



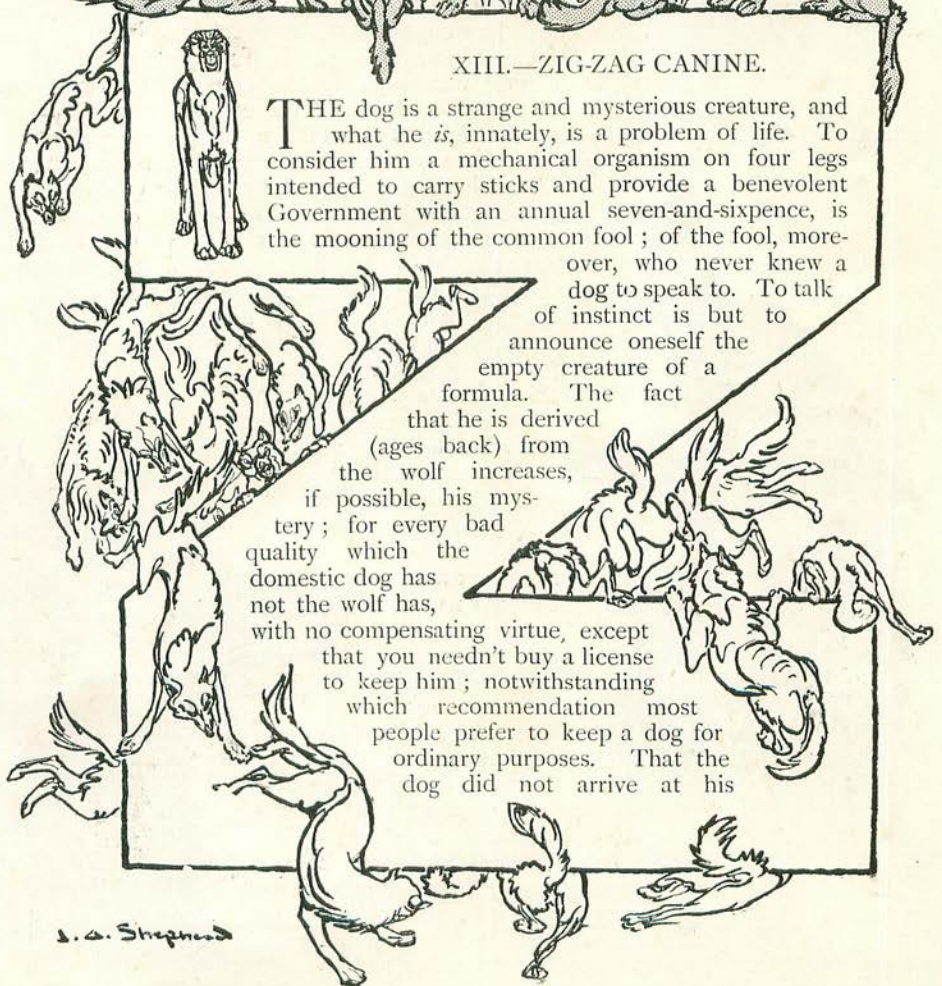
ARTHUR MORRISON
V.A. SHEPHERD

XIII.—ZIG-ZAG CANINE.

THE dog is a strange and mysterious creature, and what he *is*, innately, is a problem of life. To consider him a mechanical organism on four legs intended to carry sticks and provide a benevolent Government with an annual seven-and-sixpence, is the mooning of the common fool ; of the fool, more-

over, who never knew a dog to speak to. To talk of instinct is but to announce oneself the empty creature of a formula. The fact

that he is derived (ages back) from the wolf increases, if possible, his mystery ; for every bad quality which the domestic dog has not the wolf has, with no compensating virtue, except that you needn't buy a license to keep him ; notwithstanding which recommendation most people prefer to keep a dog for ordinary purposes. That the dog did not arrive at his



V.A. Shepherd



TOM.

tail looks amiable enough, but he conducts business with the opposite end, which is not so reassuring to look at—which, in fact, contradicts the tail flatly.



