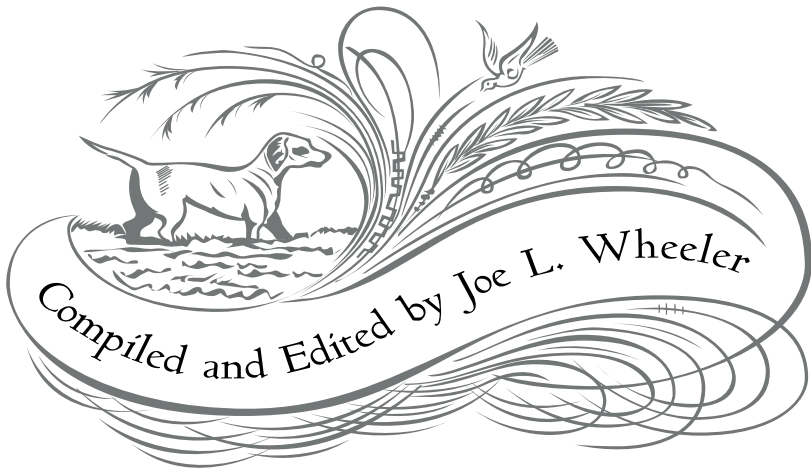


Owney, the Post Office Dog
and other great dog stories



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Introduction: Only the Dog

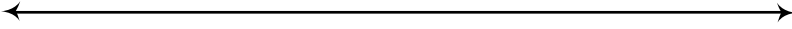


Joseph Leininger Wheeler
(with Albert Payson Terhune)

Just think about it: Down through recorded history, which species, of all species of wildlife, has always remained inseparable from the human? Not the horse; it roams free when it has the chance. Not cows, goats, chickens, or sheep—none of them *live* with us. Not even the cat. Even though millions of them have lived with humans for thousands of years, always the cat has done so on its own terms, continuing to maintain its independence. That leaves only the dog to have unreservedly cast its lot with men, women, and children. To a cat, we may represent a part of its life; to a dog, we represent *all* of its life.

In literature, the first starring role for a dog was in the Hindu *Mahabharata*. In it, King Yudisthira is granted entry into heaven, but not his faithful dog. With tears in his eyes, the king begs, “This hound has eaten with me, starved with me, suffered with me, loved me! Must I desert him now?” And has it not been true for all societies, all peoples, that their dogs have eaten with them, starved with them, suffered with them, and loved them?

The dog is the only nonhuman species that unreservedly accepts us as we are. To a dog, we can do no wrong. All our friends may desert us—but never our dog. Its love is unconditional. Even when we mistreat it, it just looks at us through wounded eyes, unable to understand how its beloved master could reward its love and devotion with cruelty.



The ways of a dog

No American has ever lived who more totally espoused the dog, both as a species and a friend, than did Albert Payson Terhune (1872–1942), author of *Lad* and so many other books and stories about dogs and their relationships with us. One of the most informative and insightful dog-related articles I've ever come across is his "The Ways of a Dog" (*Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1919). Here are some of his conclusions:

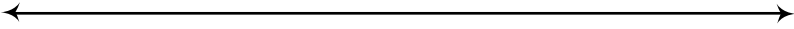
"At four hundred yards, no dog can tell, by sight, his master from a stranger. That is why a dog first makes use of his miraculous sense of smell, next of his keen powers of hearing, and never of his eyesight until he has no further need of these two stronger senses. . . . When nature gives any creature two such potent senses as are the scent and hearing of a dog, she always restores the average by dulling some other sense. . . ."

Should a dog walk into a room—"even if it has been aired of all odors discernible to man,—he will know at once whether or not any of its occupants during the past few hours are acquaintances of his, where each stood or sat, and the route taken by them in entering or departing.

"In a wood or a field or along a country road there are a million smells no human can detect, but which have distinct meaning for a dog. . . . But this superhuman sense of smell may be as painful as it is advantageous. To blow a whiff of tobacco smoke into the face of a fellow man causes a momentary annoyance. To blow it into the face of a dog causes acute pain. The nostrils are tortured."

As to why dogs howl when hearing certain notes, Terhune debunks the common perception that the dog is "singing along" with it. "He is not. He is in anguish. Canine hearing is so many times more acute than is that of man that a high-pitched note has the same effect on the tympanum as would the point of a cambric needle. . . . He is not singing. He is screaming in agony."

