

CAT GOSSIP

VOL. 1

Phone : Battersea 4358

Edited by H. C. BROOKE

No. 10

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TO SURMA.

I never yet have seen
 More bright intelligence and love
 In eyes of golden-green,
 With brown snub nose between ;
 And feather-tufted ears above
 Complete her charming mien.
 As robe of high degree
 Her burnished coat is long and soft.
 She owns no pedigree,
 But like ancestral " tree "
 Her dainty brush is borne aloft
 For all the world to see.
 Far off I hear her cry
 Responding when I call her home :
 Her light paws swiftly fly,
 Like feathers flitting by.
 And soon will Surma purring come
 Before the fire to lie.

PHYLLIS K. M. LEATHERDALE.

GOSSIP OF THE WEEK

Siamese owners, please read Major Woodiwiss' letter on another page. The second volume of the Register is to be in form similar to No. 1, but all entries will receive a number, carrying on from Vol. I, as if that had been numbered.

* * * * *

Mrs. Egerton Free, of Croydon, whose beneficent work amongst stray cats we have already mentioned, has just finished the arduous task of clearing some large yards and warehouses inhabited by semi-wild cats, many in an advanced state of mange, which in some instances had rendered the victims blind, they only finding their rare meals by the smell. It need surely not be pointed out what a menace such poor diseased pariahs form to all pets in their vicinity? It is to more effectually deal with such matters that the Animal Lovers' League has been formed. Some of the most prominent names in Catdom are on its members' list, but more help is required. All particulars can be obtained from the Secretary at the office of CAT GOSSIP.

A correspondent writes questioning the advisability of Sir Claud Alexander's prescription of peroxide for kittens' eyes. I know nothing of this preparation myself, so referred to Sir Claud, who, as most of you know, has great experience. He and I both started Cat showing about 1905—not many exhibitors of to-day date back so far! and bear in mind, both he and Lady Alexander have a perhaps unrivalled experience in the nurture and rearing of all kinds of rare animals, some of the utmost delicacy, having won many prizes for this very thing. So his opinion is worthy of every respect; and regarding his views expressed as to the constant use of all kinds of patent medicines etc., which is becoming a real craze to-day, pray note that his opinion here exactly coincides with that expressed (CAT GOSSIP, No. 8, page 2) by one of the best known Feline Practitioners of the day, to whom I know that very many of our leading fanciers pin their faith! Sir Claude writes:—"I used to have endless trouble with sore eyes until I used the peroxide and now now have none." There is no question of "touching" the eyes and as for "stinging," try it next time you prick your finger. . . . even if it did sting a week-old kitten, the price would be a cheap one to pay for immunity from the terrible suffering caused by sore eyes. It is the most extraordinary remedy for any festering wound: a few drops put on it will froth up like champagne, evaporate at once, and leave the wound perfectly clean. Cat breeders seem never satisfied unless they get hold of quack or complicated remedies, without them the vocation of certain correspondents is gone! We have been most successful in keeping delicate animals to extreme old age, and our medicine chest never contained anything but Peroxide, Iodine, and oil, with a little sulphur for the dogs; when a case gets beyond these simple things it is time to call in a qualified Vet.!" Notice, please, how this opinion tallies with that recently expressed by Mrs. Singleton in a contemporary, as to "The Simple Life," being best for cats! To these remedies, however, I myself would add quinine as an appetiser and

tonic; one patent food and ditto medicine, and Friar's Balsam for ear canker—an absolute specific, two or three drops poured in every second day, will often cure long-standing and most purulent cases. Castor oil is also soothing for this ailment, but I do NOT believe in powders of any kind being placed in the ear: they may have a certain curative action, but are obviously apt to set up a mechanical irritation.

* * * * *

My friendly opponent, M. Steens, of Antwerp, has purchased from Miss Dixon the Siamese kitten Princess Bastit, referred to by our reporter at Kentish Town as a beautiful kitten.

* * * * *

Miss Perkins, Hon. Sec. of the Neuter Cat Club, points out that Mrs. Aubrey's Chinchilla Ivan could not take the Rapunzel Cup at Kentish Town, he being a L.H. and his owner also not being a Club member. Miss Perkins has sold her Chinchilla kitten, Just Robin, to an American purchaser.

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We are sorry to say that the lady who promised us a report of the Smokes at Kentish Town has not supplied it.

