

FIFTY YEARS AGO IN THE FANCY

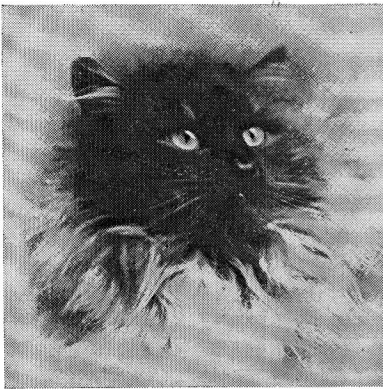
These articles of lasting interest appeared in books and magazines of around a half a century ago. The following are from the collection of Miss Dorothy Mason, who has been doing this research for the Year Book. C.S.

THOSE FACINATING SMOKES

By Mrs. Wm. Singleton

from *The Cat Review*—August, 1912, pp. 20, 21

It is only a few weeks ago that Mrs. James wrote a most interesting account of her smokes, in which she urged novices to go in for them instead of joining the ever-swelling ranks of blue breeders. Of



King Muffy, Smoke Neuter owned by Mrs. H. L. Jacobs from *The Cat Review*, 1912.

course, wealthy novices can, by purchasing at huge figures the best that can be procured of any variety they fancy, soon compete with even the most successful breeders of that variety, so it is not to them that I am addressing myself, but to the many people who have to consider ways and means when taking up a new hobby.

I think if novices would look well before they leap into the already over-crowded ranks of blues, and if they would only glance at the huge classes of blues at any popular shows, they would at once realize that to be at the top of such classes must

involve extraordinary luck or years of patient effort, and they would wisely leave more experienced fanciers to wrestle for that honor. Smokes, on the other hand, having for many years rested under the disability of being considered chance-bred, and having only comparatively lately been recognized as a distinct breed, have been consequently little known outside the fancy, and have had proportionately fewer devotees, consequently prizes are not nearly so unattainable.

Secondly, I think novices should try smokes because the standard is quite easily understood, and it is far easier for a novice to determine what a good smoke ought to be, either by that standard, or if in doubt, by the description which I am sure any smoke breeder would gladly supply to anyone who thought of taking them up, than it would be to grasp from description any particular shade of blue, cream, or silver.

In the third place they are comparatively cheap. A really good breeding female (I am not speaking of winners) can easily be had for about L3 3s., while even winners can often be picked up at a reasonable figure. I have noticed a stud of smoke color advertised lately in these columns—cats that I have no doubt could be made the start of

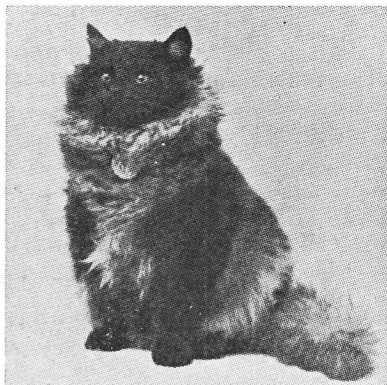
many a successful cattery; but while all sorts of other varieties are snapped up these still remain. Why is it? I fancy because most people have never seen a good smoke, and many more don't even know what a smoke is.

People often call to see my cats. I am quite accustomed to them asking if they are blues or "What nots," as they say about here. I cannot help thinking perhaps if we had some attractive name that it possibly might help to boom them; it sounds so nice to a novice to possess a "blue Persian" or a "chinchilla Persian" but a "smoke" must sound a dirty looking affair, and not so attractive. To these I say: Follow my example and wait until you have seen a good smoke by the side of an equally good specimen of some other variety, and then make up your mind. It was in December, 1907, that my husband and I visited the Midland Counties Show in Birmingham with a view to deciding what variety to go in for and we were both smitten by the undoubted charms of one particular breed. What could be more lovely than a cat with a black, black face, surrounded by the loveliest pale silver frill — a cat with perfect contrasts of color? I consulted my catalogue and found this uncommon looking beauty was a "smoke," and from that moment I have been an ardent lover of the mysterious smoke.

My fourth reason why smokes are preeminently suitable for novices, is because they are such a hardy breed, they flourish out of doors, and the less artificial heat they have the better; in fact, forget they are Persians at all, and bring them up like a common farm-yard specimen, and they flourish best. I was rather astonished last winter at one of our big shows to hear fellow exhibitors bemoaning the cold

for their kittens, and I was asked if I did not fear leaving mine in their pens at night. My reply was that my kittens had never been in such a warm place before, as they were brought up out of doors, and slept from birth in wooden houses with no artificial heat, so I was quite sure they would be quite comfortable in their pens. Of course, I am not advocating turning them out shelterless at night or on pouring wet days; no cats should be treated like this.

