The FICTION Corner

JACK

By JOHN H. HOSE

Freddy and John wanted a dog but they weren't getting far with their plea. Then a stray mongrel wandered upon the scene one day and caused a great deal of excitement.

"WHY, how do you do! Won't you come in?" asked Mother as she opened the front door. Both Freddie and I looked up to see who the caller might be.

The shades were drawn in the living room, so we couldn't see who was standing on the porch. Mother had darkened the room to protect Freddy's eyes because Freddy had the measles. He was covered with a blanket and curled up on the day bed which had been moved down from upstairs. I was spread out on the floor with the erector set.

We waited to see the unexpected visitor, and imagine our surprise when in walked a big brown dog. The newcomer trotted across the room to inspect me, and I patted him on the head. Then he went over to the day bed and nuzzled his big head against Freddy, as much as to say:

"Hi, there, Bud, I've come to help you get well!"

"O, gee, Mom," cried Freddy excitedly, "a dog! Can we keep him, Mom? Where did he come from? What's his name?"

"Now, now, not so fast, son," interrupted Mother, as she settled Freddy under the blanket again. "He just came to the door when I went to get the mail, and I thought maybe he'd help you pass the time while you're closed up here with the measles. Do you like him?"

"Boy, I'll say," Freddy and I chanted in unison, "he's swell!"

The newcomer, who was busy inspecting the premises, was just dog; part airedale, part hound. He was big, grayish-brown, and would have passed for a genuine airedale if he hadn't had those big floppy, hound-dog ears.

We had always wanted a dog but Dad said we didn't have a place for a dog, and he wouldn't have one if he had to keep it tied.

"What'll we call him, Mom?" I asked eagerly.

"Why don't you and Freddy figure that out for yourself, son," she said as she went toward the kitchen to get dinner under way.

All my life I had wanted people to call me Jack, because I liked it for a nickname; but all I ever heard was just plain John, so I said:

"Let's call him Jack, Freddy."

"Yeah—Jack's a good name all right. Here, Jack, come over here, old boy!" he called to the dog. And Jack wagged his tail, put his big front paws up on the couch, and licked Freddy on the nose.

"Gosh, look, John," said Freddy, "he knows his name already."

We had a wonderful time with Jack until Dad came home.

"What's going on here?" he called when he saw the dog stretched out on the living room floor. "Where did that mongrel come from?"

"He came to help me get well, Dad," piped Freddy from his haven on the day bed.

Freddy always could work Dad for most anything, and when he finished telling Dad how the dog just practically came up and knocked on the door to help Freddy get well, Dad just grinned and said grudgingly:

"Well, I guess we can keep him for a while . . . until you get well anyhow."

But after Freddy got well, Jack stayed. Dad kicked about it a little, but he finally agreed to let us have Jack if we kept him in the basement at night, and the dog didn't get into any trouble.

We both promised! But keeping Jack out of trouble was like trying to keep water from flowing downhill. Everything went along fine until Mr. Westour came over to complain that Jack had dug up his garden to bury a bone. All our efforts to explain didn't appease Dad very much, and he was disgusted.

Then Jack chased Roush's cat, and the cat got caught in the porch railing and couldn't get out until old man Roush sawed the railing loose. Naturally, he wasn't too pleased about that.

Dad was adamant by that time, and insisted Jack would have to go. He had found some farmer who would take the dog. But Jack had a knack for taking things into his own hands, or I guess we ought to say, his own paws!

He had a habit of following us to school, but we'd usually chase him home after a block or two. But one morning, when the snow was coming down pretty heavily, Jack trotted along behind us.

"Go back, Jack," I shouted at him. "Go on home, old boy," but the dog kept trotting along behind us. I threw stones at him and tried everything I could think of, but he kept coming right along. Nothing we could do would persuade him to go back. We knew we'd be late if we didn't hurry, so we went on to school. As we entered the building, Freddy shouted to the dog:

"You wait here till we come out, Jack!"

I asked my teacher if I could bring Jack in, and she gave consent if I would promise to keep him quiet. I hurried out to find him, but Jack had disappeared.

WHEN we got home that night, Mother asked:

"Where's Jack? I haven't seen him all day."

"He followed us to school this morning, Mamma," I explained, "but when I came out to get him, he was gone."

"Well, I suppose that saves your father the trouble of getting rid of him," she said. "Take off your coats and hang them up to dry. You're all wet from the snow."

No one had much to say at the supper table that night. Even Dad was pretty quiet, and he went to the window several times to look out before we went to bed.

Two dejected little boys prayed fervently for the safe-keeping of a lost dog that night. We rolled and tossed all night long, wondering where our pet might be.