* * * * *

Miss Wakeford's well-known Blue S.H. Ch. Prince Mordkin and his sire, Man Friday, enter our stud columns this week. Miss Wakeford is in China at the moment, but Mrs. Wakeford was in charge of her cats at Kentish Town and very pleased at the successes of kittens sired by these studs. All the awards in Blue classes, by the way, did not give satisfaction, but the light was most unfavourable, shedding, as I noticed, a sort of tawny tinge on the blue-jackets.

* * * * *

We are pleased to notice that the Blue Persian queen Blue Ball, which took 1st in adult females at Paris, was bred by our contributor, Mrs. Basnett.

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Our Belgian contemporary, *Chasse et Peche*, gives almost in its entirety this week Mr. H. C. Brooke's article on the Malay Cat, published in CAT GOSSIP, No. 8. A superbly typical Siamese head occupies the front cover. M. Armand Steens of Antwerp, known to many of my readers, will contribute a weekly cat column to the Brussels paper.

ORIGIN OF THE SIAMESE CAT.

By LILIAN J. VELEY, D.Sc.

AS the earliest exhibitor of Siamese Cats in this country (Crystal Palace, 1885), I am tempted to join in the interesting discussion as to their possible origin. Any theories must be largely based on conjecture, for, beyond the knowledge that these beautiful animals were well known fifty years ago in practically their present form in Siam, we have no certain data to go upon. Many traditions have grown up around them, some well-founded, some to a biologist like myself amusingly otherwise. It may be worth while to try to dispose of some of the latter.

First, then, as to what characters can fairly be described as ancestral. It is well-established, that a character in any animal which is much more marked at or before birth than at later stages of development may be taken to be a recapitulation of family history, and is not to be regarded as a recent adaptation. Striping and barring on the tail (the latter often marked in *young* Siamese kittens) is an ancestral character common to all the cat tribe. Even lion-cubs show distinct spotting at birth and up to six months old.

(Analogous cases may be found in the distinctly spotted young of the self-coloured Puma: the spotted young of Red Deer and Wild Boar, etc.—ED.)

Another such character is the "kink," usually but not invariably found in the Siamese cat's tail: this if present, is very marked at birth, and is not only ancestral but extremely interesting, as its origin is lost in antiquity. Both the great anatomist Sir Richard Owen, and the late Professor H. N. Moseley were interested in the question; the latter thought the kink might be the relic of a prehensile tail. The assertion often made that the kink is due to intercrossing with the "common" strain is disposed of at once by the fact that there is no other cat known in Siam, "common" or otherwise*, which has or ever had an original kink! It is therefore, biologically a folly to attempt to breed out the kink, though individual judges at Shows may give the preference to straight tailed cats if they like.

It is far otherwise with the "squint," now so common; this is of quite recent development, is heritable, and is going far towards spoiling the beautiful eyes which are a feature of the Siamese Cat.

As to the coat-colour and markings, it is just possible that they are due to a little suspected ancestor. My brother, the late E. B. Gould, for many years H.M. Consul at Bangkok, once sent me a sketch of the head of a Viverrine (sp. unknown) he had shot in Siam, which had exactly the marking of our cats, cream ground with well-defined seal-brown mask and ears, and, of course, the "marten-face." Crosses between civet or genet and the ordinary cat are not unknown and should the other ancestor have been a Bay jungle-cat, and the hybrids not sterile, here are possibilities which would explain much.

The only other theory I have heard advanced is that the Portuguese may have introduced a kink-tailed cat to the East a hundred years ago. But I do not know if there is any actual evidence of the existence of a kink-tailed cat in Portugal.**

I should like to know whether the Viverrid mentioned above is still found in Siam? My brother was the first to establish a cattery in Bangkok, and I am told that the cats there are still often spoken of as "Gould's Cats." My first pair were brought over by another brother, Mr. Owen Gould, in 1884 and particulars of them and of their progeny will, I believe, appear in Vol. II of the Siamese Register, when published.

Remarks by Editor.—*For statement by a former King of Siam as to the cause of kinks in Siamese tails, see CAT GOSSIP, No. 3, page 1.

**For further information on this matter the reader is referred to my article on The Malay Cat, CAT GOSSIP, No. 8. Note that in 1783 kink-tailed Cats were already the rule in at least some parts of Malaysia.