So how much does a dog understand of what we say? "This same uncanny sense of hearing tells him of the faintest change in his master's mood. A shade of tone, which would escape a human, is not only audible



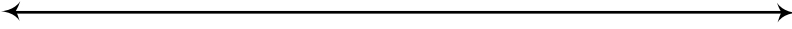
but translatable to a dog.” And no, he does not understand everything said to him. “At best, he understands barely one-tenth of it. But he does understand the way they say it.

“No courtier ever hung upon his sovereign’s humors with half the zest that the right kind of dog lavishes on those of his master. And it is by this sense of hearing that he catches the nature of these varying moods. True, he scans and reads the face too. But the bulk of his mind reading is done by ear.”

A dog’s sense of hearing is so acute he can hear and sense our coming over a mile away. During the horse and buggy days, dogs quickly learned to differentiate between the sounds made by the different horses that pulled the carriages or wagons. “Then came the era of automobiles. Across the same bridge whizzed innumerable cars every day. In an incredibly short time my two dogs had learned to recognize the hum of our car’s motor, and to differentiate it from any or all others.”

Terhune wondered whether or not dogs have auricular powers we cannot even sense (in a key too high or too low for us to hear). He notes that his collie, Sunnybank Lad, was for years undisputed king of all his other dogs. “Then ‘Lad’ grew old, *very* old. Yet his domination did not weaken. But when he was nearly sixteen years of age he became deaf. Not stone deaf, but hard of hearing. From that moment his rulership over the other dogs ended.”

As for barks, Terhune maintains, “To a student of such matters, a bark can express every shade of emotion from joy to terror. There is the challenging bark of a watchdog. There is the gayly trumpeting bark of a dog who sees his master after a long absence or who is about to be taken for a walk. There is the harrowing bark of the pup that meets a tortoise in mid-path for the first time, and there is the scared bark of the same pup when the turtle hisses at him.” Interestingly enough, “no untamed branch of the dog family has a bark.” The yap of the jackal and the yelp of the coyote bear no true resemblance. “The dog has his bark as an added attraction. It takes the place of no other animal sound. He has, in



addition, all the vocal accompaniments of the wolf or the fox or any of the canine or semi-canine races.

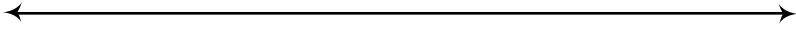
“Scientific experiments in acoustics have proved that the bark of a dog has greater carrying power than has the voice of any other known animal. It is the last sound that an ascending balloonist hears after all other earth noises have died away.”

Terhune also commented on the dog’s marvelous sense of direction. “Many is the story of their somehow being able to find their way home across the miles. Some hundreds, some thousands. Terhune remembered a dog of his that he sold to a man who lived some distance away. Every time the dog was unchained, it found its way home. Finally, the buyer kept her tied up for two years. Then, in an unguarded moment, the dog got away and came “home” again.

Terhune also points out that a dog has only one set of weapons with which to defend itself: its teeth. “All other beasts have jaws and feet, five efficient sets of weapons, for the fending off of their foes. Man can kick or hit or bite. The cat can use her claws as well as her teeth to furious effect. And so on through the animal kingdom. The dog has his teeth alone to make him formidable. Muzzle him, and you turn him straightway into the most defenseless creature alive. A month-old kitten can out-battle him.”

And if you muzzle your dog, you also “interfere with his free breathing, you cramp his sensitive mouth and lock his forty-two teeth, you mar his needful power of scent, you blur his already poor eyesight, and, worst of all, you prevent him from perspiring. A dog perspires through his tongue. That is why he pants; not because he is out of breath: it is his one means of perspiring.”

As for a dog’s memory, Terhune maintains that it is phenomenal and that it is directly tied to his sense of smell. “It is by scent rather than sight that your pup knows you and remembers you. It is by scent, too, that he remembers the few people he has reason to hate. . . . This memory trait is as potent for good as for ill. Not only a returning master after a long absence, but any former friend of the house whom the dog has once



accepted as a pal, can be certain of a fervid welcome. With a dog, once a friend means always a friend.”

Implicit obedience, Terhune submits, is the keynote to all else a dog may be taught. But never call a dog in order to punish him, or he will cease to come when called. It is hardly ever necessary to use force in seeking compliance.

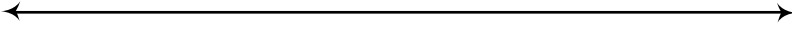
As for children, “dogs know instinctively, as a rule, who is fond of them and who is not; who fears them and who doesn’t. Perhaps that may account for the abject devotion of most dogs for children, that and the knowledge of the babies’ helplessness.”

