdust.

For a bed they set a soap box on its side, put in a thick layer of straw, and tacked a piece of old carpet loosely over it so that it would be soft and yet the puppies could not scratch it out. They bought two enameled tin dishes, one for food and one for water, for they discovered that the puppies did not understand the system of each having his own. They nailed bits of wood to the floor to hold the dishes so that they would not be pushed about and overturned. The puppies enjoyed all this activity immensely, making laughable efforts to help, and only wailed and wept when their young masters left the room.

When it was done, the boys surveyed their handiwork with immense satisfaction, but Jack would not be satisfied until they had tacked to the wall several pictures of dogs clipped from papers and magazines, for Jack insisted that the place must be made homelike.

They had read somewhere about the original Romulus and Remus of history, and so they named the apartment Rome. They thought Sam Bumpus would approve of this since it began with the letter R. Then they nailed an old horseshoe to the door for luck, called it a day, and knocked off.

The next thing to consider was the education of the puppies, and here the boys felt somewhat at a loss. Romulus and Remus didn't seem to understand a word of English, and the boys couldn't speak Latin. All attempts to secure the prompt obedience that Sam had advised ended in utter failure. Romulus and Remus were very willful and headstrong puppies. Further advice from Sam seemed desirable.

Furthermore, about the end of the second week, both puppies appeared to be ailing. In spite of plenty of milk they had grown thin, and Romulus appeared to have trouble with the action of his hind legs. Remus seemed to be chiefly afflicted with itching, and had worn a bare spot under each foreleg.

Ernest and Jack became alarmed, and their father could not seem to tell what the trouble was. Various things prevented the boys from making the trip to Sam's shack, and besides they wanted him to take a look at the dogs. They had noticed his free delivery mail box and so Ernest sent him this brief summons on a postal card:

Dear Sam: -

Romulus and Remus are sick and we don't know what to do.

Could you come down some day after school and see them? Also we want to ask you some things about disaplining them.

Yours truly,

Ernest and Jack Whipple.

Sam did not fail them. A couple of days later he appeared at the Whipple gate and gave the low whistle that he used with Nan. The boys, humoring his desire not to go into the house, led him at once to Rome.

"Well, now," said Sam, inspecting the puppies' home with evidences of approval, "this is quite a palace for the little princes. Some day I s'pose they'll have hot and cold water, electric lights, and a doorbell."

Then he proceeded to examine the puppies while the boys looked on anxiously.

"Hm," said he at length. "Just as I expected. Nothing but worms."

"Worms?" echoed the boys in chorus.

"Sure," replied Sam. "Most all puppies get 'em sooner or later, and sometimes they do a lot of harm if you don't get rid of 'em. But we'll get rid of 'em all right. Get a pencil and paper and write down what I tell you to get at the drug store and the directions."

When they reappeared with the necessary articles, Sam continued: "There's several things that'll take care of worms, but the best and surest is santonin and calomel. Write that down."

Ernest wrote as Sam spelled the words. It seemed to be much more of an accomplishment to be able to pronounce and spell such words than fulfilment or handicraft.

"Tell the druggist," said Sam, "to make you up half a dozen pills with half a grain of calomel and half a grain of santonin in each one. For big dogs we make 'em one grain each. To-morrow mornin' give the pups a little milk and then don't feed 'em again till after they've been dosed. About noon give 'em each a pill, and then, a couple of hours later, give 'em each a teaspoonful of castor oil. A couple of hours after that, feed 'em again, and I'll guarantee they'll be all right, though you may have to do it all over again in a couple of months. Big dogs have to fast longer and have to have a tablespoonful of castor oil."

"How do you give them the medicine?" inquired Ernest, looking at the squirming puppies doubtfully.

"Easy enough when you know how," said Sam. "I'll show you. Pick him up like this and take hold of his nose, pushin' his lips between his teeth with your thumb and fingers. He can't bite and he has to open his mouth. Of course, with a bigger dog it's harder if he don't want to stand still. Then take a pill in your other hand and put it down his throat as far as you can reach. Then shut his mouth and hold his head up till he has to swallow. He'll never know what went down. It's the same way with the castor oil, only you'll have to get Jack to hold the spoon and put it in when you give the word. Put it way down in, Jack, and don't get excited and spill it. Get a spoon and I'll show you how easy it is."

