

CHAPTER XXI.

NEUTER CATS.



MISS KIRKPATRICK'S
"CHILL."

(Photo: E. Landor, Ealing.)

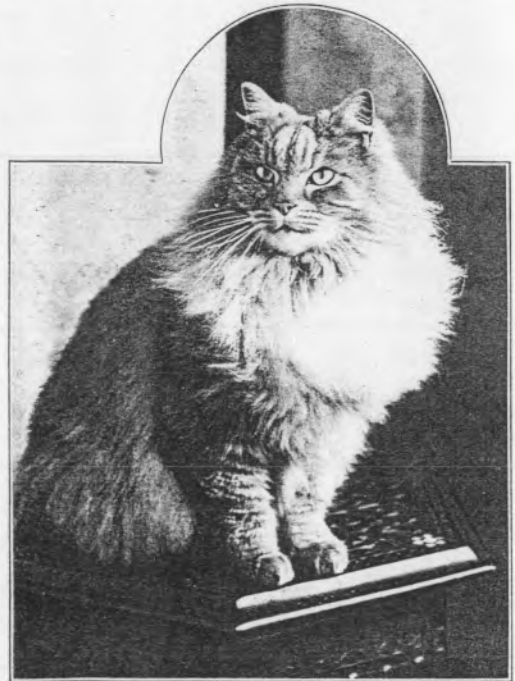
IT has been my experience in the past year or two that the demand for neuter cats, or, in other words, household pet pussies, is on the increase; and I am inclined to believe that if some fanciers made a speciality of these cats they might do a thriving trade. As it is, owners of male kittens do not care to undertake

to pay the extra fee for the use of an anæsthetic.

I have been told on good authority that if a female cat is to be made neuter she ought to be allowed to have one litter before the operation is performed. Neuter cats are essentially for the "one cat" person. They undoubtedly make a grand show when exhibited, but those who are possessed of these pet pussies are generally very disinclined to let them run the risks and discomforts of a show pen. I have advocated having neuters shown only in the ring, on the lead. If this course were adopted, I think

the trouble and responsibility of having them gelded, or doctored, as this process is sometimes called, and novices in purchasing are always very anxious that the operation should have taken place before they become possessed of their pets. A selling class for neuters at our large shows would not be at all a bad idea, but the age should be limited to eight months, or at most ten months, as it is only natural that purchasers should desire pussies before they reach the prime of life, so that they may grow up as pets in the home. For reasons that are easily understood, it is necessary, if you wish to have a house pet of unimpeachable manners, to have your male cat doctored when he arrives at years of discretion.

For my own part I consider between five and eight months the best time for a cat to be gelded, but I have often known successful operations taking place much later. It is, however, most important that the tom should not previously have shown any desire to mate. In all cases a cat should be kept on low plain diet for two or three days before being neutered, and it is more humane



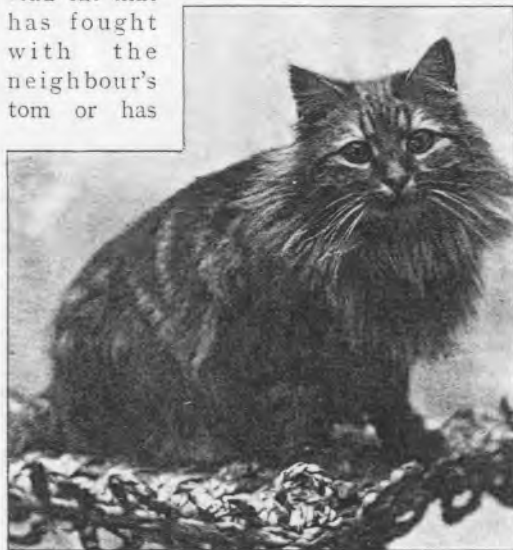
"KING CY."

SILVER NEUTER BELONGING TO MISS AVERY JONES.

(Photo: F. Bronthead, Clifton.)

owners would not mind exhibiting their precious cats, as they could be sent or taken home after their turn round. Certainly neuters are the only cats that ought to be led into the ring, and in this way their fine proportions and generally heavy coats can be seen and judged to the best advantage. It is too often a practice with fanciers to have the worst of the litter kept for a pet and made neuter, and therefore we see many blues with light green eyes, and cats with the blemish of a white spot, in the classes set apart for gelded cats; and if a beautiful, almost perfect, neuter is exhibited, fanciers are apt to protest at what they consider is "a grave mistake." From the lips of some noted and over-wrought breeders of Persian cats I have heard the exclamation, "I shall go in for neuters only!"