BOREDOM.

the cages, with a contemptuous air of never having seen you at all, and of being quite unaware that such a person as yourself was ever born. This treatment is very galling, coming as it does from a wolf whom even its proprietors are fain to label

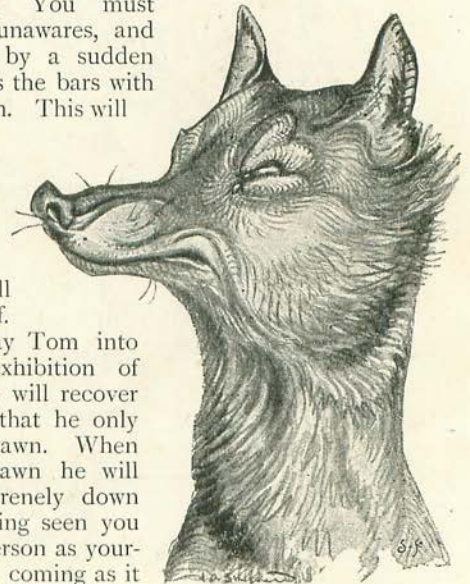
present moral state at any extremely remote age is evident from the popular fables and proverbs relating to him, for therein he always appears a mean, wolfish beast, and a fool to boot. As witness the Dog in the Manger, the Dog with a Shadow, the Dog with an Ill Name, and the rest of them. So that the reformation of the dog has come about in comparatively recent times, and it is a testimony to his innate worth that constant association with man since his conversion has not corrupted him.

Tom, the large grey wolf here at the Zoo, is, I am almost convinced, somewhat in a way of reformation himself. If he feels hungry, you may see him approach the bars and wag his tail; this on the off-chance of your having a bit of raw beef about you. But he can't smile with anything like cordiality; no wolf can. His tail looks amiable enough, but he conducts business with the opposite end, which is not so reassuring to look at—which, in fact, contradicts the tail flatly. As he stands thus, end on, you would scarcely guess the number of pounds of solid meat that Tom has put away within a couple of days. He has a lanky, thin, edge-forward sort of aspect, as though he were cut out of a deal board with a saw, and only intended to be looked at broadside on, like a piece of stage scenery. Tom won't show his teeth quite so readily as Coolie, the Indian wolf, next door. You cannot make a captive wolf show his teeth by the ordinary means of waving a hat or an arm—he disregards this sort of thing entirely. You must catch him unawares, and startle him by a sudden rush towards the bars with your head down. This will give you an undesirable appearance of mental derangement; but, properly executed, it will startle the wolf.

You will betray Tom into a temporary exhibition of ferocity, but he will recover instantly, and pretend that he only opened his mouth to yawn. When he has finished his yawn he will glance casually and serenely down



FEROCITY.



INDIFFERENCE.

“common”; but you shouldn’t have laid yourself open to it, to begin with. The gentleman who sent Tom here can handle him as much as he pleases, and treat him precisely as one would treat an ordinary house-dog, but Tom has a persuasive way of inducing other people not

to try the game on their own account—not to try it more than once, at any rate. He will recognise his old master joyfully after a year or two’s absence, but I have not

yet entered upon patting terms with Tom myself; because

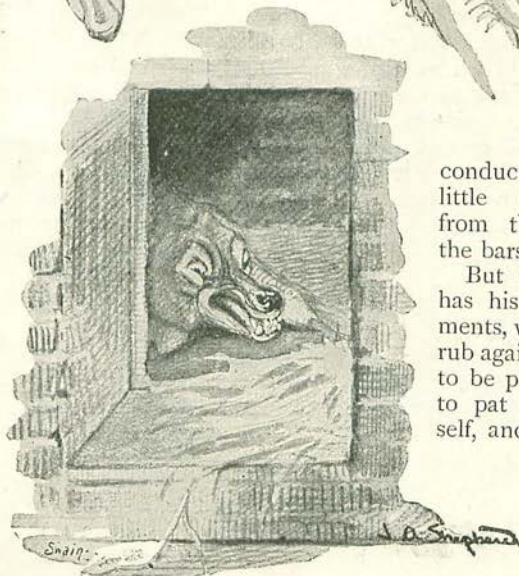
I know that lathy appearance of limb to be a deception and a snare. But, at least, Tom is half reformed, and if he lives another few hundred years will probably develop in the regular way into a dog.

