



## MR. THURBER'S CHINESE DOG

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There has been occasion at least twice to mention Chinese dogs in the pages of the *Bulletin*, once when we published the lean and lovely hunting dog of the T'ang dynasty in glazed pottery and again when we noted in passing the little pet dog in the painting *Children at Play*, attributed to Chou Fang. Other writers have called attention to the likeness of the fantastic lions on newel posts to Pekingese and to the small Tibetan dogs known in the West as Llasa terriers and have pointed out the similarity of hunting dogs as depicted by the Chinese and the Egyptians. In fact, an entire book, with many references to art, has been written about Far Eastern dogs (*Dogs in China and Japan in*

*Nature and Art*, by V. W. F. Collier). Nevertheless, it is really a little scaring to find the counterpart of Mr. James Thurber's pet dog in Chinese jade of the seventeenth century (or possibly earlier). It would be folly to argue that the book *How to Raise a Dog*, by James R. Kinney and Ann Honeycutt, with drawings by Mr. Thurber, had found its way into the hands

ABOVE: "At the end of six weeks she tells them to scam." Drawing by James Thurber, reproduced through the courtesy of Ann Honeycutt and James Thurber. OPPOSITE: Dog carved in white jade. Chinese, XVII century. Gift of Mathias Komor, 1944

of some humorously inclined Chinese forger; nobody would think of such mischief except me, but if I had, what opportunity for its accomplishment has there been, since the book was first printed in 1938?

Mr. Thurber's dog is a darling, full of character and many woofish traits, but who would ever try to name its family or its combination of families? It is a fantasy dog, which arouses sympathy and laughter in many people and faintly depresses others. Mr. Thurber's admiring reviewers seem to have a definite idea (and take pride in it) that his world is slightly mad and could only have existed lately and in these United States. Yet here is the same dog as his, carved in jade by some anonymous Chinese two hundred years and more ago. It is not only the same dog, but it takes almost the same pose that is shown in one of Mr. Thurber's drawings—the one on page 31 of *How to Raise a Dog*. The pose is very like in the two representations, but there are small differences. Mr. Thurber's dog hoists her tail in maternal belligerency, whereas the Chinese dog frisks its tail around its haunches. Mr. Thurber's dog has slightly animated ears, whereas the Chinese dog's ears lie close. These differences, however, are merely the necessities of medium—free line and a very, very hard stone. Both dogs have front paws down, head crouched upon them, and haunches raised high—the attitude of an animal ready to dash forward or settle comfortably back according to mood. We know what Mr. Thurber's dog

is doing: she is telling her puppies to scam—the caption tells us so. In the picture the puppies are surprised, bothered, and bewildered, but scrambling for all they are worth. The Chinese dog is alone, so there is no way of being absolutely sure what its intentions and feelings are, but it has the somewhat forlorn yet hopeful look of a big and clumsy dog wanting to frisk like a trim one. It makes one remember Miss G. B. Stern's ugly dachshund, who was in truth a great Dane puppy and couldn't understand why dachshunds were allowed to be lap dogs and he wasn't.

The Chinese dog is a gift to the Museum from Mr. Mathias Komor and provides a very nice example of bread cast upon the waters. The Komors had a little dog who traveled with them for many years, a faithful wire-haired fox terrier named Nap (for Napoleon), who left the lovely courtyards of Peking for the bare, stark streets of New York (I think it must be harder for dogs than for people to take these changes, because there is no way of explaining them to dogs), and here he died far from his familiar world of oleander trees, crickets, whistling pigeons, and a galaxy of delicious smells. Just about then the Komors were introduced to Mr. Thurber's dog (luckily, by a Museum Member), and when its Chinese counterpart turned up, they promptly gave it to the Museum.

Whoever made the little jade dog did it to give pleasure and amusement. It will do so, I think, for a great many people.