Terhune also addressed something I’ve always wondered about: Why do dogs like to go driving so much? “Nine dogs out of ten, after a single motor ride, are eager for another. Let them ride thus a few times, and the instinct is established. They love to motor. When, for some reason, they are left at home they are crestfallen and miserable. It is one of their chief joys to sit on the bumping seat of an automobile and be whizzed through the country at top speed. On such rides they do not tire and go to sleep. They survey the landscape with thrilled interest.”

Terhune also pointed out that to a dog all humans are gods—and they remain so unless they prove unworthy of respect. Interestingly enough, Terhune declares that, in intellect, all dogs are roughly equivalent to two-year-old children, thus one’s training methods ought to reflect that.

As to why dogs normally hate cats, Terhune suggests that it is because the dog realizes that the cat is not a domesticated animal. Furthermore, “still unconquered, loyal only to herself and scorning work or service, the cat chooses the warmest corner of the hearth and has proceeded to annex all the benefits of civilization without paying any of its penalties or taxes.”

Terhune concludes by stating that the crowded city is no place for a dog, be he big or little. “If he is big, then city life is a torment to him and cuts down his already too brief span of life. A cross country romp of five minutes will give him more exercise and general benefit than will two



hours of sedate walking on the end of a leash along a city street. . . . He is as bad for the city as is the city for him.

“A child who is never allowed to run or romp or play soon shows the results of such abstinence. A city-pent dog will show these results even sooner. For by nature he is still a wild beast. His love for man has domesticated him. But the strain of the wild is still there. That is why, for one thing, he turns around several times before lying down. Thus did his savage ancestors crush the stiff jungle grasses into a couch and scare therefrom any lurking snake or centipede.

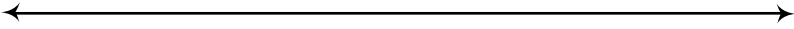
“It is the throw back to the wild that makes him a watchdog. No other tame animal will give the alarm at the approach of a possible enemy. It is the wild strain in him that makes your watchdog bristle up his back and bark when he hears a strange step on your threshold. It is his loyalty which makes you and not himself the beneficiary of that instinct. It is you and your home he is defending at such times, not his own safety. He is in no personal danger from marauders, and he knows it. Otherwise he would attack or run away, not bark an alarm to warn his human god.

“And sometimes—oh, what fools we are!—if we are cross or nervous, we scold or kick a dog for his splendid protection of us. Honestly, would any human do his duty so gallantly with such scant understanding or encouragement from his master?”

The little black dog

Long ago, when I was but a child, my mother used to recite a poem titled “The Little Black Dog.” I have no idea who is the author of these lines, but somehow, even after all these years, I have been able to find nothing else of comparable power—nothing else that comes so close to encapsulating the essence of a dog, and its willingness to give its all for its master:

*I wonder if Christ had a little black dog
All curly and wooly like mine,
With two silky ears and a nose round and wet,
And two eyes brown and tender that shine.*



*I am sure if He had, that that little black dog
Knew right from the first He was God.
He needed no proof that Christ was divine
But just worshiped the ground that He trod.*

*I am sure that He hadn't, because I have read
How He prayed in the garden alone,
For all of His friends and disciples had fled,
Even Peter—the one called a stone.*

*And oh, I am sure that black little dog
With a heart so tender and warm,
Would never have left Him to struggle alone,
But creeping right under His arm,*

*Would have licked the dear fingers in agony clasped,
And counting all favors but loss,
When they took Him away, would have trotted behind
And followed Him right to the cross.*

C O D A

I look forward to hearing from you! I always welcome the stories, responses, and suggestions that are sent from our readers. I am putting together collections centered on other genres as well. You may reach me by writing to

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Owney, the Post Office Dog



Joseph Leininger Wheeler

Strange, isn't it, how some stories just dig in their heels and refuse to die. Think of dogs, and what comes to mind? Eric Knight's Lassie, Jack London's Buck and White Fang—but those dogs never really existed, except in the pages of fiction. What about real dogs? The ones that stand out in memory are that great St. Bernard of the Alps, Barry; that faithful little Skye terrier, Bobby, who for over twelve years refused to leave his master's grave in Edinburgh's Old Greyfriars Churchyard—and Owney. Owney, who for almost one hundred and twenty years now, has remained part of the very fiber of the American story.