Jack ran for a spoon and Sam illustrated with a spoonful of water. Then the boys tried it until they felt themselves sufficiently expert.

"There's a way of pourin' medicine into the side of a dog's mouth outside his teeth," said Sam, "but he's apt to spill some of it before he gets through. Besides, he gets the taste of it that way, and may run from the sight of a spoon or a bottle ever after. I like my way better."

He looked at his watch and announced that he must be going.

"I'll look in on you again one of these days," he said, "but I know they'll be all right if you do like I said."

"And you like Rome, don't you?" asked Jack.

"Rome?" repeated Sam.

"We named it that because Romulus and Remus were Romans," explained Ernest.

"Yes, it's a mighty good place for them," said Sam. Then he considered a moment. "Do you expect me to get down and roll in the sawdust and try to bite things?"

The boys laughed at the idea, though they didn't exactly know what he meant.

"Why?" asked Ernest.

"Because I've always been told that when you're in Rome you must do as the Romans do," said Sam, and went away laughing silently.

The boys followed Sam's instructions to the letter, and when he came again a week later the puppies were as healthy and lively as crickets.

"Now," said Ernest, "we want to ask you about training them. We forgot about that the other day."

"You don't expect to go gunnin' with 'em for a few days, do you?" asked Sam.

"No," said Ernest, "but we want them to learn to come when we call and do what we say."

"Well," said Sam, "all it needs is patience. Keep talkin' to 'em and the first thing you know you'll find they understand words. Then try to make 'em do what the words mean. Remember they're only

babies yet and be patient with 'em. Keep at it until they answer to their names. Don't be discouraged. Of course, it'll be harder gettin' 'em housebroken if you don't let 'em into the house, but I'll guarantee you'll do it.

"It ought to be about time to cut down to four meals a day now, and give 'em shredded wheat or puppy biscuits. And now I'm here, I might as well give you a little advice about feedin' in gen'ral. You'll remember it all later. In another month you can cut down to three meals and maybe add a little chopped meat and gravy at night. Keep that up till they're six or eight months old, and then you can begin to feed 'em like grown dogs.

"In feedin' dogs," he continued, "remember they're like humans. They ought to have meat and grain and vegetables to get all they want to build 'em up and keep 'em healthy. Some dogs is very finicky and won't eat vegetables, but you can learn 'em to eat right if you begin right. A grown dog don't need but one meal a day, near night, but sometimes a dog gets so hungry that he overeats or bolts his food, and then it's a good plan to give him a little breakfast, too. Bones they can have any time. Bones amuse 'em and help keep their teeth and digestion in good shape. A good rule is to give a dog a little bread and milk for breakfast, a bone without too much meat on it about noon, and a good dinner at night, with all sorts of things in it. Get shin of beef or some other cheap meat at the butcher's and boil it good. Save the bone and the soup. Cut the meat up in small pieces, mix it with bread or rice and any vegetables left over from the house – onions, cabbage, carrots, or anything but potatoes. They ain't very good for dogs. Mix the food all up together and moisten it with the soup, but don't have it too wet. Stale bread is better for 'em than fresh bread. Never give 'em chicken or rabbit bones that may splinter and injure 'em inside. Don't give too much pork or fat of any kind. Don't give 'em much candy or sweet stuff. Some folks bake bread or cakes specially for dogs, but if you do that, don't use much corn meal. It's too heatin' in summer and it's apt to cause skin trouble. If anything seems to disagree with 'em, like baked beans, or sweet corn, or rice, cut it out; you can tell. Last of all, always keep plenty of clean, fresh water where they can get it. A thirsty dog is never happy."

These and other instructions the boys obtained from Sam Bumpus from time to time, and as the days went by they were pleased to see their dogs growing bigger and stronger. Slowly, too, they began to learn the meaning of things and to obey their masters' voices. Raising dogs proved to be the most fascinating thing that Ernest and Jack Whipple had ever undertaken.