Coolie, next door, is a ruffian, and makes no shame of it. He would like a piece out of you, and doesn’t care if you know it. If anything, he would prefer two pieces. Failing that, he would like a piece of Tom; or of North, the keeper; or



COOLIE WITHOUT.

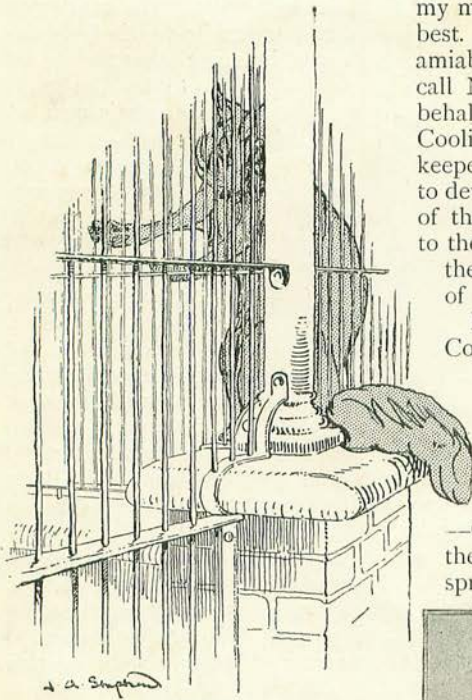
of Bob, the Eskimo dog; or of his own grandmother, if he could get it. There’s no weak sentiment about Coolie. The only thing that would dissuade him from eating a relation would be the event of the relation first eating him. I don’t altogether like Coolie; he is not the sort of chap that anybody would fall in love with at first sight. He won’t meet your eye so long as he is out in the cage. Try to fix him for a moment; try to annoy him, in fact. He will evade your eye in the shiftiest fashion, keeping you in sight, however, with the corner of his own, for fear of accidents. Presently, at the end of his patience, he will retreat into his lair and give you a straight look at last; one which will convince you at once of the multifarious advantages of



conducting these little experiments from this side of the bars.

But even Coolie has his softer moments, when he will rub against the bars to be patted. I like to pat Coolie myself, and I consider

COOLIE WITHIN.



CHARLIE.

of gymnastics, impossible to the other wolves, since they are too big. If you particularly want him to perform, for your amusement, he won't do this trick, small as it is; but when you are not looking he persists in it, by way of annoying the neighbours who can't perform it. Perhaps, after all, the Dog in the Manger wasn't a dog at all, but a prairie wolf. The man who called him a dog didn't examine him closely enough; few people stay long to examine a loose wolf. Like a dog as the prairie wolf is—and he tries his utmost to maintain this respectable appearance—his drooped tail, his snarling mouth, and his small eyes, expose the pretence. He is attempting his promotion in the wrong way—merely by imitating the uniform of the superior rank.

There can be no reasonable doubt that the wolf wants to be a dog if he can. He quite understands his rascally inferiority, but will never give up his social ambition, especially when so many visitors encourage his vanity, time after time, by mistaking him for a dog. There are times when such a mistake is natural—almost pardonable. On a hot day, for instance, a wolf, to cool his mouth, will muster up a most commodious smile—present an open countenance, in fact—strikingly like that of an amiable retriever out for a run. But the wolf is too sad a



GOOD OLD DOG!



GOOD WOLF OR BAD COLLIE?



EH!

my method of patting him to be in many respects the best. When I see Coolie against the bars and looking amiable (for Coolie), and I feel disposed to pat him, I call North, and authorize him to pat Coolie on my behalf. In this way I have become quite friendly with Coolie, who is as affable under my pats as if I were his keeper. I shall always pat Coolie like this; I am able to devote more attention to the general superintendence of the proceedings when I have an assistant to attend to the manual detail. Sometimes Sutton helps me pat the lions in the same way. It requires a little nerve, of course, but I am always perfectly cool.