That was the last we saw of Jack until about a month later. One of the neighbors said:

"You know, I think I saw your dog this morning over at the Whittier school. He was outside watching the children as they came out. I stopped the car and turned around, but by the time I went back to look for him, he was gone."

Mother replied that Jack was probably making the rounds of the schools looking for us. We kept searching and hoping, renewed by the news that Jack was still alive. But we didn't have much time to hunt for him, as I was practicing every night for a school play. The night of the play's performance we almost found Jack again.

During the second act, there was a lot of commotion near the back of the auditorium, and several ushers ran up and down the aisles. It was pretty hard for us to enact the scene with all that commotion going on in the auditorium.

On the way home, I asked Mom what the noise was, and she laughed.

"I think it was your old friend," she replied.

"What do you mean, Mom?" I questioned.

"Why a dog got in during the play and made a bee-line for the stage when the ushers caught him. I looked around to see four of them dragging him up the aisle, and it looked for all the world like Jack."

"But let's go back and look for him," I cried.

"Your father and I did look for him, son, as soon as the play was over," said Mother as the car turned in the driveway at home. "But we couldn't find him anywhere. I guess we're just not supposed to have him back anymore."

But two days later, just as suddenly as he had gone, Jack came home! Freddy was out shoveling snow off the sidewalk, and Jack came bounding up the street just like he'd never been away from home. Everyone welcomed him back, and even Dad didn't say a word.

But our pleasure in our dog didn't last long. About a month later, Jack was lying on the front porch. Teddy Long, a tot about two who lived across the street from us, was playing on the sidewalk in front of his house. He toddled toward the curb, and was climbing down into the street when Jack leaped to the center of the street, barking furiously at the youngster. Just then a car came around the corner, and struck Jack. Jack wasn't dead, but nearly all his ribs were broken.

Dad sat up with him through two long nights, feeding him and nursing him, but old Jack just couldn't make it.

Our only consolation was that Jack had undoubtedly sacrificed his life to save little Teddy; for the car could have struck the youngster just as easily. But this was a logic difficult for youngsters to understand. Freddy cried as though his heart would break, and I guess I was pretty tearful myself.

After waiting so long to get our dog back, it was pretty tough, having to lose him so soon. Things were so glum around the house that Mother decided we ought to have a party to cheer things up. But it was no use . . . nothing could take the place of our lost dog. Even when spring came and Dad took us on a fishing trip, something was missing.

We were sitting on the porch one afternoon waiting for Dad to come home for supper. Freddy sighed and said:

"Poor old Jack."

Mother asked, "Boys, you're surely not moaning about that dog yet, are you?"

Just then Dad swung the car into the driveway. From along side the house, we heard him honk the horn. Freddy ran to see what he wanted. Suddenly, he burst around the corner of the house, carrying a squirming puppy in his arms and shouting:

"Hey, Mom, look what Daddy brought home. He's our new dog, Mom . . . and you know what his name is, Mom? His name is Jack!"

Mom looked at Dad and smiled, and I thought I saw just the least sign of a tear in the corner of Dad's eye, as the new puppy kissed Freddy on the nose.

But keeping Jack out of trouble was like trying to keep water from flowing downhill.