By February they were very proud of their charges and anxious to show them off. Consequently they welcomed a visit one Saturday morning from Harry Barton, a chum of theirs. Harry appeared unannounced and accompanied by his big, bow-legged English bulldog, Mike. He went directly to the barn, from which issued the voices of the Whipple boys and their dogs, and entered Rome. The unexpected appearance of Mike startled Jack, and he picked Remus hastily up and held him in protecting arms. But Harry only laughed.

"What you 'fraid of?" he inquired. "Mike wouldn't hurt a kitten. He looks ugly and that's what scares tramps away, but he never bit anything. You ought to see the baby walk all over him."

"Come on in, then," invited Ernest.

Mike went slowly up to Romulus and sniffed at him noisily. At first the puppy was frightened, but finding that he was not attacked he made one or two playful little lunges at the bulldog and then stood off and barked shrilly at him, Remus joining in the chorus and struggling to be set down.

"They've got spunk, all right," said Ernest, proudly.

Mike sniffed at Remus also, then yawned in a bored sort of way, waddled out of Rome as though his years and dignity forbade his association with such frivolous company, and thumped down on the floor outside. All three boys laughed.

"Well, what do you think of 'em?" Ernest asked presently. "Some dogs, eh?"

"Oh, they'll prob'ly be all right when they grow up," said Harry, unwilling to concede too much. "They'll have to grow a lot, though, before they know as much as Mike."

"But a bulldog can't hunt like a setter," said Ernest, flying to the defense of his breed.

"Who wants to hunt?" demanded Harry. "Hunting isn't all a dog's for, is it? A bulldog's a better watchdog than a setter."

Ernest, not knowing whether this was so or not, made no reply.

"But aren't they cunning, Harry?" asked Jack.

"Oh, sure, they're cunning," said Harry, satisfied that he had scored his point. "Can they shake hands yet?"

"Not yet," said Jack.

"Mike can shake hands," said Harry, "and take the mail from the postman, and do lots of things."

"But he can't hunt," insisted Ernest, returning to the attack.

"I'd rather have a bulldog than a setter, any day," said Harry. "Why, the bulldog is one of the best kinds of dogs. It's an older kind than the setter. They used them in England for fighting bulls hundreds of years ago. A bulldog is brave and faithful, and he sticks to things. He isn't a flyaway kind of a dog."

"But they're so homely," objected Jack, glancing out at Mike.

"Ho," cried Harry, "who ever heard of a pretty bulldog? We don't want 'em pretty. Mike's just like a bulldog ought to be, thick-set, muscular, with wide chest, elbows set far apart, and undershot jaw. See?"

It sounded very much as though he were reading it out of a book, and the other boys were much impressed. Ernest found himself wondering where Harry had picked up his dog lore.

"What do you know about setters?" demanded Harry.

Ernest, in the face of superior wisdom, admitted that he didn't know very much.

"Well, you ought to," said Harry. "What's the use of having dogs if you don't know all about them?"

"Sam Bumpus has told us a good deal about training and hunting," said Jack.

"Yes, but what do you know about the breed, where it came from and all that? Do you want to find out?"

"Sure," said Ernest.

"Well, I'll tell you where you can find out," said Harry. "I know a man that knows more about dogs than anybody else in the world, I guess."

"Who is he?" demanded Ernest.

"Did you ever hear of the Willowdale Kennels?" asked Harry.

Ernest was forced to admit that he had not.

"Well, they're over at Thornboro," said Harry. "They have twenty-eight dogs there. Mr. Hartshorn owns them, but the man that takes care of them is Tom Poullice. He's an Englishman, and he used to have charge of kennels in England once. He knows all about collies and greyhounds and – and every kind of dogs there are."

"I bet he doesn't know more about setters and pointers than Sam Bumpus does," said Ernest, loyally.

"Bet you a hundred dollars he does," said Harry.

"Bet you a thousand he doesn't."

The bidding bade fair to be unlimited, and though the millions and billions and trillions remained to be called upon, Harry desisted.