The "prehensile tail" theory I confess I cannot regard seriously. Such tails do not occur in the Civets, etc., from which older form the more highly specialised felines would appear to have evolved. Again, crooked and twisted tails are very common amongst Bulldogs. Would any one advance the theory that Bulldogs derive from a primitive prehensile-tailed Canine?

OUR ANIMAL FRIENDS SPEAK.

Appealing to the Children.

By J. RICHARD TRAYNOR, M.C.S.S.

EDUCATIONALISTS are beginning to realise more and more that visual training is one of the most successful ways of appealing to children. Show a child a photograph, a model or a cinematograph film and you conjure up in his mind a vivid picture of the object, place or process

you are trying to impress upon him. You at once set up an interest than can be secured in no other way.

The more progressive schools and teachers having appreciated this fact I have found a welcome awaiting my project of a model theatre in the classroom. On its tiny stage can be enacted historical and geographical scenes of the utmost value, and it can often turn what would be an otherwise dull lesson into a most fascinating and instructive hour.

What we are primarily concerned with, however, is the promotion of animal welfare propaganda among the young, and I can here most emphatically say that it has been my experience that the model theatre is an ideal means of inciting the children's interest and sympathy for their animal friends.

With the greatest ease, using that delightful power conferred upon us by the beautiful imagination of a child, we can make our animal friends speak to us and tell us their own story. The younger children will be delighted at such a pleasing fancy and if we only arrange our matter carefully, their more prosaic elder brothers and sisters will be genuinely interested in what the animals have to say. There is something of a genuine thrill, for example, when the pit pony describes his arduous life in the mine and with such a scene I have so aroused the children's sympathy as to secure their active collaboration as a body in helping the campaign for the emancipation of the pit-pony.

Again—and here the readers of this paper are more intimately concerned—the story of the domestic pets can be made into a most attractive scene. What is more effective than to compare on our tiny stage the life of a cherished cat sleekly curled up by the fireside beside its bowl of cream, with the life of a poor discarded outcast miserably roaming the wet streets? There is here scope for two carefully painted scenes. So effective is such an item if cleverly worked up that a word of warning is really necessary here. I have known young children so moved by such a theme as to cry bitterly, so we should be careful to so present our little story as to inspire sympathy without "over-doing" it.

These two examples will serve to show how valuable a means of propaganda a model theatre skilfully worked can be to an animal welfare society. Many schools will be delighted to have a performance in their classrooms and as a sideshow at a bazaar or exhibition there could be nothing more effective. Children are always fascinated by a model stage with its tiny dolls and gaudy scenery, and where propaganda is concerned this is the sugar that coats the

pill—but in the hands of an experienced and enthusiastic operator there is no pill at all—the little show is such a palatable sweetmeat that children call for more!

In all such model theatre plays there should be plenty of action—the animals should not merely stand up and talk—the story should be enacted as a scene. The animals should all be as lifelike as possible, and not be caricatures or burlesques, although Felix or Bonzo may well render a song or dance between the mere serious scenes! Get the children enthusiastic and let them use their voices:

"Boys and girls, are you sorry for the poor stray cats?"

"YES!"

"Will you do all you can to help them?"

"YES!!"

"Will you all join the Animal Lovers' League?"

"YES!!!"

And so on. Follow up the performance by joining the class or group to the League as a body and give them collection boxes and cards. Children love collecting and do much valuable work, as they are irresistible. Often have I seen a dear old gentleman captured by two little girls, looking at him entreatingly. It nearly always "comes off" and sometimes they get half-a-crown each! Get the class to write essays on what they have seen on the model stage, adding any experiences of their own, and offer a small prize for the best. In this way, given the stimulus set up by the actual performance, workers can use their ingenuity in manifold ways to create widespread interest in animal welfare activity.

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A QUEER SUPERSTITION.

THE following account of a curious superstition in modern Egypt, related about three-quarters of a century ago, by Lady Duff-Gordon, is certainly of interest.

"Do you remember the German story of the lad who travelled 'um das gruseln zu lernen' (to learn how to shudder)? Well, I who never 'gruselte' (shuddered) before, had a touch of it a few mornings ago. I was sitting here quietly drinking tea, and four or five men were present, when a cat came to the door. I called, and offered milk, but puss, after looking at us, ran away.

