



TABITHA'S AFTERNOON TEA.

(Photo: C. Reid, Wishaw, N.B.)

## CHAPTER XXX.

## REARING OF KITTENS.

IT may truly be said that the subject most interesting to cat fanciers is the successful rearing of kittens, and pages might be written on what to do and what not to do in order to bring up a family of kits in health and strength. Experience teaches us many things, and certainly during the number of years I have been breeding Persian kittens I have had ample opportunity of judging what food suited the little mites best, and which was the surest method of bringing up a wholesome litter of kittens. I am sure that in the olden days there was less delicacy amongst Persian kittens than at this present time.

With the advent of the first family the anxieties of the novice begin. Perhaps a goodly sum has been risked in the purchase of a pedigree queen, or else with much carefulness and taking thought a valuable kitten has been reared to happy matronhood. So far well; the trouble has been slight, but the account book shows all on the debit side. Now, as we gaze upon the tiny blind bobbing atoms, over which the mother croons and

purrs with pride, here is the investment that has to swell our credit column. And ignorance here spells loss.

If a large number yearly are successfully raised, a still larger number sadly "pass out," and might claim the baby's plaintive epitaph:

"Since I am so quickly done for—  
I wonder what I was begun for!"

Neither does the comfortable law of the "survival of the fittest" seem to hold good here. At least, Nature and the exhibitor are at variance in their ideas of such, for always it is our choicest, our sure and certain champion, that slips our too eager grasp.

Here is our experimental nest of champions; they are but two days old, and in this early stage of their existence the less they are handled and examined and the mother interfered with, the better.

Attend to two things—*darkness* and *fresh air*; and leave them alone till they introduce themselves of their own accord to your notice.

Shift on to a clean nest the second day after

birth. It is safer not to do so before, as I have known a belated kitten arrive twenty-four hours after the rest of the family, and in the case of an excitable or inexperienced mother she will by then be more composed, and can be coaxed out to feed while the change of bed is being made. Hay, short and sweet, is the best bedding—much better than blankets or cushions. Many fanciers use boxes turned on their sides and curtained. These, while giving the necessary darkness, are not sufficiently ventilated; the air in them cannot circulate freely, and becomes stuffy and foul, vapours ascend, and the wood becomes unsanitary in a very short time.

Bad eyes follow as a matter of course, and the anxious, worried novice wonders "how they can *possibly* have taken cold when they have been so guarded"—from fresh air!—and seals them up still more! If, therefore, a box is

used, let there be holes for ventilation, or arrange for the covering to reach only partly over the top.

In an outside cattery or attic or room guard against too much light and any draught, but let in the outside air by *keeping the window open* during the day. If winter kittens are to be reared, heat the room to an average of 55 degrees, and have the window open, taking precautions naturally against rain or snow beating in.

When the kittens reach the age of three weeks, they will require some food beyond that provided by the mother, who, if nursing a large family, is perhaps showing signs of wear. It is when the process of weaning begins that trouble generally arises.

I am inclined to put down the growing delicacy of Persian kittens to the injudicious feeding with solids at too early a period of

their existence. I never used to allow my kittens meat until they were about four or five months old, and during the period of weaning from their mothers it is most essential that all food given—such as Mellin's, Ridge's, and Benger's—should be made very thin: at first, so as not in any way to try the tender digestions of the little creatures.

I believe that most of the ills that kittens' flesh is heir to, proceed from indigestion. The tendency in fanciers is to overload the stomach of the wee kittens, forgetting that it is not the amount of food eaten that nourishes the tiny creatures, but the quantity they are able to

digest, and this must necessarily be small for some weeks after they have learnt to feed themselves. Another mistake that is made is giving milk that is too rich. In large towns we generally get our milk watered for us, but in the country the milk is richer, and needs



A HAPPY MOTHER.

mixing with warm water. It is not so important in the country as in London and other large towns to have the milk boiled, but it is at all times and in all places a wise precaution. In preference to risking the town dairy milk, flavoured with boracic, and most deadly to the systems of both kittens and babies, I advise a good brand of Swiss milk—such as Nestlé's—being employed, or, better still, Plasmon powder, made to a jelly according to directions on packet, and one teaspoonful of this jelly thinned out with hot water and sweetened. Do not give raw meat till the teeth are fairly through and they can bite sharply; then give it *scraped* with a blunt knife, not cut; and remember that *raw* meat is three times as digestible and nourishing as *cooked* meat—one tiny meal of meat a day, a teaspoonful per kitten to begin with. Do not give them fish while under three months old.