He was immortalized in the pages of that greatest of all children's magazines, *St. Nicholas*. The editors first ran a story on him in March of 1894—M. I. Ingersoll's "Owney, of the Mail Bags." The editors received so much reader feedback that a year later, in December of 1895, they published a follow-up story, Helen E. Greig's "Owney, the Post-Office Dog." But even that wasn't enough: in July of 1896, they ran a special by Charles Frederick Holder titled "Owney's Trip Around the World" (only twenty-four years after the first appearance of Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*). These three accounts constitute the core of what we know about Owney. I am also indebted to Frank Morgan's "The Story of Owney the Dog Revisited" (*Fort Lauderdale's Hi Riser*, December 18, 2003). Some of our readers may have seen the Owney exhibit at the National Postal Museum in Washington, D. C.

* * * * *



It all started in the Albany, New York, post office, one bitterly cold autumn day in 1888. A little puppy, tired, homeless, hungry, and shivering, sneaked into the building when a customer opened the door. Everyone being busy, no one noticed him. That gave him the courage to keep going and to slip through another momentarily opened door. In one corner of that room was a big pile of leather mailbags. Among these, the little dog found a place to curl up and promptly went to sleep.

Next morning, the postal clerks found him there when they went in for the mailbags. According to Ingersoll, "He could not tell them where he came from; but the wag of his little tail and the pleading look in his brown eyes said plainly, 'Please let me stay!' and they did."

That noon one of the post-office clerks brought some soup for the puppy in a bottle from his own dinner, and the next day another kindhearted man treated him to a piece of steak.

Days went by, and nobody came to claim him. Neither did he wander away from his new quarters. He liked his new home, whatever his previous one had been, and meant to stay there. As one person and another came in and saw him, they would say:

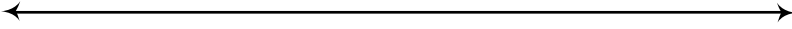
"Whose dog is that?"

And then the postal clerks would reply, giving him a playful pat:

"Owney! Owney! who is your owner?"

After a time everybody called him "Owney."

Under good treatment Owney grew very fast and soon became a wise and intelligent little terrier. From the first night that he had slept on the mailbags he had seemed very fond of them. He often wondered, in his dog way, where the bags went to when they were tossed onto the wagons and carried off. One day he made up his mind he would go with them and see. So when the driver jumped on his high seat and drove off, Owney trotted on behind. He saw the bags flung into the railway car, and when a good chance came, he went in after them. Nobody saw him; nobody missed him. But Owney and the mailbags were old friends, and he was not afraid to go where they went. By and by, when the men began



to sort the bags, they found Owney just as he had been found that first day in the office, asleep among them. They were men who knew who Owney was and where he came from, and they took care of him and brought him back on their return trip.

But Owney had learned the secret of the mailbags. Neither did he dislike the steady jogging of the train and the attention which he received. Soon after he took another trip. This time he was gone for several weeks, and his friends at Albany thought they had seen the last of him. But one morning, in he walked, looking a little thinner, a little more ragged, but very wise and happy. Though glad to be at home again, he had evidently enjoyed his trip very much. Where he had been, of course, was only conjecture, but the men at the post office thought it must have been a long distance away. His friends, afraid that he might go upon another journey and perhaps be lost, took up a subscription and bought him a collar. This collar was marked . . .

*“Owney,”
Albany Post-Office,
Albany, N. Y.*

To this collar was fastened a card asking the railroad postal clerks to fasten tags to him showing where he had been, if they should encounter him traveling about.

It was not a great while after this that Owney was gone again. His way of traveling was to jump aboard the first mail car he met, and when that car reached its destination and was emptied, he would take any other that was standing in the station ready to leave. If he ever got tired and wanted to go home nobody knew it, and since Owney could not ask directions as to the way back, the only thing for him to do was to keep on going.

He went to all kinds of places and met all kinds of dogs. Some days a generous postal clerk would give him a good dinner; the next day he would have none, but it was all the same to Owney so long as he had excitement and a change of scenery.



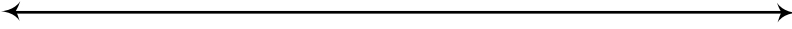
He went to Chicago, Cincinnati, and St. Louis, and the clerks attached checks to his collar. Then he went on through Salt Lake City to California, and from there to Mexico. In Mexico, someone hung a Mexican dollar on his neck. From there, Owney came up through the South, finally reaching Washington. His collar was hanging full of tags and checks, and poor Owney was weary of the heavy load about his neck. Postmaster General Wanamaker saw him and took pity on him. He took him out one day and had a harness made for him; then he took the badges from his collar and fastened them to his harness, as you see in the picture. . . .

Owney did not tarry long in Washington, but was soon off again with his new harness. The farther he went, the more checks he had to carry, and the heavier grew his load. At last the attachments alone weighed over two pounds, and poor Owney grew tired of carrying the dangling things about with him.