This has been called forth, perhaps, by a succession of failing litters or by a rampageous stud cat that has fought with the neighbour's tom or has



MISS CHAMBERLAYNE'S "BELVEDERE TIGER."

(Photo: J. Atkins, Upper Norwood.)

wandered off on amorous thoughts intent, perhaps never to return, or on returning to bring disease to the cattery. Certainly, for a thoroughly comfortable domestic pet there is nothing like a neuter cat. They are more affectionate, and with children more docile, not

less keen in catching rats and mice, and they are proverbially very clean in their habits. One great advantage that neuters have over the other long-haired breeds is that they retain their lovely coats nearly all the year round. In spite, however, of the many points in favour of neuter cats, they are nevertheless rather looked down upon in the fancy. Certainly, at our shows no cats are more attractive to visitors than the big burly neuters, and I would fain see a better classification for these really fine animals.

A specialist society was started in 1901 by an admirer of these cats, but either through lack of energy or want of enthusiasm the work was not carried on, and the club died a natural death. It remains for some other fancier with a love for pet pussies to start a society, for as it is the neuters fare badly at our shows, the classes provided never numbering more than two, and the special prizes being few and far between. Formerly neuters were judged by weight, and I remember some specimens exhibited at the Palace that really looked like pigs fattened up for market. It was in 1886 that the classification for neuters at the Crystal Palace show ran thus: "Gelded cats, not judged by weight, but for beauty of form, markings, etc." Happily, therefore, this state of things has been abolished, and though neuters should be big, massive cats, yet they need not, and should not, be lumps of inert fat and fur. It is true that a big show cat appeals to the non-exhibitor, and visitors to our shows are always greatly impressed with huge animals over filling their all too small pens. The heaviest and biggest neuter I have ever seen was possessed by Mrs. Reay Green. This enormous silver turned the scale at 20 lb. I believe the record weight at the Crystal Palace was 25 lb. It is a libel to say that neuter cats are lazy and uninteresting. I have always possessed a neuter, either a blue or a brown tabby, and these beloved pets have ably fulfilled their duties as mice-catchers of the establishment. My "Bonnie Boy," who but recently joined the noble army of neuters, is as keen as a knife, and will sit for hours

any remarkable American neuters, and no photographs have been received by me for reproduction in this work.

If we go back some years in the fancy, I remember Miss Sangster's "Royal Hector," a

twenty-eight first prizes and many specials, and his championship before he was a year old. I had an offer of £20 for him. The greatest honour 'Blue Boy' received was a caress from her Majesty, then Princess of Wales.



MISS ADAMSON'S CHINCHILLA NEUTER.

blue of great celebrity; also same owner's "Royal Bogey," a handsome black with a white star. Miss Boddington's cobby, woolly-coated white "Ba Ba" appeared later in exquisite form, winning well till he was eleven years old. At this same period Mrs. Herring's little smoke "Ally Sloper" and Miss Molony's big, heavily coated black "Uncle Quiz" were noted winners.

Then we come to Mrs. Willman's "Charlie," a fine blue of "Beauty Boy" strain, and Miss Knight's "Albion Joey," one of the finest neuters ever exhibited, a huge smoke with the roundest of heads, a trifle marked and not good in eye, but a glorious animal.

A little later came Madame Portier's "Blue Boy," and, as I have received some notes from the owner of this magnificent cat, I will give them:—"I am very proud of my 'Blue Boy,' born on St. Patrick's Day, 1895. He has won

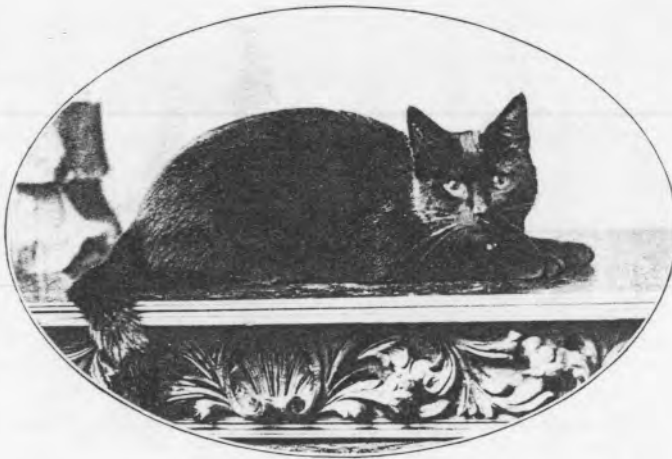
"I often take my pet out for a walk on a collar, and he is quite easily led, and people often stop and ask if it is really a cat. I send you his photo for reproduction in 'The Book of the Cat.'" One of "Blue Boy's" wins was at the Richmond show, 1902, where he was greatly admired for the dignified way in which he comported himself on a lead. In these up-to-date days, however, "Blue Boy" has to run the gauntlet with superior coloured eyes, but in shape, size, and coat he holds his own. Miss Kirkpatrick's "Chili," now no more, was a beautiful creature—a silvery smoke, almost a smoke tabby, with a wonderful fleecy coat and grand frill. Mrs. Reay Green has always been the proud possessor of superb neuters—"Mosca," a blue; "Abdul Zephir," a chinchilla; and later "Ajax," who has done some winning. Viscountess Esher also has quite a cattery of neuters. I