"Tell you what I'll do," said he. "I'll take you over there and then you can see for yourselves."

Ernest and Jack promptly forgot their controversy with Harry and accepted his proposal with animation.

"And can we see all those dogs?" asked Ernest.

"Sure," said Harry.

"How many did you say there were?"

"Twenty-four besides four puppies."

"Whew!" Jack exclaimed.

"When can we go?" asked Ernest.

"Why, this afternoon, if you want to. It's over five miles to Thornboro, but we can take the 2:10 train and be there in no time. You come along by my house after dinner and whistle," said Harry.

"Bully," said Ernest, and Harry turned and walked jauntily out of the stable with old Mike lumbering at his heels.

CHAPTER V

THE WILLOWDALE KENNELS

As Harry Barton had said, it was only a short run on the train to Thornboro. The three boys disembarked at the station and walked up a winding, muddy road, for the sun was gathering strength and the snow had been melting fast. The fields and hillsides lay brown and dry, but not uninviting. It was a glorious day to be out of doors, especially upon such a quest.

They came at length to an entrance in a privet hedge and passed up a long driveway with maple trees along both sides. At the end of it they could see a large brick house with white pillars along the front.

"My, but this is a big place," said Ernest.

"Sure," said Harry. "Mr. Hartshorn is a rich man. If he wasn't, how do you s'pose he could keep so many dogs and hire a man just to take care of them?"

"What does he do with so many?" inquired Jack, to whom the care of one small puppy seemed a considerable responsibility.

"Oh, he shows them," was Harry's somewhat vague explanation. "He takes prizes with them at dog shows. Some of them are champions. He breeds them, too, and he sells the puppies he doesn't want to keep. I guess he makes a good deal of his money that way."

"What kind of dogs are they?" asked Ernest.

"Mostly Airedale terriers and white bull terriers," said Harry. "Not common bull terriers, like Frank Symonds's, but the finest kind, all white."

As they neared the house, Harry led them into a path through the shrubbery which brought them at last around to the rear, where there was a big stable and garage, a greenhouse, and some other buildings.

"That long low building is the kennels," said Harry. "The dogs are in their runs out back, I expect, and prob'ly Tom is out there, too."

"Why!" exclaimed Jack, "it's just like a house for people."

The Willowdale kennel house was indeed a more elaborate affair than the boys had imagined could ever have been built just for dogs. It made Rome appear very humble in comparison. It was a well-built house, long and low, with windows all along the front and a door in the middle. Over this door was an ornamental gable and there was a cupola at the top. The whole was painted white.

The boys passed around the end of the building, from behind which issued the voices of many dogs which they presently saw running about in yards built of wire fencing. Some of the dogs were smooth and pure white and some were wiry-coated and a rich black and tan – tan on the legs and head and black or a very dark grizzle on the neck and body. They all appeared to be very lively, active dogs, and some of them seemed rather pugnaciously anxious to get at one another through the wire fences.

"There's Tom," announced Harry, and the other boys, following his pointing finger, observed a man in brown clothes and leather leggings apparently engaged in mending the fence at the rear of one of the runs. As they approached he straightened up and came forward to meet them, with a little smile on his broad face.

"Well," said he, "'ere we are. An' 'ow's the little man to-day? An' 'ow's the dog Mike?"

"Pretty well, thank you," said Harry, in a rather more subdued tone than he had been using toward Jack and Ernest. "These are my friends, Ernest and Jack Whipple. They want to see your dogs."

Tom Poullice regarded the newcomers quizzically. "Sure you aren't afraid o' gettin' bit?"

"Oh, no, we aren't afraid of dogs," asserted Ernest.

"Right-o," said Tom. "Come along and I'll show you our new Hairedale, Bingo's Queen Molly. She's a 'ummer, Molly is."

He led the way through a wire gate into one of the runs and called the new dog to him, whereat the dogs in the neighboring runs set up a loud barking.

"They're all jealous," said Tom, "but they wouldn't touch 'er. A male dog scarcely ever attacks a female."