Rice is a very *indigestible* food for kittens, especially cold; but rice-water, strained from rice boiled to a pulp and given quite cold, is useful in checking diarrhœa. Melox is a most useful food for kittens of ten weeks old and upwards, soaked for an hour or two in a little good gravy, and given crumbly (not sloppy), and a little scraped raw meat mixed with it. For younger ones a tablespoonful of red gravy from a cooked joint, poured over some bread-crumbs, proves an appetising meal.

Small meals at short intervals are infinitely better than heavy meals at long intervals, and if a young kitten is left for many hours till half famished, it will in all probability eat too much and suffer in consequence. From four to ten weeks six or seven meals in the twenty-four hours are none too many. I am presuming that till that age they will be with their mother at night, which will do away with the necessity of providing food between 9 p.m. (when the last meal should be given) and 8 a.m. Give always a light and *warm* meal for the breakfast. After ten weeks lessen to five meals, after three months four, and give four till six months old, when they may be fed as adults, unless one should be delicate or has been through severe illness.

The best test of a properly thriving kitten is its weight, and 1 lb. for each month of age is a fair average, occasionally exceeded by very big-boned and robust kittens. For young growing kittens a teaspoonful of lime-

water added to a saucer of any liquid is very advisable, as it strengthens the limbs and forms bone. If a kitten under a month or six weeks old is unfortunate enough to have a severe illness, whether epidemic or accidental, my advice is to chloroform it. At so tender an age the constitution rarely recovers from the strain.

Although this article has no intention of encroaching upon that treating specially of diseases, our aim and object being to rear such healthy sturdy families of kittens that they shall never have any diseases, yet, *en passant*, it might not be amiss to remark what a valuable medicine for the first symptoms of distemper is Pacita, a herbal medicine that can be obtained in both powder and pill form. The latter is to be preferred, as, the smell being very nasty, kittens rebel against it. Half of No. 1 size pill is sufficient for a kitten under three months, to be given fasting in the morning an hour before food for three mornings. It reduces fever and clears the system in a wonderful manner.

The question of outdoor exercise must now be discussed. I speak of summer kittens only. Winter kittens—viz. those born from November to February—are, I think, a mistake. Out

of season, like forced green peas at Christmas, they have not a good start in life; the damp and darkness of those months is very deterrent upon young life. Nature's plan of arranging for the new lives to come chiefly in the spring



MRS. BONNY'S "DAME FORTUNE."

(Photo: L. R. Stickells, Cranbrook.)



MRS. BONNY'S "DEREBIE."

(Photo: L. R. Stickells, Cranbrook.)

when days are lengthening and sunshine has power, is the wisest. They grow with the days, and have the summer to romp through and grow big and strong before the leaves fall. It is a mistaken policy—that of *exposing to risks* under the intention of *hardening*. We must remember that the Persian cat is an exotic, and that the present system of breeding for coat and show points does not tend to make the race hardier; on the contrary, probably the constitution is more delicate than in its native country, imported cats invariably boasting a vigour and hardihood that our pedigree specimens sadly lack. It is not *cold* that injures; frost and snow can be borne by grown-up Persians with impunity, and even enjoyment. It is the *damp* that kills, and upon consideration we shall see that this is largely a question of *coat*.

Look at your English sleekly groomed puss as she comes leaping across some dewy field in the early morning, pressing through a thick, wet hedge. She gives herself a shake; examine her fur: not a dewdrop has adhered, hardly are her pads damp. Now pick up your Persian gentleman who has taken a slight hunting stroll through the same ground: his stomach fur is *soaked*, clinging like wet linen to him; his “knickerbockers” are disreputable, his frill clammy; and it will take him a good hour to get himself clean and respectable once more. The soft woolly under-coat of the Persian holds water like a sponge, where the close short coat of the British cat shakes it off as from duck’s feathers. This is the true secret of the delicacy of the Persian. So in rearing kittens, let your first care be, *avoid damp*.