procured for her a sable, almost unmarked and very rich in colour, a white with limpid sea-green eyes, and a Siamese with perfect points. Miss Cochran's "Patpaw" (now in the possession of Viscountess Esher), a son of the celebrated tortoiseshell "Tawney," is rather small for a neuter, but full of quality, with wonderful orange eyes. "Persimmon Laddie," owned by Miss Whitney, is, perhaps, the most perfect specimen that has been seen in the pen of the neuter classes. He is not a brown and not a tabby, but a sable; and, having the blood of the "Birkdale Ruffies" and "Champion Persimmon" in his veins, it is no wonder he carries all before him. No photograph can do him justice.

Mrs. Boyce's "Fur" could beat any male chinchilla now on the show bench; for in colour, shape, and head he is well-nigh perfect. Mrs. Millar's "Lord Bute" is a monstrous black, and in spite of his green eyes is generally in the prize list; but in

honours, and Miss Chamberlayne's "Tiger" is a handsomely marked brown tabby. Miss Meeson's "Fluff Duvals," another brownie, won first at the Crystal Palace and Brighton, and after a second at Westminster came home to die! Miss Averay Jones has a splendid chinchilla neuter "King Cy," a possession too precious to be risked at any exhibition.

So much for the long-haired pet pussies, and we will take a glance at past and present short-haired neuters. A lovely coated cat was "Tiger of Kepwick," owned by Mrs. MacLaren Morrison, a brown tabby, as his name denotes. Then Mrs. Butler's orange, which for many years won at the Crystal Palace and Brighton. Mr. Lane had a good yellow-eyed white, "Leonidas." Mrs. Herring owned a well-marked brown tabby in "Sir Peter Teazle." Of late years the most remarkable short-haired neuters have been Miss Cartwright's really lovely Siamese "Chote" and Lady Alexander's blues, "Brother Gamp" and "Tom



"NIGEL THE RAVEN."

MRS. MELLER'S SHORT-HAIRED BLACK NEUTER.

Mrs. Curtis's "Baron Bonelli" he met more than his match at the Crystal Palace in 1902. This black cat (a son of "Johnnie Fawe") has all the good points of "Patpaw," including his gorgeous eyes, and he is very large. Miss Holmes' "Blue Tut" has won many

Gamp," who are rarely, if ever, defeated. A richly coloured orange tabby neuter, "Red Eagle," also hailed from the same cattery.

In judging neuters, I think it is rather a mistake to go too much by points. I consider

size should be a most important factor, also coat and general effect. Of course, in close competition points would come into question; but I really think that a large, heavily coated neuter, whose colour was a trifle unsound, or whose markings or eyes were below par, should not be placed below a small mean-looking cat who, however, excelled in these points.

Louis Wain, writing on a general survey of the Crystal Palace show of 1900, referring to the neuter class that he judged, says:—"Neuters have suffered somewhat through the extended schedule of the 'whole' cats. At one time it was quite a usual thing for exhibitors to have their cats neutered to preserve the natural beauties of a fine cat, and very often a really handsome cat was neutered

because he stood no chance in a class of twenty or thirty cats, and yet would take first as a neuter in a class of six or eight. The neuter classes have not grown as have the other classes. As 'home' cats neuters should be encouraged, and I feel sure that many are kept at home in fear of the dreaded 'blues,' which are usually unbeatable." Mr. Wain also complains of the poor classification for neuters at our shows, and on this particular occasion he states that the cats were such extremely fine animals that they needed classes of their own for him to do justice to their merits. Certainly there ought at least to be three classes provided for neuters at our large shows, viz.: Neuters, self-coloured (blue, black, and white); neuters, tabby, "any colour"; and neuters, "any other colour."



MADAME PORTIER'S NEUTER "BLUE BOY."

(Photo: Hana, London.)