THE BULL TERRIER

By WILLIAMS HAYNES

A Breed Which Has Won a Well Deserved Popularity in Spite of Wide-Spread Prejudice

It is bitterly true that you might just as well go off to some secluded spot and ignominiously hang a dog as to give him a bad name. The bull terrier has had a bad name, and the mere detail that he does not deserve it at all makes not the least difference in the world.

Twenty-five or thirty years ago, the "white 'un"—as he was called in comparison with his rival, the "black 'un," or the black and tan Manchester terrier—was in a very fair way of making a great name for himself. He had sterling inherent qualities. Dame Fashion smiled on him. The future of the breed seemed assured. But a "bad name" dangled behind him, like a can tied by some bad boys on a cur's tail. Just as an onlooker sees the tin can before he does the tormented pup, so the bull terrier's undeserved bad name eclipsed the breed's good qualities.

The world in general, and nice old ladies in particular (not that I am prejudiced against nice old ladies, for I know several who are very nice indeed) have some weird ideas about dogs. One of their pet theories is that any dog who has "bull" in his name is a savage, ugly, faithless brute fit only to associate with stable boys, corner loafers, prize fighters, and downright thugs.

This is undoubtedly a memory of the days of bull baiting, that very barbarous sport once upon a time relished by our English forefathers. It is quite true, and it can be proved, that in the veins of the English bulldog and the English bull terrier flows the blood of dogs who, three centuries ago, did bait bulls. It is equally true, and some go to considerable pains to prove it, that many of us are descendants of the gentlemen who enjoyed watching bull baiting. That is, of course, very shocking, but we console ourselves by thinking of the wonderful improvement made by the human race since those dark days. Why do we give the dogs no credit for improvement?

The sporting instincts of our English forefathers were not in themselves bad. They admired strength and skill; they loved the chance of battle; they glorified determination and courage. These are all prime requisites in the good sportsman of nineteen hundred and now, as they were in fifteen or sixteen hundred and then. The great difference is that we no longer sic a plucky little dog at a big, strong, enraged bull in order to see these admirable traits in action. Our sportsmanship has grown and developed. It is better in act and higher in ideal.

So it is with the dogs. They are still strong and game but, if I may use the
expression, their ideals are higher. They are no more like their bull-baiting, badger-drawing, rat-killing-against-time ancestors than we are the same sort of men as the hard drinking, heavy betting, swaggering sparks of the Restoration.

A good big share of the blame for the bad connotation of the word "bull," when linked to a breed of dogs, must rest upon the shoulders of the gentlemen of the press. Have you ever noticed that it is always a bulldog, or a bull terrier, or a "brindle bull" or a "Boston bull" who gets his name in the papers? They are the only breeds recognized by reporters, and two of them are not recognized by the Stud Book. The last two, "brindle bull" and "Boston bull," are misnomers. If, however, a dog goes mad and bites half the community, it is sure to be some kind of a "bull." If a dog turns traitor and attacks his master's wife, it is always a "bull" of some variety. As the bad dogs, like bad men and women, get into print more often than the good ones, the popular opinion of "bull" dogs is pretty low.

Moreover, there is still another reason for the bull terrier's bad name. This is the pit dog. The so-called sport of dog fighting is an ancient relic of sporting barbarism that has persisted. It flourishes nocturnally in the cellars of low dives and in out-of-way, deserted barns in some parts of this country and Canada. It is not, heaven be thanked, a very popular pastime, nor are its devotees men we should care to call representative members of the community. It does, however, actually exist.

The dogs that fight in the pit are a thick-set, square-headed, brindle-marked, cross-bred edition of the English bull terrier. About seventy per cent of their blood is bull terrier, but they have been crossed with bulldog and various fighting terriers of more than doubtful pedigrees. Time and again the supporters of these nondescripts have tried to have them admitted into the American Kennel Club Stud Book. The A. K. C. has always closed the registration records to them, and very rightly, for on the usually accepted definition of a breed they could not be recognized. The type is not established, and they do not breed true.