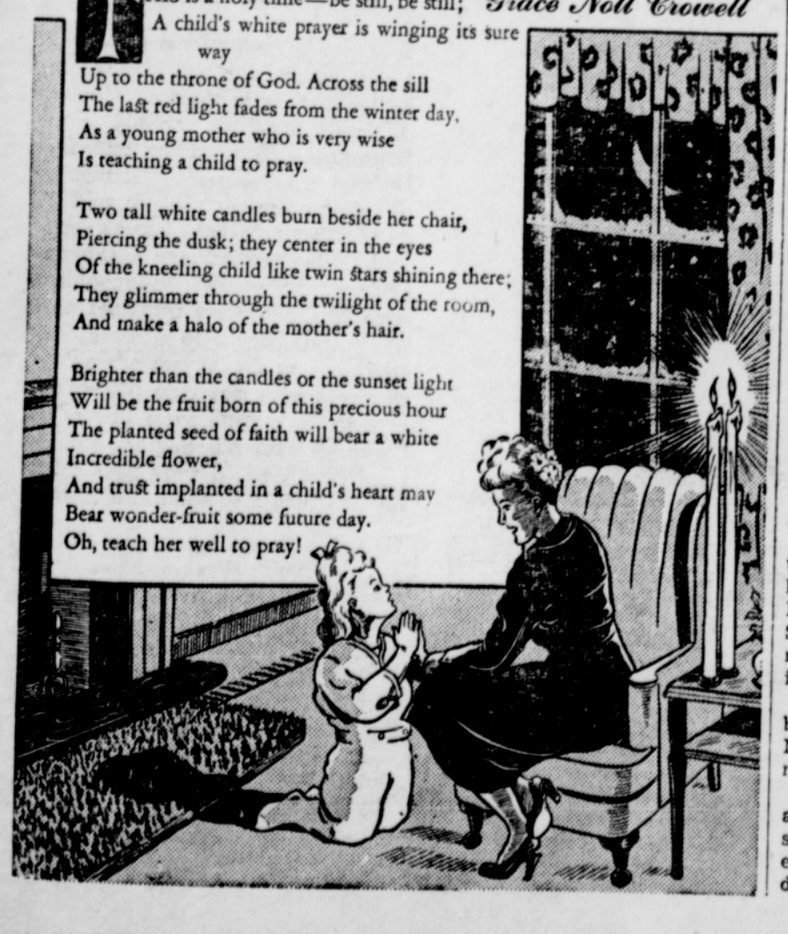
Evening Prayer

Grace Noll Crowell

THIS is a holy time—be still, be still;
A child's white prayer is winging its sure way
Up to the throne of God. Across the sill
The last red light fades from the winter day,
As a young mother who is very wise
Is teaching a child to pray.

Two tall white candles burn beside her chair,
Piercing the dusk; they center in the eyes
Of the kneeling child like twin stars shining there;
They glimmer through the twilight of the room,
And make a halo of the mother's hair.

Brighter than the candles or the sunset light
Will be the fruit born of this precious hour
The planted seed of faith will bear a white
Incredible flower,
And trust implanted in a child's heart may
Bear wonder-fruit some future day.
Oh, teach her well to pray!



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★★★★★★★★★★★★

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U. S. fish and wildlife service says that all species of deer increased from six and one-half million to over eight million animals between 1943 and 1946.

Low Work Tables

It takes four and one-half times the energy required to work at a table too low as at one of correct height.

Popularity of 'Notions'

Sewing notions, from skit facings to buttons, are enjoying the biggest volume in the history of the variety business.

Paint Protects Baby Trout

Hatching troughs for trout usually are painted blue-green to protect the baby rainbow trout, which are very delicate, from sunburn.

Pie a La Mode

Customer: "What kind of pie is this. Apple?"

Waitress: "How does it taste?"

"Like glue."

"Then it's peach. The apple tastes like putty."

Well Pressed Man

"I'll have to have a raise, sir," said the bookkeeper. "There are three companies after me."

"What three?" asked the boss.

"Light, telephone and water," was the reply.

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FOR SALE OR LEASE
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NEW MODERNISTIC motel and trailer park, about 2 acres. Trade for farm or city home. 1 mi. south of Junction City, Or., hiway 99. **Pacific Trail Court.**

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17 UNIT MOTOR COURT, TRAILER PARK and store. Owners must devote full time to other business. Extra good income. For quick sale, $30,000.00; half cash. Full information, write **Box 736, Mountain Home, Idaho.**

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To Promote Sleep

Homes should be chosen, whenever possible, for the quietness of their location. If they must be built on a busy street, bedrooms should be placed as far away from the street as possible. Only by constant attention to the causes of noise and their elimination will Americans be able to escape the enervating effects of this ailment of modern civilization.

Terminal Island

Six-mile long Terminal Island, center of the region's big fishing and canning industry, lies two-thirds in Los Angeles and one-third in Long Beach. It is a largely man-made unit in the great artificial Los Angeles-Long Beach harbor with its shipbuilding plants, Navy Pacific fleet base, and piers used by 200 steamship lines.

Test Switchboard Lamps

One electrical manufacturing plant alone produces and checks daily more than 26,000 tiny lamps for telephone switchboards. Samples are placed on life test boards, and many have been burning since January, 1944.

Killed in Homes

More farm residents are accidentally killed in their homes than in any other place.

Sleepy Ground Squirrels

Some species of ground squirrels in the West go into a summer sleep called "estivation" during the hot dry period of summer. They also hibernate during the winter, spending only two to four months above ground during the year.

Beginning of U. S. Pottery

First potteries were established in the American colonies early in the 17th century. Modeled on the ageless potter's wheel, this 75 million dollar industry now employs nearly 50,000 people.

Food Value of Potatoes

Potatoes provide more food energy for the money than any other vegetable. A daily serving of potatoes can provide as much as one-fourth of the vitamin C quota.

Flourine Reduces Decay

Tooth decay may be reduced 50 to 60 per cent for a whole community simply by adding a small amount of fluorine to the city water supply, reports Dr. Robert O'Neill of the New York State department of health.

"Fluorine will not completely stop tooth decay, but it will reduce it," Dr. O'Neill declares. "It is particularly effective for children, and may greatly improve general dental health."