Another reason why many novices might join our ranks will, I expect, be regarded as heresy by some of our foremost breeders. It is because many already possess a most excellent founder of a new strain of smokes, and new



Mrs. Sinkin's "SHAITAN"
Smoke Male from *Our Cats*, 1910.



Miss Taylor's "West Wells Betty"
from *Our Cats*, 1912.

strains are exactly what are most needed. I mean a blue female! Only lately, in "Scottish Catdom," Mr. Hally says in criticizing the blues, "some were veritable frog-pond third-raters—some were quite admittedly smokes!" Now, Mr. Hally, this is rather rough on smokes, for while a bad blue can never, never look like a good smoke, still those curious colored blues, provided they have good shape and eyes, and only fail in blueness, are just the ones which, mated to a dark smoke, with a good undercoat, might be the founders of numerous good strains of smokes, whereas they are quite useless to try and breed self colors from. I will explain my meaning more fully later on in another article.

And now may I add one final plea for smokes, this time not to novices, but to some of those already successful owners of catteries who have large studs of almost every variety except smokes? Will not they also include a few smokes, and so give the smoke fancy the greatest possible impetus by thus helping to popularize them?

—Fur and Feather

By Mrs. Wm. Singleton
from The Cat Review—January, 1913, pp. 20-22

In my last article I advocated using a blue female as the founder of a new strain of smokes, but she must have copper eyes to be of any real use. My reason for using a blue is as follows: At the present time we have such a limited amount of smoke stud cats to choose from that it is almost impossible to find one that is not nearly related to our smoke females, so obviously our first endeavor is to get new blood.

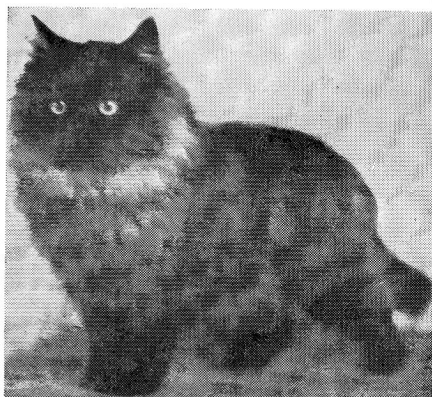
To those who already own the necessary blue, I say mate her to the purest smoke-bred smoke male they can hear of. My experience is that they will find they have one or two smokes, some blues, and some blacks in this litter. Now it all depends on the female as to how many to keep of the rest of the family. If she will be content to rear only a few, I should chloroform all but the smokes; if not, I would let her keep either a blue or black male; this male must be regarded entirely as a pet, and be neutered, otherwise some unlucky fancier may ultimately possess him, who, knowing nothing of his smoke parentage, and thinking him pure bred, might try to breed either blues or blacks from him, for which purpose he is quite unsuitable. If there is no male and the breeder still wishes to keep another kitten, a blue or black female might be useful for smoke breeding, and I should, if possible, mate her back to her smoke sire.

It is from a blue female, mated to smoke males, that I have bred two Palace winning smoke kittens. I have been told that I was in danger of losing the white undercoat, and that blue-bred smokes have never, in this respect, as pure a white, but this has not been so either in Buddha, my 1909 winner, or Banshee, who won in 1911. I have also had experience of the blue cross from the sire. This I do not care for, although, in one case this also proved a success. My Danny had for his grandsire a blue, his mother, Cigarette, being a daughter of orange-eyed Blue Emperor. Cigarette, herself a winner, did fail in undercoat as a kitten, though now when in coat she has a very nice one. The reason I don't care for the blue male cross is be-

cause I know that blue or black would be the strongest color, and hardly any smokes appear in the litters, while my own experience is that one gets nearly all blacks.