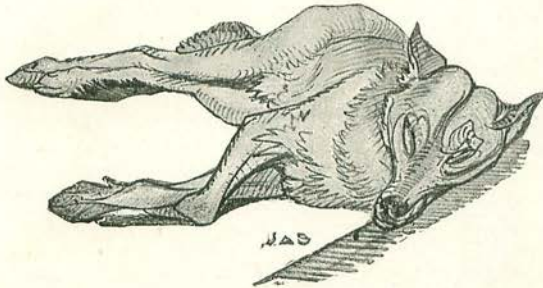
Bob, the Eskimo dog, lives in the next cage to Coolie, and in the next cage still there are a pair of prairie wolves, whose improvement on the common wolf lies only in externals. To look at, they seem a kind of collie, but with a finer model of head than any collie-breeder can produce. Except in appearance, they are far back in the blackest ages of wolfdom. One of them—Charlie—has an offensive habit of sitting up on the coping-pier from which the cage division-bars spring, because that is regarded as a sort of feat

blackguard to redeem himself by an occasional smile; nothing but orderly centuries of evolution will be of much use to him, and his present *parvenu* attempts to assume a position in life to which he was not born make him look worse than ever. He betrays himself—like a *parvenu*—by small and unconscious habits. Give a well-bred dog a biscuit, and he will munch it with gentlemanly relish and keep a polite welcome ready for another. A wolf, being always hungry enough to eat anything, will take it, but in an indifferent, perfunctory disdainful fashion, not vouchsafing the courtesy of concealing his



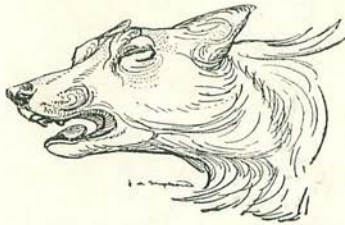
HONEST SLEEP.

contempt for your present; while animal food drives him to the opposite extreme. The wolf can't even sleep like a dog. Bob, the Eskimo (who is a gentleman among dogs, with low neighbours whose manners he despises), sleeps as an honest dog always does sleep; flung upon the ground with his legs, head, and tail spread about fearlessly, and his mind as conscious of rectitude as if he could tell you so in Latin. Tom or Coolie can't sleep like that. The wolf tries to hide



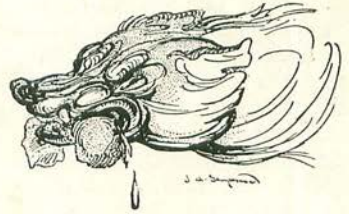
DISTRUST.

crimes, even in sleep, and can't trust his legs or his tail or anything else in sight. He hides his tail between his legs, and resorts to the most complicated and twisty devices for arranging his legs to hide each other. He gets underneath himself, covers himself over him, and tucks in the corners; and even then his sleep is restless. I don't think Red Riding Hood's grandmother has ever been properly digested.



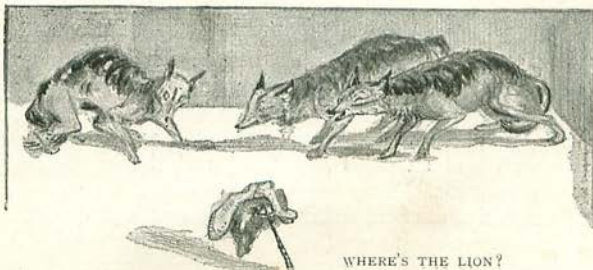
A MERE BISCUIT.

Bob, the Eskimo dog, is a fine fellow, as friendly as any dog you may name, except to wolves. He would be glad to visit the wolves next door, and take their machinery to pieces hastily with his



SOMETHING BETTER.

teeth, and the wolves so heartily reciprocate the sentiment that a sheet-iron memorial of the fact has been erected between the cages. There is another dog called Bob a little further along—the Dingo dog. He is a cunning-looking fellow, of more civilized condition than the wolves, but sharing with them their chief characteristic of eternal hunger. The Dingo dog is the only animal that can beat the cat's collection of nine lives; he is calculated to possess twenty-seven. If you give a wild Dingo a single bang on the head he will lie down

