

SNAP

THE STORY OF A BULL-TERRIER

I

It was dusk on Hallowe'en when first I saw him. Early in the morning I had received a telegram from my college chum Jack: "Lest we forget. Am sending you a remarkable pup. Be polite to him; it's safer." It would have been just like Jack to have sent an infernal machine or a Skunk rampant and called it a pup, so I awaited the hamper with curiosity. When it arrived I saw it was marked "Dangerous," and there came from within a high-pitched snarl at every slight provocation. On peering through the wire netting I saw it was not a baby Tiger but a small white Bull-terrier. He snapped at me and at any one or anything that seemed too abrupt or too near for proper respect, and his snarling growl was unpleasantly frequent. Dogs have two growls: one deep-rumbled, and chesty; that is polite warning — the retort courteous; the other mouthy and much higher in pitch: this is the last word before actual onslaught. The Terrier's growls were all of the latter kind. I was a dog-man and thought I knew all about Dogs, so, dismissing the porter, I got out my all-round jackknife — toothpick — nailhammer-hatchet-toolbox-fire-shovel, a specialty of our firm, and lifted the net-

ting. Oh, yes, I knew all about Dogs. The little fury had been growling out a whole-souled growl for every tap of the tool, and when I turned the box on its side, he made a dash straight for my legs. Had not his foot gone through the wire netting and held him, I might have been hurt, for his heart was evidently in his work; but I stepped on the table out of reach and tried to reason with him. I have always believed in talking to animals. I maintain that they gather something of our intention at least, even if they do not understand our words; but the Dog evidently put me down for a hypocrite and scorned my approaches. At first he took his post under the table and kept up a circular watch for a leg trying to get down. I felt sure I could have controlled him with my eye, but I could not bring it to bear where I was, or rather where he was; thus I was left a prisoner. I am a very cool person, I flatter myself; in fact, I represent a hardware firm, and, in coolness, we are not excelled by any but perhaps the nosy gentlemen that sell wearing-apparel. I got out a cigar and smoked tailor-style on the table, while my little tyrant below kept watch for legs. I got out the telegram and read it: "Remarkable pup. Be polite to him; it's safer." I think it was my coolness rather than my politeness that did it, for in half an hour the growling ceased. In an hour he no longer jumped at a newspaper cautiously pushed over the edge to test his humor; possibly the irritation of the cage was wearing off, and by the time I had lit my third cigar, he waddled out to the fire and lay down; not ignoring me, however,

I had no reason to complain of that kind of contempt. He kept one eye on me, and I kept both eyes, not on him, but on his stumpy tail. If that tail should swing sidewise once I should feel I was winning; but it did not swing. I got a book and put in time on that table till my legs were cramped and the fire burned low. About 10 p.m. it was chilly, and at half-past ten the fire was out. My Hallowe'en present got up, yawned and stretched, then walked under my bed, where he found a fur rug. By stepping lightly from the table to the dresser, and then on to the mantel-shelf, I also reached bed, and, very quietly undressing, got in without provoking any criticism from my master. I had not yet fallen asleep when I heard a slight scrambling and felt "thump-thump" on the bed, then over my feet and legs; Snap evidently had found it too cool down below, and proposed to have the best my house afforded.

He curled up on my feet in such a way that I was very uncomfortable and tried to readjust matters, but the slightest wriggle of my toe was enough to make him snap at it so fiercely that nothing but thick woolen bed-clothes saved me from being maimed for life.

I was an hour moving my feet — a hair's-breadth at a time — till they were so that I could sleep in comfort; and I was awakened several times during the night by angry snarls from the Dog — I suppose because I dared to move a toe without his approval, though once I believe he did it simply because I was snoring.

In the morning I was ready to get up before Snap was. You see, I call him Snap — Ginger-snap in full. Some Dogs are hard to name, and some do not seem to need it — they name themselves.

I was ready to rise at seven. Snap was not ready till eight, so we rose at eight. He had little to say to the man who made the fire. He allowed me to dress without doing it on the table. As I left the room to get breakfast, I remarked:

“Snap, my friend, some men would whip you into a different way, but I think I know a better plan. The doctors nowadays favor the ‘no-breakfast cure.’ I shall try that.”

It seemed cruel, but I left him without food all day. It cost me something to repaint the door where he scratched it, but at night he was quite ready to accept a little food at my hands.

In a week we were very good friends. He would sleep on my bed now and allow me to move my feet without snapping at them, intent to do me serious bodily harm. The no-breakfast cure had worked wonders; in three months we were — well, simply man and Dog, and he amply justified the telegram he came with.

He seemed to be without fear. If a small Dog came near, he would take not the slightest notice; if a medium-sized Dog, he would stick his stub of a tail rigidly up in the air, then walk around him, scratching contemptuously with his hind feet, and looking at the sky,