Speaking of blacks reminds me that in most smoke litters, especially in litters that have good dark smokes in them, blacks constantly appear. These blacks look very nice as kittens, and will often win if they are of good type, and I, myself, have consequently been tempted to show them. In 1911, I won first black kitten at the Palace with one which was smoke bred on both sides, whilst this last winter I got second and third at the Palace, and second and third at Westminster with "Mascot." The first I sold for a small price, as, on account of her smoke parentage, I knew she would be useless to any one but a smoke breeder; the latter is now a neuter. I was thinking at one time of keeping him to mate to light smokes, and if only his eyes had been good enough he would have been invaluable for that purpose, as, besides, having champion for both sire and dam, he is a lovely shape and type. However, I have reluctantly given up this idea on account of his eyes.

I don't think, on the whole, these blacks are worth rearing, as when they get older they develop into smokes in almost all respects, except that they have no white undercoat whatever and their frills are never quite the lovely pale silver shade I like to see. Any one who has one of these smoke-bred blacks, I should advise them to mate her to the lightest smoke male possible, and she should breed a good percentage of good smokes. I expect someone will ask. "Why not to a chinchilla or silver tabby, instead of a smoke?" But I do not advise this



Alcyone, Smoke Male owned by Mrs. A. M. McAllister, N. Y. from *The Cat Review*, 1915.

because it would at once place the breeders ten years behind our times. Smokes are only too prone to have green eyes; in fact, they are one of the hardest faults to overcome, and as no present-day judge will permit a green-eyed smoke to win, it is better to keep right away from a variety, one of whose chief beauties is grass-green eyes.

Silver tabbies also are a very hard cross for smokes, as there are no worse faults than tabby bars. I think to a novice it must be a little misleading to see smokes so constantly classed with silvers, and I have even seen them spoken of as dark silvers and chinchillas as light ones; how can they be? Can there be two diametrically different colored eyes in the same family? I am glad to say **Fur and Feather** recognizes this point and gives them a space to themselves in its advertisement columns, and does not classify as "Silver."

Having given my advice about an out-cross, I will now try and describe the way that I have found best of mating the smoke females. In the first place, remember that even the few smoke studs we have

differ immensely in their characteristics, and any one going in seriously for smokes should make it their business to find out as much as possible about each stud cat. My advice is to see the cats — only let it be in the winter please, when they have got their full coats — study their points at any show, as it doesn't always do to trust a show report in a paper, as so seldom is it written by a smoke fancier and so often the very thing you most wish to know about a certain cat is not mentioned. It does not necessarily follow that because a cat is a big winner it is the cat to best suit any female. I am a very strong believer in mating of opposites. For instance, suppose the queen has a narrow head and pointed ears and yet in other points is good; pick out a mate for her who excels in shape of head and has tiny ears, and so breed principally for shape in her case.

On the other hand, suppose you possess a very dark female, with little coat and no ruffle; choose for her a heavily-coated male, with a big, light ruff. Or if you have a female who is one grey shade all over — I mean who is the same shade on her ruff as she is on her mask and back — choose for her a male who has his black and grey points most clearly defined. A smoke without contrasts has lost its chief beauty. Or, again, suppose the female has green eyes, mate her to the deepest copper-eyed male possible.

It will be seen from these hints why it is so imperative that we should have plenty of choice in our males; in females, as I have pointed out, we can always begin by a cross out, if we have not got an unrelated smoke. I hope I have made it quite clear that if there is a certain point in which the female fails, go first for that point and leave the next point you want to the next generation. For instance, if you want eyes, go for eyes this year, for coat next, for undercoat afterwards, and so on to perfection.

Personally, I have never yet seen a perfect smoke, but we are nearing perfection. I am sure if I could only roll all my present cats into one I could arrive at what I want, but one has one good point, one another, and I am by no means satisfied yet. Another thing to remember, is that it is not always the best-looking cats that are the most useful as breeders, but it is those who possess most strongly whatever point is most needed and called for by the principal judge at the time. For instance, lately, there has been a perfect rage for eyes, so it is eyes that smoke breeders have been going for, and they are the hardest of all points to get, at least they are easier got than kept; so many kittens have lovely eyes, but so few adults keep them.

Now having, I hope, suitably mated the queen, the next event of importance should be the arrival of the kittens. Do not be in a hurry, to decide as to which are blacks and which are smokes; it is almost impossible even for an expert to tell the first day or two after birth. My Danny was called "the big black" for the first week of his life, and in consequence was nearly one of the ones who had to be destroyed. However, I think he was about a week old when he began to show his under coat and from that moment became a cherished possession. On the other hand, his father, Dannyboy, looked like a young silver tiger when he was born.

Fur and Feather