A sick kitten generally forgets its manners, however carefully it has been trained to the use of the dry earth or sawdust box; it seems to feel too bad to care how it behaves, so due allowance must be made at the time; but in health, cleanly behaviour must be insisted upon from the time they begin to trot about their nursery. Begin by placing a *very* shallow tray of nice dry *fine* earth in one or two corners that the kittens seem to have a predilection

for; it may even be necessary to put them in all *four* corners for a little while to convince some obstinate or dullard member of the family.

A cat’s confidence is harder to win than a dog’s, but once you have gained it the animal will trust you implicitly, and will bear pain or nasty dosing at your hands without resentment. I think kittens *should be handled* from early days. I do not advocate a valuable kitten being sent up to a humar nursery, to be hugged flat or carried head downwards by the too-adoring occupants; but kittens should be thoroughly accustomed to human society and to being picked up, caressed, and handled. It will make their subsequent show career far less of a terror, and greatly augment their chances of success; and in the case of all male cats, whether for stud or neuter, it is very convenient to train them to walk on a lead. Begin by using a light ribbon, and *two* kittens led together on separate leads will come more willingly than one. The first lessons in walks might terminate at the feeding dish, so that the kits would quickly associate this new form of exercise with something to eat.

It sometimes happens that young kittens are too early bereft of maternal care from some cause or other. Mr. A. Ward, of Manchester, has invented an artificial foster-mother (*see* page 343). This consists of a glass vessel covered with flannel, and having indiarubber teats. This is filled with warm milk and water, and the kittens help themselves!

It is only of comparatively recent date that any serious attention has been given to the successful breeding of Persian kittens.

A demand has arisen for animals that approach perfection, according to a recognised standard of points, and it may not be unprofitable to devote a few pages to the consideration of how these can be best obtained.

Formerly a long-haired cat was not much thought of unless he really deserved his name, but nowadays coat is rather at a discount on the show bench.

Points, points, points—colour of eyes, colour of coat, shape, expression, and what not—

these are all considered first, and length and beauty of coat are rather apt to be overlooked.

The amateur cat lover should provide himself with a female cat or kitten of fine health and luxuriant coat, and treat it precisely like any other "well done by" domestic pussy. Probably by the time she is twelve months old she will have insisted on matrimony. This is worth a little consideration and trouble, but if the choice lies between a healthy, hardy long-haired tom at large in your own neighbourhood and a pedigreed

trophies, and have to be won four times before becoming the property of the exhibitor.

Over against the mistaken motto of "Haphazard" we must place the password of "Selection" if we would become successful breeders. Selection—clever, thoughtful, painstaking selection—lies beneath all real success. I am not denying that excellent results are obtained occasionally by accident, but these happy flukes want following up if any permanent good is to be effected.

Having a queen of a given colour,



A LITTER OF EIGHT, BELONGING TO MISS SAVERY.

(Photo: H. Warschawski, St. Leonards-on-Sea.)

prisoner at a distance, I should recommend the local monsieur.

What you want is physique and a fine appearance, and you are more likely to get them in this way.

Many owners of Persians have been quite content to rear saleable kittens of average merit, and trust for their show reputation to fine animals bought from others.

To encourage breeders special prizes are offered at shows to those who win a first prize with a cat whose mother was in the exhibitor's possession at the time of the kitten's birth. They are very handsome

you should, as a rule, mate her only with a cat of the same colouring, and be especially careful not to cross self-colours with tabbies.

Now selection, as too often understood, means just this: A male cat makes a great sensation at a show and wins many prizes. He is the right colour, therefore to him you will send your queen. What can be simpler? Why this fuss about the difficulty of breeding?

But you are a novice, and know nothing of the value of the pedigree owned by the winning monsieur. It is not so much he himself as his inherited tendencies you have to consider, for assuredly they will reappear in his children.