These pit dogs, or American bull terriers, or brindle bull terriers, or whatever name you choose, are miles away from the pure bred English bull terrier in both looks and disposition. Their heads are square and blocky; their make-up is
cloddy; their shoulders are heavy, and their front legs apt to be slightly bowed. They are always more or less heavily marked with brindle, smut, or even tan on black. In disposition they are a sort of canine Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. To people they are kindly, affectionate, faithful; to dogs they are a curse and a terror. They make perfect pals, but they are inborn scrappers. How this pit dog could ever become confused with the real bull terrier is a strange mystery, but with most Americans the two are jumbled up into one, and the bull terrier's bad name has been tied to him the more securely.

We seem to have approached the bull terrier crab fashion, telling what he is not and how he does not look and behave before describing himself. I am sure this is best, for so many, many people think only of him as he is not that this point ought to be very carefully set right. But now for him as he is!

The bull terrier is really a dog of marked individuality in appearance. He is quite different from all terriers, and it is indeed hard to see how anyone could ever confuse him with other varieties.

In the first place, his nickname, as is usually the case, fits him like a glove. He is really the "white 'un," for his color is pure white, snow white and without markings. True, a dog of very exceptional physical excellencies may sometimes win prizes in spite of a small ring about an eye or a tiny round spot or two, but these are not considered beauty spots, and any color save light lemon will, with the best judges, put its bearer completely out of the running. It was not always so, for the immaculate white jacket is an acquired beauty, which the breed owes to years of careful breeding. Originally, there were plenty of brindles, but the colored coats were discarded long since for the snowy one that is now a hall-mark of the thoroughbred. The only other white terrier is the game, little, wire-coated West Highlander, who looks about as much like a bull terrier as an aeroplane does like a submarine.

Another distinctive feature of the bull terrier is his weight. This may vary considerably; in fact, the leeway of from twenty to fifty-five pounds is more than is allowed to any other terrier breed. Some giants will be as big as a pointer, and at the other extreme will be seen small ones not bigger than an Irish terrier. An average is struck, however,
and bull terrier size is, as a rule, somewhat bigger than halfway between an Airedale and a fox terrier.

His tail is still another point in which our dog differs from the other terriers. He has what is known in fanciers' phraseology as a "sting tail," so called because it is straight, smooth, and tapers to a point, suggestive of a wasp's sting. This tail is carried not gaily erect, but straight out behind, on a line not higher than his back. A tail that curves up
dale, Irish and Welsh terriers all have heads so nearly alike that those elusive details that make up what we call the "type" of each breed cause trouble even to those who know and love these varieties well. This fact was amusingly proved once by a photographer connected with one of the sporting magazines. He cut the bodies off some terrier photographs and had the time of his life laughing at the mistakes his doggy friends made in guessing the breed

ever so slightly is a bad fault, while one that sickles over the back, beagle fashion, is a horror to any judge. The tail is uncut, but Art is sometimes called upon to assist Nature by means of sandpaper, used to shorten the hair and produce that evenly tapering, sting effect. The "sting tail" is carried by but one other terrier, the black and tan Manchester, who, by the way, is most like the "white 'un"—sort of a dark-colored, smaller brother he is.

Just as we recognize persons by their faces, so we are accustomed to distinguish a dog's breed by his head, and among the terriers none has a head more individual in outline, detail, and expression than the bull terrier. Fox, Aire-' of the head. He caught all sorts of fanciers from gray headed veterans to young novices and had no end of sport out of our discomfort.

But the bull terrier is different, and once you know him you would never even in a photograph mistake his head. It is a wedge-shaped head, flat and tapering evenly on all sides to the nose. The skull is level, broad at top, and quite without "stop," as the indentation between the eyes is called. This, supported underneath by the strong lower jaw, gives the wedge look in profile, while the well filled up fore face and the invisible cheek bones produce the same effect, when he is viewed from the front. This wedge-look is carried right out to
the big, black nose, and any snappiness in muzzle is a fault.

The head, which should impress you strongly with its strength and length of jaw, is topped off with cropped ears. A neatly cut, perfectly erect ear adds a great deal to the appearance of the dog, and there is no doubt that the anti-cropping law in effect in England has seriously affected the popularity of the breed over there. The lips ought to be thin and tight, just sufficient to cover the big, white, even teeth.