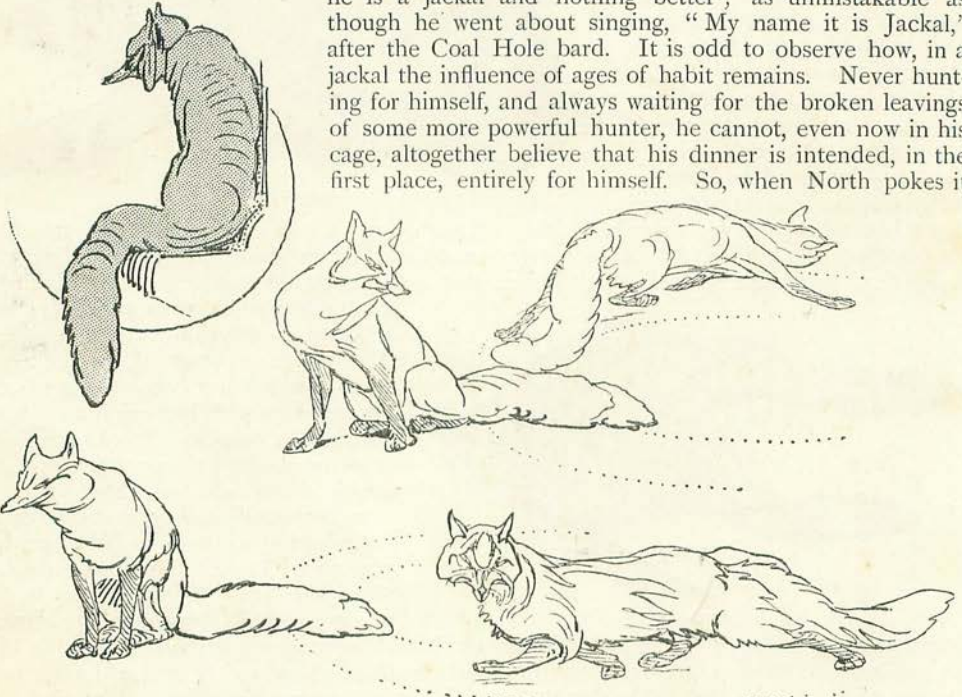


WHERE'S THE LION?

as if killed at once, shamming; lying doggo, in fact. But you may beat him out flat and dissect him, and as soon as your back is turned he will gather together his outlying fragments, blow himself into shape, and walk home. He doesn't mind a little accident of that sort.

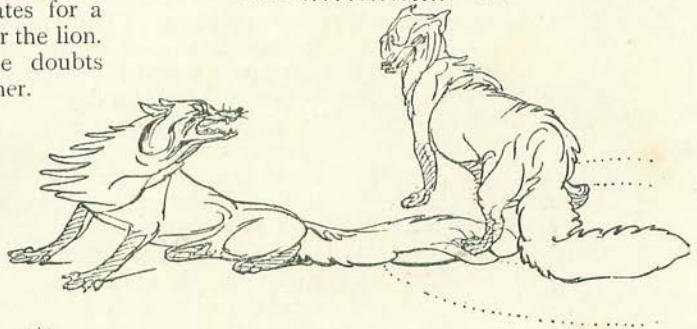
In this row of cages, too, are jackals — black-backed jackals,

ordinary jackals, and extraordinary jackals, as well as foxes. A jackal is recognisable at once—a mean-looking fox of the wrong colour. The prettiest jackal is the black-backed, but still he is a jackal and nothing better; as unmistakable as though he went about singing, "My name it is Jackal," after the Coal Hole bard. It is odd to observe how, in a jackal the influence of ages of habit remains. Never hunting for himself, and always waiting for the broken leavings of some more powerful hunter, he cannot, even now in his cage, altogether believe that his dinner is intended, in the first place, entirely for himself. So, when North pokes it



between the bars he hesitates for a moment, and looks round for the lion. It is sad life wherein one doubts ownership in one's own dinner.