Molly proved to be a sweet, gentle creature, and allowed the boys to pat and stroke her hard little head.

"She's the genooine harticle," said Tom. "See the straight legs of 'er an' the square muzzle. She'll win something, or I'm no judge."

"She's a little smaller than some of them, isn't she?" asked Harry.

"Yes, but she's just about the right size for showing," said Tom. "Thirty-seven she weighs. I'm partial to the bigger dogs, myself, but the judges generally favor a smaller dog if he's got the points. Molly's certainly got the points."

Much to the edification of the boys, Tom went on to describe the standard points of the Airedale, illustrating with several of the dogs, all of whom seemed to be very fond of the kennelman. Then he took them in to see the bull terriers.

"'Ere's a different kind of dog entirely," he said. "As good a fighter and watchdog as the Hairedale, but not useful in so many ways. It's an older breed than the Hairedale. I can remember when the bull terrier was a heavier dog, and brindles were just as good as whites, but now they want only this kind in the shows, with a long skull and pure white. Eyes small and shaped like almonds, and set wide apart. That's the kind. The ears have to be cropped in this country to win prizes. Beastly custom. They don't do it in Hengland any more. I'm glad they let the Hairedales' ears alone."

For some time Tom Poulitice discoursed learnedly on these two breeds and answered numerous questions.

"What-ho," he exclaimed suddenly. "'Ere's Mr. 'Artshorn coming. Get 'im to tell you about dogs. 'E knows a thing or two 'imself."

A well-dressed gentleman in a gray overcoat and hat, with a gray pointed beard, and carrying a cane, appeared around the end of the kennel house. The boys appeared a little ill at ease.

"Don't be scared of 'im," said Tom. "'E likes boys."

"Well, Tom," said Mr. Hartshorn, stopping now and then to poke his stick through the fence at the dogs that came yelping down their runs to greet him, "how's Molly?"

"Mighty fine, sir," said Tom; "mighty fine."

"Some of your friends?" he inquired, indicating the boys.

"Yes, sir," said Tom. "This is Harry Barton, sir, from Boytown, and these – what did you say your names were?"

"Ernest and Jack Whipple," said Ernest.

"Ah, yes," said Mr. Hartshorn, just as though he had been reading about these boys in the paper. "Glad to meet you, I'm sure. Came up to have a look at the finest dogs in Connecticut, I suppose."

He had a pleasant, friendly face, and though the boys were a little awed by his imposing appearance and courtly manner, they soon lost their shyness and found themselves asking him many questions about dogs.

"Come up to the house," said he at length. "I can explain things better up there, where I have some pictures."

Tom went back to his work and the boys, bidding him good-by, followed Mr. Hartshorn up to the big house. He took them into a room that he said was his den. There was a big desk in it, all littered up with papers, and well filled bookcases around the room.

"Are all these books about dogs?" inquired Harry.

"Well, a good many of them are," said Mr. Hartshorn. "I have about every book on dogs that has been printed, I expect."

On the walls above the bookcases were photographs and colored pictures of dogs and horses in frames, and at one side of the room was a long leather sofa. Mr. Hartshorn seated himself at his desk and began rummaging in a drawer full of photographs, while he told the boys to be seated on the sofa.

"Now, then," he said when they were all settled, "you were asking me about the different kinds of terriers, and I guess I've got pictures of good specimens of about every kind. How many kinds of standard breeds of terriers do you suppose there are?"

"About eight, I guess," said Harry, who was a little more forward than the Whipple boys.

"Wrong," said Mr. Hartshorn. "There are nearly a hundred recognized breeds of dogs in this country, all different, and eighteen of these are terriers. To make them easier to remember, I will divide them into three classes, smooth-coated, wire-haired, and long-haired. The smooths are the bull terrier, the Boston, the smooth fox terrier, the Manchester, and the Doberman pinscher. The wires are the wire-haired fox terrier, the Airedale, the Bedlington, the Irish, the Welsh, the Scottish, the West Highland white, the Dandie Dinmont, the cairn, and the Sealyham. The long-haired ones are the Skye, the Clydesdale, and the Yorkshire."