The eyes of the thoroughbred bull terrier are also unique. They are small, black, set close together, and oblique. His bead-like, Chinese eyes give him a peculiarly attractive expression, a somewhat incongruous mixture of wisdom and wickedness.

The bull terrier has a deep, broad chest, which makes his "front" wider than in other terriers. His shoulders, however, should not be loose, for while wide in front he stands on his forelegs, not, like the bulldog, between them. His front legs should be straight and strong. His shoulders must be muscular without being "loaded" and should be sloping. His hindquarters are well developed muscularly, long, and with straight, low-set hocks. He must stand firmly on sound, well-knuckled feet. His back ought to be short, and his brisket deep and well ribbed up. A long, sway back or one that inclines to arch is a sign of weakness, as is a flat-sided body. His color, as we have seen, is pure white, and his coat is short, smooth, harsh to the touch, and with a peculiar glossy luster.

To sum up, a bull terrier is a solidly built but symmetrical and active dog. He is lively in disposition and quick in his movements. He is always alert, and you feel quite sure that nothing from a stray cat to a motor truck misses his attention. He is very far from the typical bull terrier of picture and story, who is usually supposed to be everlastingly tugging at the end of a heavy chain, or slinking along at the heels of a master only one degree a worse blackguard than the dog himself.

The true disposition of the real English bull terrier is as little understood as his looks. He is a real terrier, quick, lively, affectionate, faithful to any end. He does not spend his time looking for dogs to fight—in fact, he is a much more peaceable canine citizen than some of his relatives in the terrier family. He is a splendid pal for man or boy, and he makes an excellent dog to have in a household with young children, for he is not snappish and his temper is long suffering.

As a guard he is seldom equalled, for he has brains enough to recognize friend from foe, size enough to be formidable, and pluck to spare. In fact, his courage is almost a proverb, and it is the one popular superstition about him that is absolutely true.

Hope for the Future

Good to look upon, possessed of companionable qualities, intelligent, and dead game, it is a wonder to his friends that the bull terrier is not the most popular dog in all the Stud Book. He is hardly that, but as he has the happy knack of holding fast to his friends the number of his devotees constantly increases, and to-day there are more good bull terriers and more staunch bull terrier fanciers on this side of the Atlantic than in all the rest of the world.

If one wants a dead game and devoted four-footed friend, let him get a thoroughbred "white 'un." If he is buying a puppy, let him pick out a husky youngster with a flat skull, correct eyes, short, low-set tail, and well-cropped ears. Buying a pup is more or less like fishing a package out of a grab-bag, but these four are salient points which will be possessed by all bull terrier babies who, from an external, physical point of view will be worth their milk and dog biscuits.

It is usually best, if one is looking for a house dog, to buy a puppy, and this is particularly true in bull terriers. Those who hold the popular opinion of these dog's disposition may feel inclined to sniff when they read that a bull terrier is a sensitive dog, but those who know the breed well know that this is true. Therefore, a great deal depends upon their upbringing.
A bull terrier pup is a bright, rather homely, but remarkably winning little customer. He will get into all sorts of trouble and mischief—just like any other healthy youngster. When he is six months old he begins to sit up and take notice, and his training should seriously start. If he transgresses any of the dog’s code of ethics, correct him and see that he sins no more. He must be house broken and taught to stick “to heel” on the streets. If he chases Miss Tabby—as he most surely will—restrain his ardor gently, but firmly; and let him understand that he must live at peace with all neighbors human, canine, and feline. Properly trained, and he is so clever that this is an easy task, he makes a most desirable pal, but his training should be done during his young days.

One ambitious to own a strong kennel of “white 'uns” cannot do better than to buy a couple of good, sound, young bitches and make haste slowly, by breeding his own stock. Select bitches about three years old, proven mothers, bred from the best stock, and if possible individuals good enough to have won at the shows. Mate them to the proper sires—well-bred winners—and one has made the soundest possible start along the way toward a winning, profitable kennel. Of course, it is easy to buy a string of winners, but anyone can do that, while only a wise and patient fancier can breed them. But breeding your winners is a hundred fold more satisfying and many times as much fun.