An old hand will tell you, "Yes, a grand head, but where he got it from is a miracle, with such parents"; or, "Colour? Yes, first-rate, but he was the only one clear from sandy in the litter." Well, what can a bewildered novice do? Remember, you have to try to cap each of your queen's defects with a corresponding virtue in her mate. If she is snipey in face, make head a chief point; if she fails in colour, lay great stress on colour; and so on. My advice is, do not send her to a new star who has but just arisen in the sky of the cat world until you know a little more about your business. Mark your catalogue at shows. Study the cats and kittens whose points please you and who are filling the prize lists, and then notice their sire's name. When you find the same name repeated again and again, and always attached to animals of consistent merit, you will not do far wrong to choose the owner for your queen's mate.

But after having exercised all possible care in the selection of a male cat, we must not expect the litter of kittens to be perfection. All breeders know that there is, as a rule, one kitten in each litter which far surpasses its fellows in beauty.

Perhaps one will possess the type of head you so covet, but the colour is inferior. Another

has colour or markings to perfection, whilst the head is poor. Well, then, they must be mated with an eye to remedying these defects, and a near relative possessing these strong points will be likely to prove the most successful cross; for in-breeding—careful, cautious, and judicious—is another secret of the successful breeder. But one word of caution to the novice: Never be persuaded to breed from an unhealthy animal, be his or her points what they may, and never allow your queens to mate when thoroughly debilitated and out of health; for this lies at the bottom of the difficulty experienced in carrying out the next point we have to consider—*i.e.* the successful rearing of kittens. If cat fanciers could learn this lesson, we should hear far less of infant mortality.

For the ordinary mode of kitten rearing it is essential to have proper out-door quarters, and, if possible, quarters isolated from each other. There is nothing more suitable than the portable houses so readily obtained; but these must be on a dry foundation.

Sunshine, fresh air, and wholesome food are the essentials of a kitten nursery. Moreover, there must never be many young things kept together. Otherwise, some unlucky day you will find a sad-faced kitten looking down its nose, and in two or three days more your whole tribe will be down with distemper and your hopes for the year shattered.

I know it sounds brutal, but I cannot refrain from saying that sentiment is the ruin of successful kitten rearing. Some tiny morsel develops a skin trouble, has chronic diarrhoea, bad eyes or snuffles, and we tenderly nurse it for many weary weeks and perhaps save it.

A victory? Yes, if the morsel were a gem of great value, one of the "surprise babies" in colour or shape that now and again visit every cattery, it may have been worth paying the cost. For pay we shall have to, make no doubt of that. Your kitten nursery will never be quite so



"STAR OF THE SPHERES" AND "SON OF ROY."  
BRED BY MISS E. A. CHAMBERLAYNE.  
(Photo: Russell & Sons, Baker Street.)

healthy again, and in spite of all precautions you will very probably carry sickness to your other stock. I would never breed from unhealthy animals, and I would at once destroy a very sick kitten of tender age.

Lethal boxes rob the act of inhumanity, and you will probably have one little tombstone to erect instead of a dozen!

One great feature of success is the boarding-out system. Any woman really fond of cats who will take a kitten into the bosom of her family and rear it is a perfect boon. Of course, she must be well paid, but if she is successful you can afford to be liberal.

In these cases it is better only to put out your choice specimens that you wish to attain some age before sale or to keep for stock. The others should be sold off at about eight to ten weeks old at moderate prices.

Far more of the trouble with kittens comes from defective digestion than from any other cause, and I suspect we frequently overload their little interiors. When nature makes the small cat turn away from its dinner, we fall into a panic and pour beef essence down its throat. Probably a short fast was all that was required, and it is a mistake to force food until some hours have elapsed. In fact, healthy surroundings and common-sense treatment are the main secrets of successful kitten rearing.



THE "FOSTER-MOTHER."  
(Photo: H. Glacier, Longsight.)



THE "FOSTER-MOTHER" IN ACTION.  
(Photo: H. Glacier, Longsight.)