"My!" exclaimed Ernest. "I never heard of some of them before."

"Lots of people haven't," said Mr. Hartshorn, "but they're all worth knowing. You can see nearly all of them at a big show like the one held every year in New York. I'm going to tell you something about them all, if you'd like to listen."

"Oh, yes, please do," said Ernest.

"Well," said Mr. Hartshorn, arranging his photographs, "first let me explain what a terrier is. Most of them come from England and Scotland. A few from Wales and Ireland. Terrier means earth dog, and that's what they were called hundreds of years ago when they were first used to hunt animals that run into the ground or under stones. They had to be brave and gamey and not too big, and they became very active little dogs and mighty efficient. At first, some were smooth-coated and some wire-coated. Finally, however, Englishmen began to breed certain favorite kinds, and so the different breeds were gradually established.

"One of the oldest kinds is the Manchester or black-and-tan terrier. He was first bred by the mill hands in the Midland counties of England where he was famous as a ratter. Here's a picture of one. Handsome chap, isn't he? Nice, intelligent dog, too. His ears are cropped but his tail isn't. The white bull terrier is a near relative of the Manchester. I've already told you about him.

"Now here's the Boston. I guess you know this kind."

"Oh, yes," said Ernest. "Theron Hammond has one named Alert."

"This is an American-made breed," said Mr. Hartshorn, "out of British raw material. Some Boston fanciers developed it from the brindle bull terrier about 1890. It's one of the most popular breeds here now. A smallish dog – sometimes too small, I think – brindle and white. And here's the smooth fox terrier. You've seen lots of those. Another small one, not over twenty pounds. He was developed from the old English working terrier about fifty years ago.

"Now here's one that I don't believe you know. It's a Doberman pinscher. Funny name. Wonderfully smart dog, though. They call him the dog with the human brain. He comes from Germany, where he was first a watchdog and was later trained as a police dog. I believe the first ones were brought over here in 1907. A muscular dog, weighing forty or fifty pounds. He is marked like the Manchester but his coat is less silky.

"Now we come to the wires. The wire-haired fox terrier is really just like the smooth, but he looks quite different because of his stiff, wiry coat. Then there's the Airedale. You know about those. Best all-round dog in the world in my opinion. This is a Bedlington. You won't see many of those. Has a head like a lamb, hasn't he? And notice the silky topknot. He's a good little sporting dog if he does look so mild. They're mostly blue-gray and tan, and weigh about twenty-four pounds.

"Here's the liveliest one of the lot, the Irish terrier. Sometimes they call him the dare-devil. He's a great little scrapper. He comes from Ireland, of course. He's a red dog, weighs twenty-four pounds, and makes one of the best comrades a boy can have. The Welsh terrier is related to the wire-haired fox, though he looks more like a small Airedale, being black and tan. He's a little smaller than the Irishman.

"Several terriers come from Scotland, and as you can see from these pictures they're a short-legged, strong-headed, long-bodied lot. That's because they were bred to go into the ground and the piles of rocks after badger and such-like game. They had to be pretty tough to manage it, too. This is the cairn terrier. He used to be called the Highland terrier, and I guess he's more nearly like the original terrier of Scotland than any of the others. He came from the Hebrides Islands. I expect you've never seen one, for they aren't common in this country. But they're jolly little beggars. They're the smallest of the lot, weighing only twelve to fifteen pounds, but mighty hardy and gamey. They are various sandy and grizzled colors and always have this foxy little head.

"You may have seen one of these. It's a Scottish terrier, once called the Aberdeen, and we have a lot of good ones over here now. Some call him the Scottie or the die-hard. See how wise he looks, with his bright eyes under his big eyebrows. Notice the big head and short legs and upright tail. There are some sandy ones, but mostly they're a dark grizzled gray. They weigh eighteen to twenty pounds. Here's his first cousin, the West Highland white terrier. He comes from Argyllshire, on the west coast of Scotland, and he's always pure white. Like most of the other Scotchmen he has a harsh outer coat and a soft under coat, which are practically waterproof. He has a more pointed muzzle than the Scottie and he's smaller."

