

Dog Stories from "The Spectator": Being Anecdotes of the Intelligence, Reasoning Power, Affection and Sympathy of Dogs, Selected from the Correspondence Columns of "The Spectator"

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Strachey's purpose, as given in his introduction, is to provide "no little entertainment for all who love dogs", and in this he surely succeeds.

There are unusual and compelling tales of thoughtful and coherent dogs, dogs who pass judgment, hospital dogs, package-carrying dogs, and purchasing dogs - that is, dogs which "understand the first principles of the science of exchange". We learn of dogs with an actual sense of humor, of dogs who befriend hens, rabbits, and pigeons, dogs that foretell death, and dogs that recognize themselves in the mirror. By the time we get to the end of the book we may agree with Strachey that "a single story of a clever dog may amuse, but... if we have half a dozen illustrating the same form of intelligence, the value of the evidence is enormously increased".

An added pleasure of the book is, of course, its age. This was a time when the correspondence columns of a general interest magazine were filled with letters written in formal, elegant, crafted prose. The sense of a forgotten time of good manners and civility could not be better expressed than in the strange and delightful Dog Stories from The Spectator.

(cover image courtesy of Jason Antony)



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