A Boston postal clerk saw him and took pity on him as Mr. Wanamaker had done; he carried him home to his house, and wrote a letter to the postmaster at Albany, telling him of the dog's difficulties. Word came back to take off the harness just as it was and forward it to Albany. This was done, and the harness with its attachments could be seen for years in the post-office building there, preserved in a glass case with Owney's picture.

Once in his travels Owney reached Montreal, and, happening to follow the mailbags to the post office, he was taken possession of and locked up. A letter was sent to Albany telling the officials there of his whereabouts. A reply came to let him go and he would take care of himself. This the Canadian postmaster refused to do till the cost of feeding and keeping Owney was paid. In all, the bill amounted to two dollars and fifty cents. A collection was called for among his old friends, the money forwarded, and Owney released.

As the years passed, it seemed that every postal worker in America either had met Owney or had heard about him. Ingersoll described him as "a cross between an Irish and a Scotch terrier. His fur is short and curly. He



has beautiful, intelligent brown eyes, but somewhere in his wanderings has lost the sight of the right one, probably from a hot cinder.”

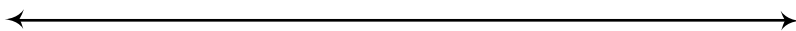
Though Ingersoll had often heard about Owney’s exploits, it was not until the summer of 1893 that he actually became acquainted with him (on a camping trip): “One of our party was a postal clerk, and on the day he started for our camp Owney appeared in the postal car. My friend managed to lure the dog to our camping ground. Owney seemed pleased at first with the broad fields and enjoyed now and then a dip in the sea. But two days and two nights were enough for him. On the morning of the second day he disappeared. At half-past six in the morning Owney was still in our camp, but at half-past eight he was reported in the Old Colony Station in Boston. He must have caught the first boat for the city, and made straight for the railway station.”

Ingersoll concluded his account with these words: “Where he is now, I don’t know. And if I knew *today*, he might be half way to California a few days later. His home is with the mailbags, and nothing would induce him to ride in a passenger car.”

By 1895, Helen Greig noted that Owney “has traveled from Alaska to Texas, from Nova Scotia to Florida, from Pennsylvania to Missouri—making side journeys and ‘stop overs’ as pleased him, either for rest or feeding. . . . No matter how far away he may travel, he is known as ‘Owney, the Albany Post-Office Dog.’

“ ‘How do you know when Owney has gone on a trip?’ I





asked the man who especially looks after Owney's interests.

" 'Why, when the cat comes in the office, we know that Owney is away,' he replied. 'And the dog is away from home so much, that the cat is seldom obliged to move out.'

" 'Tell me how he begins a journey. Does he know which is the postal car?'

" 'Know? Of course he does. He knows a postal car as well as any postal clerk. When the mail is sent to the station, Owney jumps on the wagon and stays there until the last bag is thrown into the car. If he feels like taking a journey, he then jumps aboard the car, barks goodbye, and away he goes. Once on the train, he is the guest of the clerks at the offices along the road.'

"He wears a fine silver collar, marked 'Owney, Albany P.O., Albany, N.Y.,' and with him is often forwarded a book in which is kept a record of places he visits; and a very interesting story the book tells.

"The first entry is 'New Westminster, British Columbia.' Then comes 'Seattle, Washington Territory.' Next, Owney was the guest of the post office at Portland, Oregon, after which he was to be found at Hardacre, Minnesota, under which name occur these lines:

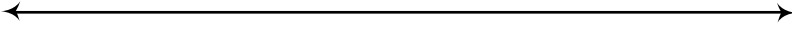
*On'y one Owney, And this is he;
The dog is aloney, So let him be.*

"While he was at Bozeman, Montana, and, I fancy, a little homesick, this letter was written for him to his good friends at Albany:

*Dear Folks: I arrived here last night safe and sound from Spokane.
I go to Helena, Montana tomorrow. I have twenty medals on my collar,
am fat, and feel well. I start east on the 4th. I will be glad to see you all.
Your friend, Owney.*

Detroit, Michigan, contributed this short bit of doggerel:

*Owney is a tramp, as you can plainly see.
Only treat him kindly, and take him 'long wid ye.*



Baltimore joined in with this:

*Once there was a dog that took it in his head
Never to stay at home, ever to roam instead.
You have him now: send him on ahead.*

“At Seattle, Owney was so well treated that he stayed a long time—for him. In fact, he jumped from the postal car and returned there for another good time. A blue ribbon was attached to his collar by an admiring friend.