A fox must be an unpleasant sort of person to live with, for other reasons beside the smell. A fox's conversation consists chiefly of snarls. Put two foxes together, and they will at once begin to



invent occasions for snarling at one another. They don't quarrel outright, probably from fear of the consequences. The favourite device of one of the Indian desert foxes here is of a Donnybrookian flavour. His mate has a way of amusing herself with a little circus—just trotting round the floor in a ring. He watches her at this amusement, and when a snarl seems desirable, he dismounts from his perch and lays his tail just across her track, and waits for her to trample on it; then he snarls and snaps at her face, and she snarls and snaps at his. This being accomplished, he returns, perfectly satisfied, to his roost, to rest and doze till his system requires refreshing with another snarl. A properly-executed, mutual snarl, almost approaching



THAT GOOSE IS SOUR.

a bite, will last him for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour.

These foxes—all of them—have a very irritating cause of bad temper to contend with in the existence of a fine pair of Chinese geese a few yards beyond the obstructive bars. The ordinary fox has arrived at a stoical attitude of indifference to the Chinese goose. He affects to believe that he is uneatable. The Chinese goose wears a black stripe behind his neck, rather suggestive of a pigtail; this the fox points out to his friends as evidence of uneatability, having learned the consolation from a relative who once had a fancy for grapes.

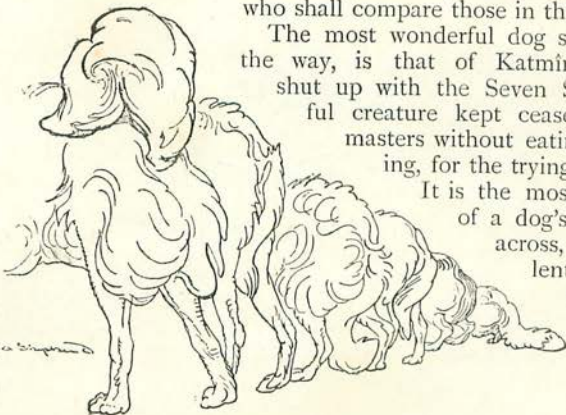
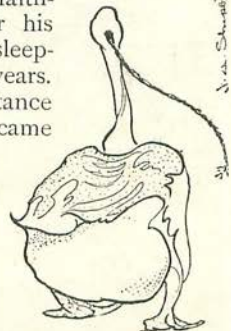
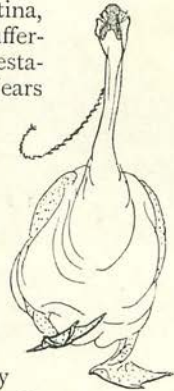
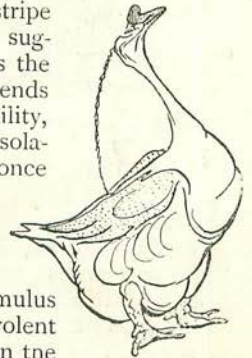
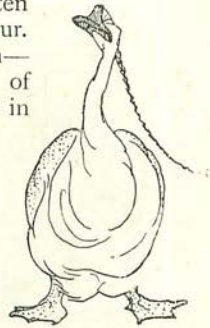
As for the wolf, the cause of man's hatred for him lies in the fact that a wolf nursed Romulus and Remus. If this malevolent

creature had left them as they were, they would have been drowned in the Tiber. Thus Romulus would never have built Rome, and there would have been no Cæsar, no Dr. Smith's Smaller Roman History, no Principia Latina, and untold misery would have been spared many generations of long-suffering schoolboys. No wonder that the wolf is held in horror and detestation by all nations, and is exterminated mercilessly wherever found. Years of bitter tears, bitter Cæsar, bitter Accidente, bitter Smith's Smaller, and bitterest swish have left their scar upon the human soul, and roused up an hereditary and traditional hatred of the beast, but for whose malignant interference All Gaul would never have been divided in Three Parts; a hatred only second in its wild intensity to that of the snake who beguiled Eve. Consequently the wolf for ever wears his tail between his legs, as does every member of the canine kind unbeloved by man, which, by-the-bye, is a noticeable thing in itself, but obvious to everybody who shall compare those in this row.

