

"PALS"

"That reminds me," he broke in, "of a tale that will bring tears to your eyes."

"It seems, there was a lad of nine or ten summers who received, as a birthday gift, a small puppy. The dog was not a terrier, not a hound, but a mixture of several breeds. At times, he was a white dog with two black mittens and a black mask, but not often for his wiry hair picked up any and every kind of dirt.

Joe and Renny were inseparable pals. Every Sunday afternoon was dedicated to rambling, once through the woods trying to scare a wary squirrel or rabbit, another time meandering along a lazy winding stream, teasing or catching bullfrogs and "wigglers."

With the first snowfall, though, came new sport. Joe and Renny invariably tramped through the woods, uphill and down, following the numerous crossing and re-crossing tracks of rabbits. Yet, time and time again, their quarry eluded them, warned by an incautious step breaking through a thin crust of snow.

And so the year rolled round 'till the following October brought another birthday. To Joe's unspeakable delight, his father gave him a gun.

Then came the day before Thanksgiving. It was up to Joe to supply a part of the feast. Happily humming,



his gun over his shoulder, he strutted, much like the proverbial peacock, into the woods.

Twilight came, a star peeped out; still there was no sign of Joe. Alarmed, yet trying to keep his fears from his wife, Mr. Ranes called a neighbor and set out after the boy. All night they searched and in the cold gray light of dawn, when they were ready to go back for more help, they came upon Joe's tracks, mingled with many animals' tracks, leading to a cluster of pines. With a cry, Joe's father ran forward, parted the branches and paused as the scene was revealed.

Near a stump was Renny in a pool of blood and stretched out beside him lay Joe--sleeping."

We sat for a short while in silence. Then as my friend rose to leave, he said, "I was that boy!"