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STERLING NORTH was born in a farmhouse on the shore of Lake Koshkonong in Wisconsin and was raised in the nearby town of Edgerton. After attending the University of Chicago he became a newspaper reporter and later was Literary Editor of several newspapers. He has written dozens of articles and poetry for most major American magazines, and is the author of twenty-eight books, which have been published on five continents and in more than fifty languages. These include the bestselling SO DEAR TO MY HEART and RACOONS ARE THE BRIGHTEST PEOPLE (ZS137), both published by Avon.

He and his wife, Gladys, live on twenty-seven acres near Morristown, New Jersey, where their neighbors include foxes, deer, and, of course, racoons. RASCAL was the winner of the 1963 Dutton Animal Award, a runner-up for the Newbery Medal, listed as an American Library Association Notable Book, and has received many other literary awards.

The illustrations and cover art are by John Schoenherr.

Rascal

Sterling North



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All of my friends in this book, both animal and human, were real and appear under their rightful names. A few less lovable characters have been rechristened.—Sterling North

AVON BOOKS

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*For Gladys, my constant companion
in watching our wilderness world*

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“A very interesting book could be written about the
Raccoon and, with its industrious energy and re-
sourcefulness, it deserves to be elevated to the
status of the National Emblem in place of the para-
sitical, carrion-feeding Bald Eagle.”
—Ivan T. Sanderson in *Living Mammals of the World*

RASCAL

I: *May*

IT was in May, 1918, that a new friend and companion came into my life: a character, a personality, and a ring-tailed wonder. He weighed less than one pound when I discovered him, a furry ball of utter dependence and awakening curiosity, unweaned and defenseless. Wowser and I were immediately protective. We would have fought any boy or dog in town who sought to harm him.

Wowser was an exceptionally intelligent and responsible watchdog, guarding our house and lawns and gardens and all my pets. But because of his vast size—one hundred and seventy pounds of muscled grace and elegance—he seldom had to resort to violence. He could shake any dog on the block as a terrier shakes a rat. Wowser never started a fight, but after being challenged, badgered, and insulted, he eventually would turn his worried face and great sad eyes upon his tormentor, and

more in sorrow than in anger, grab the intruder by the scruff of the neck, and toss him into the gutter.

Wowser was an affectionate, perpetually hungry Saint Bernard. Like most dogs of his breed he drooled a little. In the house he had to lie with his muzzle on a bath towel, his eyes downcast as though in slight disgrace. Pat Delaney, a saloonkeeper who lived a couple of blocks up the street, said that Saint Bernards drool for the best of all possible reasons. He explained that in the Alps these noble dogs set forth every winter day, with little kegs of brandy strapped beneath their chins, to rescue wayfarers lost in the snowdrifts. Generations of carrying the brandy, of which they have never tasted so much as a blessed drop, have made them so thirsty that they continuously drool. The trait had now become hereditary, Pat said, and whole litters of bright and thirsty little Saint Bernards are born drooling for brandy.

On this pleasant afternoon in May, Wowser and I started up First Street toward Crescent Drive where a semicircle of late Victorian houses enjoyed a hilltop view. Northward lay miles of meadows, groves of trees, a winding stream, and the best duck and muskrat marsh in Rock County. As we turned down a country lane past Bardeen's orchard and vineyard, the signature of spring was everywhere: violets and anemones in the grass; the apple trees in promising bud along the bough.

Ahead lay some of the most productive walnut and hickory trees I had ever looted, a good swimming hole in the creek, and, in one bit of forest, a real curiosity—a phosphorescent stump which gleamed at night with fox-