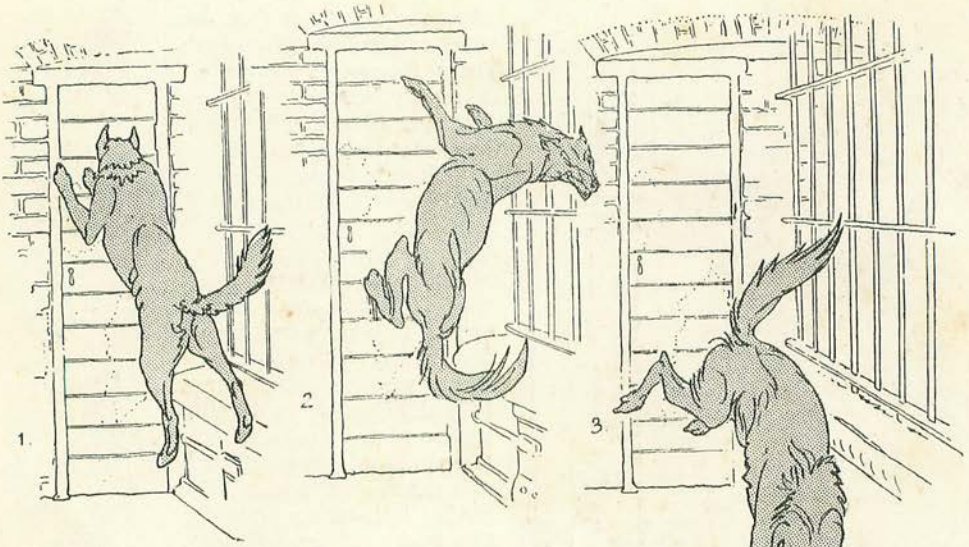
The most wonderful dog story on record, by the way, is that of Katmir, the dog who was shut up with the Seven Sleepers. This faithful creature kept ceaseless watch over his masters without eating, drinking, or sleeping, for the trying period of 309 years.

It is the most wonderful instance of a dog's fidelity I ever came across, and an excellent specimen of the dog story in several respects.

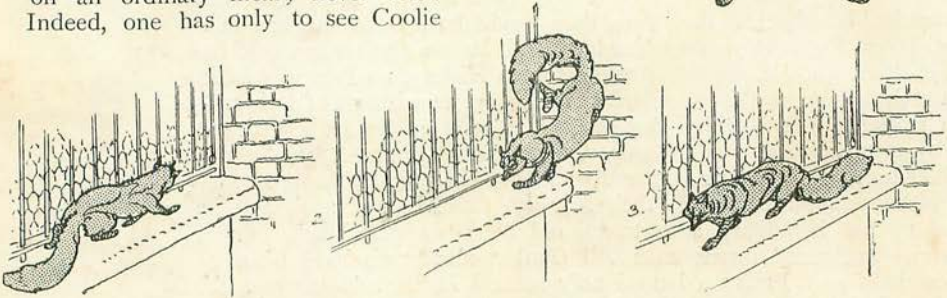
Speaking of facts, it is not generally



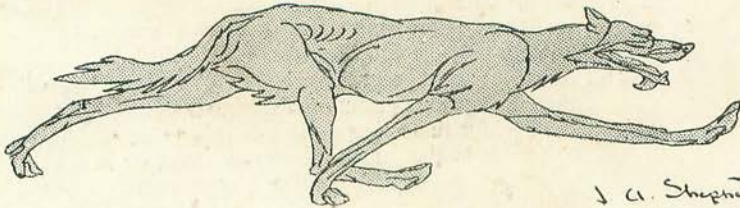
A STUDY IN TAILS.



known that some day a great wolf is to arise in the North (according to Scandinavian prophecy) and swallow the sun and moon. One is usually a little inclined to distrust this statement until he has seen a wolf at work on an ordinary meal; never after. Indeed, one has only to see Coolie



louping swiftly to and fro, and Tom bouncing against his back door when feeding-time approaches, to feel that it wouldn't be altogether safe to leave the moon loose hereabout with nobody to take care of it.



J. A. Shepherd