“A letter from the Railway Clerks’ Association at Atlanta, Georgia, declares that,

Owney received an ovation here. After consenting to sit for his photograph and answering several questions, he was decorated with a medal bearing the inscription, ‘Compliments of the R. R. Club,’ and was carried by members to the postal car.

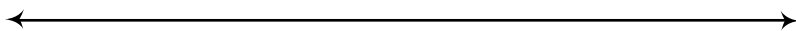
“Among Owney’s highest trophies is a duplicate of the seal of the Postmaster General. A tag made of California tin was given to him in San Francisco.

“Postal-clerks everywhere are loud in their praises of the dog. One of them writes:

Owney is excellent company. When we arrive at stations where the train stops ‘twenty minutes for refreshments,’ the dog walks into the station and barks for bones. When the bell rings ‘All aboard!’ he is the first one on the train.

He can tell the difference between a whistle for a crossing, and that for a station; while he ignores the first, he is up and ready when the station whistle blows. He takes his place on the platform, waits until the mail is thrown off, and then goes back to bed on the mail-bags.

“There was some talk of sending Owney to the World’s Fair at Chicago, with all his medals, and I am sure that, on his merits, he would have taken first prize.



“At a San Francisco kennel exhibition, Owney received a very handsome silver medal as the ‘Greatest Dog-Traveler in the World.’

“But the little dog is more than a mere curiosity. He is a faithful friend and companion. It is said that several times a sleepy and worn out postal clerk, who has fallen asleep, forgetful of the stations, has been wakened by Owney’s barking and has thus been reminded to throw off the mailbag.

“Owney has never been ‘held up’ by train-robbers, but he has been in more than one wreck.

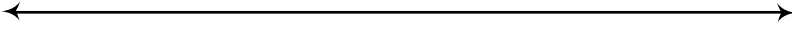
“You have heard of his wanderings—now you shall hear of his homecoming.

“When he reaches the Albany Post Office, he walks in with wagging tail, beaming with joy to be at home again. Going up to the good friend who looks after him, Owney rubs against him and licks his hands. Thus he bids all the clerks good-morning, wags his tail for a ‘how-d’ ye-do?’ and, returning to the spot he left months ago, Owney lies down and sleeps for hours. But after this first greeting there is no familiarity.

“While in Albany, Owney goes to a certain restaurant near the post office, and then carefully selects, from the food offered, just the bones he prefers. He arrives there every day at the same hour. If the restaurant fails to supply the food that Owney is seeking, he goes to a hotel across the street, where he is sure to find a meal.”

From Mr. George H. Leck, of Lawrence, Massachusetts, the photographer who took Owney’s picture, comes a letter to the editor of *St. Nicholas* telling how the famous dog behaved when he sat for his portrait. At first Owney ran about the studio and seemed anxious to find a way out, but when the dog saw that a mail pouch had been placed for him to sit upon, he at once lost his restlessness and made an excellent sitter. “I had no trouble in taking all the views I wanted, as long as he was on the pouch,” says the photographer.

Mr. Leck repeats a story that tells how the letter carriers of Lawrence, Massachusetts, kept Owney as an attraction for their picnic, which was to be held two weeks after Owney’s arrival. The dog was very interesting to



the visitors, but though his hosts treated him well, he became ugly before the end of his stay because he was kept from taking the trains.

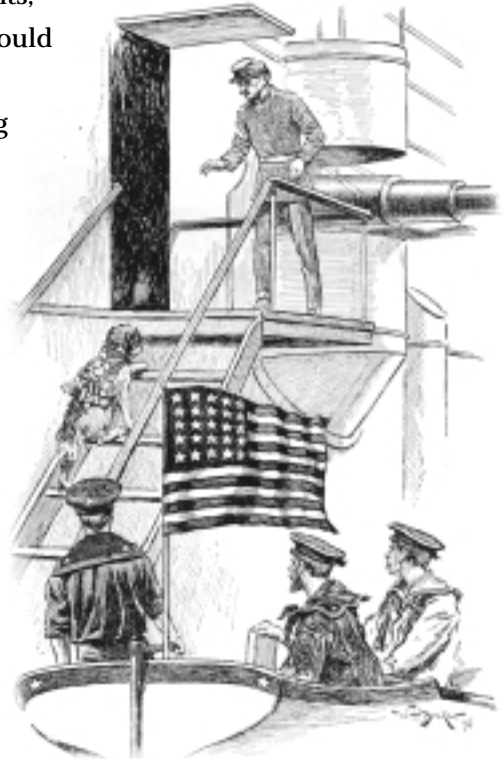
“Owney does not like to be interfered with, and ‘makes a fuss’ unless he is allowed to take the first train that leaves a station. Of course the dog doesn’t care where he goes, but the post office clerks like to send him where their friends will see him when he happens to get off the through lines.”