'Well dost thou, Lady,' said a quiet sensible man, a merchant here, 'to be kind to the Cat, for I daresay he gets little enough at home: his father, poor man, cannot cook for his children every day'; then, in an explanatory tone to the company: 'That's Ali Nasseree's boy, Yussuf, it must be Yussuf, because his twin, Ismain, is with his uncle at Negadeh.'

'Mir gruselte' (I shuddered) I confess: not but what I have heard things almost as absurd from gentlemen and ladies in Europe, but an 'extravagance' in a Kaftan has a different effect from one in a tail-coat.

'What! my butcher-boy who brings the meat—a Cat?' I gasped.

'To be sure, and he knows well where to look for a bit of good cookery, you see. All twins go out as Cats at night, if they go to sleep hungry, and their own bodies lie at home like dead, meanwhile, but no one must touch them or they would die. Why, your own boy, Achmet, does it. Ho, Achmet! Achmet appears.

'Boy, don't you go out as a Cat at night?'

'Non,' said Achmet tranquilly, 'I am not a twin. My sister's sons do.'

I enquired if people were not afraid of such Cats.

'No, there is no fear: they only eat a little of the cookery, but if you beat them, they tell their parents next day. 'So-and-so beat me in his house last night,' and show their bruises. No, they are not afreets: they are beni-Adam. Only twins do it, and if you give them a sort of onion broth and some milk, the first thing when they are born, they do not do it at all.'

Omar professed never to have heard it, but I am sure he had, only he dreads being laughed at. One of the American missionaries told me something like it, as belonging to the Copts; but it is entirely Egyptian, and common to both religions. I asked several Copts, who assured me it was true, and told it just the same. Is it a remnant of the doctrine of transmigration? However, the notion fully accounts for the horror the people feel at the idea of killing a cat."

From *The Book of Cats*

CAT CALLS.

From Major E. SYDNEY WOODIWISS.
 AS I am nearing the completion of Vol. II of "The Siamese Cat Register," I should be glad if owners and breeders of Siamese whose cats did not appear in Vol. I and have not been registered with the Governing Council since May 1, 1924, would send me full particulars so that they can be included in the present volume. As my object in publishing these Registers is to help both present and future breeders to trace out pedigrees, etc., it naturally follows that I am desirous of every Siamese being included, whether registered or not, otherwise my object is but partially fulfilled. So many owners of perhaps one pet queen do not bother to register, but breed from her not realising how important it is the progeny should have a registered dam and thus an authentic pedigree. This gulf we can largely bridge over if we can insert in the Siamese Cat Register details of these unregistered queens. I shall be much obliged and my work much facilitated if owners will send along the particulars asked for. . . . I think CAT GOSSIP excellent, and a jolly good threepennyworth.

BOOKS REVIEWED.

By M. SHERIDAN JONES.

Out through the wood
 When the moon is good
 The grey cat goes a-creeping,
 And, Hush! Hush! Hush!
 For the sparrow and the thrush,
 When all but the mice are sleeping."

These lines taken from Mr. Mortimer Batten's "Patrol Calls and Signs," a little volume intended to teach scouts the pronunciation of the beast or bird after which their Patrol is named, will make an instant appeal to all young people. Such widely differing creatures as the Antelope and the Nightjar, the Elephant and the Cobra, are introduced to us, and nearly all of the sketches is set off with some jolly verses.

* * * * *

Moko and Rufus are two male cats in charge of a hospital. We say in charge advisedly for staff, patients and visitors all compete to gain

True Stories of the London Zoo, by P. N. Hart Scott, 1s. net.

Moko and Rufus, by H. M. Turner (Claude Stacey Ltd., 2s. net).

Patrol Calls and Signs, by Mortimer Batten, F.Z.S.) C. Arthur Pearson, 1s. 6d. net).

their affection. They are clever cats and the story of their doings and undoings make amusing reading.

* * * * *

Books on the Zoo are always acceptable when illustrated like this one and written with so true an understanding of animal character. Pamela, the camel who is very ill after each Bank Holiday, and Grace the lazy crane, with suffragist leanings, are presented to us in a new and amusing guise. As indeed are all our old friends. A pleasant little volume for a leisure hour.

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All other matters to: Proprietor, CAT GOSSIP, Phone: Battersea 4358. 11, TUNLEY ROAD, LONDON, S.W 17

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