At the next picture the boys all laughed. It was such a queer-looking dog, with such a big head and long body, and a face like that of an old Scotchman.

"He's a Dandie Dinmont," said Mr. Hartshorn. "If you ever read 'Guy Mannering' by Sir Walter Scott, you may remember that he speaks of Dandie Dinmont's pepper and mustard terriers. The book was published in 1814, and Dandie Dinmont terriers have been popular in the border countries of Scotland ever since. The Dandie is related to the Bedlington. You see he has the same drooping ears and the topknot. Gray and fawn are the colors.

"This is the last of the wires. It's a Sealyham. He looks as though he might be related to the Scotch breeds, with his short legs and strong head. He was, in fact, bred for badger hunting, as they were, but he comes from Wales. We have had them in this country only since 1912. The Sealyham is a mighty lovable little dog. He is white, often with black or brown markings, and he's about the same size as the West Highlander.

"Now we come to the long-coated ones, and the first of them is the Skye, another of the Scotch breeds. He's a close relative of the cairn, but he has a long coat and hair over his eyes. He's about the same size as the West Highlander and he's blue-gray or fawn. They used to be much more common than they are now. By the way, did you ever read the story of Greyfriars Bobby?"

None of the boys had read it.

"Well, do so the first chance you get. That's one of the loveliest dog stories ever written, and it's true. Greyfriars Bobby was a Skye terrier.

"This is the Clydesdale or Paisley terrier. Not at all a common breed. I doubt if you'll ever see one in the United States. He looks something like the Skye, but his coat is silkier. He's steel blue on the body and head, with golden tan feet. The Yorkshire comes from the other side of the border, and he's something like the Clydesdale, only with longer legs and shorter body. He's a fancy dog with a wonderful coat, parted down the middle and sweeping the ground. He's steel blue with tan markings on the head, chest, and legs.

"There you have all the terriers," he concluded, "and I guess you've had a long enough lesson for one day. These facts are all very interesting, but they become prosy and confusing if taken in too

large doses. Here, take this book home with you, and look it over at your leisure. You'll find in it all the things I've told you and a lot more besides."

"Terriers are the smartest dogs there are, I guess," said Harry.

"Well, I don't know as I should want to say quite that," said Mr. Hartshorn. "Smartness and other qualities are as much a matter of individuals as of breeds. However, the terriers certainly have won that reputation."

"Do you know any good stories about them?" asked Harry, who was never backward in such matters. Mr. Hartshorn laughed.

"Unfortunately my memory for stories isn't very good," said he, "but I have lots of stories in books, and before you boys come up again, I'll look up some of them. Meanwhile, see if they have a book in the Boytown Library by Edward Jesse, called 'Anecdotes of Dogs.' It was published in London in 1858, and it isn't very common, but if you can find a copy, it's a dandy. It contains most of the historic dog stories. It includes several stories about terriers, chiefly illustrating their intelligence, but also their devotion. Many of them, I recall, are stories of dogs that found their way home over unknown roads after being carried away for long distances. This homing instinct seems to be very strong in the terrier. The breed has always been a very close and intimate companion of man, and that has sharpened his wits and deepened his sympathies.

"The only terrier story that I recall at the moment is a little anecdote that illustrates the terrier's shrewdness rather than his uprightness of character. A lady music teacher was going to the home of one of her pupils one day when some sort of wire-haired terrier surprised and startled her by running out from a field and seizing her skirt in his teeth. She tried to drive him away, but he wouldn't go. Becoming somewhat alarmed by his actions, she called to two laborers who were working in the field, and they came to her assistance.

"He wants you to go with him, ma'am," one of the men said. 'I've heard of dogs actin' like that. Maybe it's a murder or something. I guess we'd better go along.'

"They followed the dog to the rear of a cottage, and he at once began to dig feverishly at a heavy plank. The workmen, half expecting to find a corpse, lifted the plank, only to disclose a large beef bone. This the terrier at once appropriated and made off with it, without waiting to express his thanks for assistance."

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