Mr. Leck relates also that before the Boston Union Station was built Owney would cross the city at midnight, or any other hour, and would take little trips for himself, returning just before train time.

When Owney’s picture was taken his tags were few—he had been unloaded. The dog’s collar is full, and his original harness is full. Owney values his collar and knows that it introduces him to strangers in the postal service. It is easily slipped off, and he allows it to be taken off and examined; but after he has given his friends a reasonable time to study the tags, checks, and other attachments, the dog shows very plainly that he would like to have the collar put on again.

Once while the clerks were looking over the recent tags a mail train arrived, and they put down the collar to go to work on the mail. But the dog was not willing to leave his collar, and, putting his nose through it, he slipped it on for himself. After the clerks had learned of this accomplishment they often used to make Owney exhibit his cleverness by repeating the performance before their friends.

Owney’s short but eventful life was now drawing to a close. But it would not be before he’d seen



more of the world. Charles Frederick Holder chronicled what happened next: “You remember that Owney has traveled over almost every postal route in North America, and that tags and medals, collected from his friends along the way and amounting to a bushel or more, are kept in the Post Office Department at Washington.

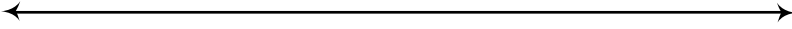
“In 1895 Owney visited Postmaster A. B. Case, of Tacoma, Washington, having just returned from a trip to Alaska, and one day it happened that Owney rode down to the wharf of the Asiatic steamer, when the great vessel was taking her cargo.

“Owney was evidently much impressed with the ship’s size and beauty and so plainly expressed a desire to go aboard that it was determined to send him on a flying trip around the world, and to let him break the record if possible. So, some few days later, on August 19, 1895, his friends said farewell to Owney, as he walked up the gangway of the good ship *Victoria* of the N.P.S.S. Co., and was welcomed by Captain Panton, whose guest he was to be. Owney had his credentials in a traveling bag, and he carried also his

blanket, brush, and comb, his medal-harness for full dress, and letters of introduction to the postal authorities of the world. As the steamer backed out from the dock, hundreds of people waved their hands and wished Owney a safe and prosperous voyage. So the trip began.

“Owney was soon the pet of the crew. After an uneventful voyage, he arrived at Yokohama on October 3. Here his baggage was examined, with no little curiosity, by the officials, as no dignitary had ever before entered Japan who owned so many decorations that he was





obliged to carry them about with him in a bag! It was concluded that Owney must be either a dog of very high rank or the property of a distinguished person, and an account of him was promptly forwarded for the information of his Imperial Majesty, the Mikado.

“A few days later an official waited upon Owney and presented him with a passport bearing the seal of the Mikado. It was addressed to the American ‘dog traveler,’ and in very flowery language extended to him the freedom of the interior of the country. There were some stipulations which, in all probability, Owney would have agreed to had he made the trip. Some were as follows: ‘The bearer is expressly cautioned to observe in every particular the directions of the Japanese government printed in Japanese characters on the back of the passport, an English translation of which is given herewith; and he is expected and required to conduct himself in an orderly and conciliatory manner toward the Japanese authorities and people.’ The passport also forbade Owney to ‘attend a fire on horseback,’ warned him not to write ‘on temples, shrines, or walls,’ and politely requested him not to ‘drive too fast on narrow roads.’

“Unfortunately, Owney had no time for side trips, and, after meeting many officials, he sailed from Yokohama, arriving at Kobi on October 9, where he received medals and a new passport from the emperor. He was at Maji, October 19, Shanghai, October 26, and Foochow, October 31, where also he received more medals and was the subject of an ovation. His fame had preceded him, and at the latter port he received an invitation to visit the U.S.S. *Detroit*, which was lying in the harbor. One day the marine at the gangway of this fine man-of-war was astonished to see a be-medaled shaggy dog come up the ladder, wagging his tail and showing all the delight that a patriotic American should at the sight of the Stars and Stripes in a foreign land. The marine almost laughed as Owney stepped aboard and ran up to the officer of the deck as though he had known him all his life.

