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Rex: A True Tale

In the early 1900s no American writer of dog stories was loved more than Albert Payson Terhune. Albert Terhune was a great lover of dogs. One of his best loved pets was a mongrel dog named Rex. Rex was about the size of a Great Dane. He had a short light-brown coat and a scar on his forehead. Rex loved his master. He would lie for hours at Terhune's feet, looking up at his face. If Terhune moved around, Rex would follow quietly, lying down again when the writer sat down.

The mongrel was never allowed in the dining room of the house. During meals he went out on the porch. He would stand looking at Terhune through the French windows of the dining room. Rex was not allowed in the study, either. He always lay down on the same spot outside the study door. He napped there, waiting for his master to come out. It was the only regular resting place Rex ever had in the Terhune home.

Rex died in March 1916. It was a sad time. Terhune wrote a book about his death. The next year Terhune's old friend, the Rev. Mr. Grannis, paid him a visit. Grannis had not been in Terhune's home for many years. They dined together. As they got up from the table, Grannis said, "I thought you showed me all your dogs, but there's one I haven't seen before. The large dog with the short, light-brown coat and the scarred forehead."

Terhune shook her head. "We don't have a short-haired dog," he said. "Or one with a scar across his forehead." "But" answered Grannis, "the dog stood outside the window looking at you all through our meal. He's gone now. What's his name?" Terhune was confused about what to say. He just said, "I don't know." After all, Rex was dead.

Another friend, Henry Healy, used to visit Terhune often. Healy was interested in crossbreeding. He had made a study of Rex. In the autumn of 1918, the Terhunes had the Healys to dinner. After dinner they sat talking by the fire. The hour grew late. At last, the Healys rose to bid Mr. and Mrs. Terhune good night.

"I wish there were a creature as fond of me as Rex is of you," Healy remarked to Terhune. "I was watching him as he lay in the firelight at your feet. He stared into your face with a strange kind of worship. He must - "

"Good heavens!" Terhune broke in. "Rex died more than two years ago!" Healy's face had a puzzled frown. "Of course, I remember now...Yet, I'm sure he was lying at your feet all evening." There had been other strange events concerning Rex. A collie named Bruce was the one dog allowed in the study. After Rex died, Bruce never once stepped on the patch of floor outside the study door where Rex used to lie. For the four years, Bruce remained in the Terhune household, he always walked round Rex's spot, as though Rex still lay there.

Time and again Terhune put Bruce to the test in front of guests. He would call the dog into the study, and Bruce always took the strange little detour. Why? Terhune did not know. He did not believe in ghosts, dog or human. Still..."How did Grannis chance to see a dog peering through the window at me?" he wondered. "Grannis had never heard of Rex, and Healy is a level-headed businessman, not given to fancies. What did he see lying at my feet in the firelight?" Terhune could only guess.