

CUFFEE

KEYWORD: Affection.

Billy wanted a dog. He had wanted a dog almost ever since he could remember wanting anything, and that was a long, long time; for little boys, and little girls, too, can remember things away back ever so far if they think real hard about them.

Well, the more Billy thought how nice it would be to own a dog, the more he wanted one. "Oh," said he, "if I only had a dog, I would be the happiest boy alive." And what kind of a dog do you suppose it was Billy wanted? A collie? An airedale? Both very fine dogs to be sure; but it was neither a collie, an airedale, a fox terrier, a greyhound, nor in fact any particular breed of dog that Billy wanted, but just a friendly, lovable playmate full of life and fun.

Finally, Father and Mother agreed that if a suitable dog could be found, Billy should have him. How delighted Billy was. He expected, of course, that he would find such a dog right away. But when week after week went by, he found it was not so easy, for in spite of all his inquiries he still had no dog. There were lots of dogs, but none whose owners wished to part with them. There was Uncle Bob's clever collie, for instance, but Billy knew it was no use asking for him because he was needed to bring in the cows at milking time. Then there was Auntie Maude's little poodle, but she wouldn't part with it.

But surely somewhere in the world there must be a dog that was meant for Billy, so instead of sitting down and crying, he just kept on making inquiries because he was really a wise little boy. Whenever he met a man, he was sure to ask, "Please, mister, can you tell me where to find a nice dog?"

The man would often talk with him for a little while till he found out what sort of a dog he wanted, and then he would say, "No, my little lad, but if I hear of any one who has a nice pup to give away I'll let you know."

He meant it, too, because he remembered that when he was a boy he had a dog and loved it, or if he hadn't had a dog he wanted one ever so badly.

Finally when Billy was feeling ever so discouraged, a

man came with a dog called Cuffee. What a strange name for a dog! And what a scraggly, ungainly looking pup was Cuffee! Not that Billy thought so though, for even one minute. Oh, no! to him the awkward, lanky puppy with its coarse and wiry brown hair and its queer reddish-brown eyes that glowed like two balls of fire was a beautiful creature. When he ran to pet it, a little moist, red tongue shot out to lick his fingers, giving him such an odd tingling sensation that he was sure the puppy loved him. Trembling with excitement and almost afraid to ask for fear of disappointment he looked up at the man, who was smiling, and asked if he might have the pup.

"Why, yes, Son," the man answered, "I reckon you can have that dog if you're pining for him. I heard there was a boy around here somewhere wanting a dog, so I just brought him along. Are you the boy?" With shining eyes Billy assured him that he was, then down he went on his knees to hug Cuffee.

"Oh, Billy," remonstrated his sister Eileen, "he is so ugly. Do wait and see if you can't get a dear little fat, roly-poly puppy like the one Aunt Kate has."

"It isn't looks that count, Miss," said the stranger. "It's what a dog is. Now this dog is worth a whole lot. He isn't afraid of anything. When he gets a little older and sort of fills out a bit he'll be a real beauty. But you've got to play fair with him, Son, got to treat him proper or he won't be worth anything."

"I'll be good to him," promised Billy breathlessly, trying to evade a friendly licking of his face. "Down, Cuffee, down," he commanded sternly.

"That's the way to talk to him, Son, but don't you go to beating him or you'll spoil him for certain. You'll find him full of mischief though. It's not reasonable to expect either a boy or a dog not to get into some mischief. Dogs

have to be educated just like humans and learn what is right and what is wrong.”

The next moment all was confusion. With a sudden bound which sent Billy sprawling in the dust, tripping Eileen as he fell, Cuffee made a mad dash after a black and white streak that flashed by and up to the top of the clothes post leaving him yelping below. Mickey, Eileen's precious kitty, crouched on the post with bristling fur, every hair on his tail standing on end, while he glared down at Cuffee, spitting defiance.

“Cuffee is a bad dog,” sobbed Eileen as she picked herself up and ran to her cat's rescue.

“No, not bad, Eileen,” soothed her mother, “but just a little ignorant puppy that has not learned to be friendly with cats. Take Cuffee away, Billie, and tie him up till Mickey gets over his fright.”

While Billy was tying Cuffee up, he talked to him in such a sorrowful tone that Cuffee was sadly puzzled. He put his little tail between his legs, then held up his little paw to shake hands in such a coaxing manner that Billy had to laugh. You see, Cuffee needed to be taught right from wrong, for when one doesn't know this, it is so easy to make a mistake, isn't it?