“Owney dined in the mess-room, ate plum-duff before the mast, and—I could not begin to tell you of all the good things he enjoyed. When he reached Tacoma again he weighed several pounds more than



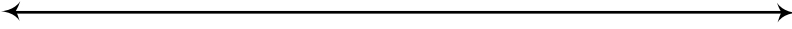
when he started, and I am confident that his trip with the boys in blue on the cruiser *Detroit* had something to do with it. When he bade his countrymen farewell, he was decorated with the ship's ribbon, and he received a letter of introduction to other officers of the Asiatic squadron from Lieutenant-Commander E. Floyd of the *Detroit*.

“From Foochow, the dog sailed to Hong Kong, where he was unfortunately delayed and prevented from making a speed record around the world. He visited the consulate, made a round of visits to the rich tea and silk merchants, and received many curious pieces of Chinese money, which were strung to his collar. From the emperor of China, Owney received a passport bearing the royal crest and dragon, permitting him to travel in the country. But Owney did not go beyond the city, and so much red tape was employed on his departure by the Peninsular and Oriental steamer that Captain Panton of the *Victoria* finally decided to take the dog traveler back to Kobi, Japan, from which port he finally sailed to New York as the guest of Captain Grant, of the steamer *Port Phillip*.

“Owney soon knew all on board, and, as on the *Victoria*, was a member of both starboard and port watches, and dined in the cabin and before the mast with equal satisfaction.

“At Singapore, Owney went ashore with an officer, to the wonderment of the natives, who, noting his decorations, concluded that he was a personage of high rank. Some of the native dogs, it is said, looked upon him with distrust, and more than once they rushed out from narrow alleys and pounced upon the Yankee dog; but it is not on record that Owney was ever defeated. On November 30, Owney sailed from Port Said, where he put to flight more native dogs. On the trip through the Suez Canal he attracted no little attention from the various vessels and from postal authorities. Many of the clerks gave Owney mementos.

“Finally, Algiers was reached, and the quaint shipping-port visited, where Turks, Nubians, and others looked upon Owney with amazement. They handled his decorations, and some, though perhaps they did not understand just why, fastened to his collar medals which were thus sent



to the American people. On December 13 Owney reached St. Michaels, the beautiful port of the Azores, spending a few hours there.

“The trip from the Azores across the Atlantic was a rough one; but there was no evidence to show that Owney did not thrive in all kinds of weather. Finally the lookout of the *Port Phillip* sighted land, and a few hours later Owney’s baggage was being examined by the custom house officers, who had never before seen so strange an assortment of trophies. But, having looked at his credentials, they decided that the collection of medals and tags, though representing a large amount of metal, was personal baggage, and so passed it.

“Like all distinguished persons, Owney was met by the reporters and ‘interviewed.’ From the bag of decorations and letters his story was probably obtained, and the news of his arrival telegraphed to Tacoma papers as follows:

Owney, the postal clerks’ dog, has arrived at quarantine from China, having completed the circuit of the globe. The steamer will dock today, and Captain Grant will take the dog to the post office and start him on his journey westward at once.

“As may be expected, this announcement created no little interest among the young people at Tacoma, and Owney was the hero of the hour.

“Owney arrived in New York on December 23, at noon. He was taken immediately to the post office, and after a short reception by his many friends, started again by the New York Central for Tacoma, which he reached five days later, having completed the circuit of the globe in 132 days—a rapid rate of traveling for a dog who attracted so much attention. Owney was visited by hundreds, young and old, and so universal was the demand to see him that Postmaster Case placed him on exhibition in a public hall, and people for miles around made his acquaintance.

“At the end of his trip, Owney had over two hundred tags, medals, and certificates to add to his collection. He is today, in all probability, the best-known and the most universally popular dog in the world.”

That trip around the world apparently satisfied Owney’s desire to



travel abroad: from that time on, he appeared content to stick to the American continent.

There is a controversy as to whether or not any train Owney was traveling on ever met with an accident: some say yes; some say no. But since postal train employees treated him as a good luck charm and even bribed him to ride on their routes, it seems evident that, generally speaking, it was good luck to have Owney aboard.

Periodically, the Albany mail clerks would remove some of his tags for safekeeping. No one knows just how many places Owney visited or how many miles he traveled. However, he collected over a thousand tags, badges, and medals from all over the world. If one counts only the fully documented trips, he still would have logged a minimum of 142,000 miles.

Frank Morgan declares that postal workers sadly realized, by late 1896 and early 1897, that Owney's age was finally catching up with him. "His diet was limited to soft foods and milk. To protect Owney from harm, mail clerks sent him back to his friends in Albany, where Owney died quietly on June 11, 1897. The Albany postal workers paid a taxidermist to preserve Owney's body.

And today, in exhibits, Owney is *still traveling!*

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