

CAT · GOSSIP

VOL. 3

Edited by H. C. BROOKE

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LONG-HAIR LORE.

By MRS. CAMPBELL-FRASER.

(Phone: Hendon 1019.)

I very much regret to hear that Miss E. M. Hill has had the misfortune to break her arm; the accident happened on New Year's Day, and most unluckily the right arm is the injured one.

Miss B. Appleby (Newcastle) sends the following interesting notes of "How I became an exhibitor:": "Some years ago a black half-Persian male kitten, six months old, was given me as a present. I had him neutered, and after two years, from some illness or other, he died. His death was a great grief, as I had become very attached to him, and, hoping it might bring me some consolation for his loss, I bought, through an advertisement, a pure-bred black female Persian kitten. When she was nearly a year old I was told by a cat fancier who saw her that she was a very good cat, and would breed good kittens. There was no good local black Persian stud to whom I could mate her, so she was nearly two years old when I mated her to a blue Persian; he sired three lovely black kittens, one male and two females, and as they were considered good kits I exhibited them in our Ch. Show at Newcastle. I entered them all in the black kitten class, but only exhibited two—male and female—Endora and Ronald (the latter I sold last year as a stud). To my pleasant and great surprise I won 1st and 2nd prize and several specials, but through not being a member at the time of the B. and W. Club could not claim the latter. I again mated Jetta to the same blue stud, Hayhurst, and in her next litter of five she had three males and two females; unfortunately two males and one female died. I again exhibited at Hexham Show in the following year. Roderick, the male of the second litter, and Endora, the 1st prize kitten of the previous year, and again won 1st and 2nd prizes, 1st with the male, who was 8 months, and 2nd with Endora, then 13 months. At our last Ch. Show, at Newcastle, I exhibited all my four blacks, Jetta, Endora, Roderick, and Chloris, and was awarded v h c with Roderick in the Ch. Class, he also winning 3rd in the Novice. This year I hope to have some good black kittens ready for the Ch. Shows. My ambition is to breed a black Persian as near perfection as possible, to be worthy to merit a championship, and in time to become a full champion."

I must congratulate Miss Appleby on her praiseworthy ambition; 'tis the right spirit, and I hope before long will spell fulfilment.

Brown tabby L.H. should be looking up again, for with improved health Miss Hotson is returning with spirit to take up her old pets; she is hoping to find a cottage near Southport, or a home with another fancier whose house is asking for company. At present located in Glooston, called by a Leicestershire lady "God's Lost 'un," she gives the following description: Glooston is a hamlet of 52 inhabitants, including babies. My cottage is the end one of a row of six, and each of my neighbours owns a cat or two, and in two cases a dog as well. They all believe a cat should keep itself—it does, but at the expense of the neighbours; three or four can always be seen patiently waiting at my door till it is feeding time, and two have practically made a home with me. My bedroom is on the ground floor, the window always open a little; one night last summer I was roused by a cat crying and trying to get in. I did nothing, and she went away. I heard her crying and rattling the handle of her own house door; presently she returned, and cried so piteously that I got up and let her on. She went straight to a basket, and had her kittens in a few minutes! This is a true story; now little mother looks upon this as "home" and in return has helped with Mollie Malone's kits. When in the garden, woe betide any dog that ventured near; she was soon on his back, and he flew off to his own abode. My other cat is a cast-off pet. Until children arrived in the homestead, kitty had a happy life, was made much of and petted, but the children were allowed to tease her so that she will not go near her old home. My young great-nephew of 8 sums up the situation thus: "There's great-grandmother cat, mother cat, two kittens, and lots of visitors!" My fourth attack of rheumatic fever in 1921 put me out of all my brown tabby breeding, but I hope to be able now to do some good work again, and to put some pre-war type specimens in the pens. 'Tis good to feel one is once again in the swim of the tabbies.

Mr. Budd tells me he has purchased Mirza of Bredon from Mrs. Yeend. This cream kitten was best kitten in Show at Croydon, and should make an adult of points. Mr. Budd is much disappointed that owing to the change of ownership taking place too late, he is unable to show Mirza at the S.C.C.C.

Down South are we losing weight in our blue Persian? A fancier from the "Border" considers her blue queen (just off a litter of five) to be a light weight at 8lbs. The kittens, one male and four females, weigh 5½ and 4lbs, respectively.

Congratulations to Jill of Ashburnham, who annexed her seventh championship at Worcester the other day. In fact, Mrs. McClure had quite a field day with her blacks, and we were glad to hear it, for she is one of our young fanciers who loves her cats and thoroughly enjoys her hobby.

DEBUTANTE'S DIARY.

In choosing sires for our prospective kittens it is well to remember that the maiden queens should mate with the older studs and the veteran queens with the young studs.

GOSSIP OF THE WEEK.

WHEN we asked readers not to cause us any unnecessary correspondence at this period, when we are overwhelmed with work and worry, we did not mean that we wanted no news! We have received none this week—even the Siamese, our good supporters, have not sent in a single item! This is disheartening, and adds to our worry. We are running "Cat Gossip" as a hobby and for the benefit of cat lovers, and we do not want to have to worry ourselves to death about it! Subscriptions are also due from a number, and should be sent in, please.

WE were very interested in Miss Howey's remarks on the Polydactyles, whilst not being in accordance with her views. It seems to us rather late in the day for Nature to begin thus to improve on the predaceous characteristics of the feline tribe! Sometimes these additional members, a form of "freak" which reaches its highest development in the so-called "Siamese twins," are really only due to the joining together in the mother-body of two more or less imperfect young. Two-headed or eight-legged animals are thus produced from time to time. Polydactyle humans have also been recorded, with extra fingers and toes, but we have never heard it assumed that Nature was thereby endeavouring to improve upon the human race. Miss Howey's cats appear, from her description, to derive additional "grip" from their polydactylism; but we ourselves owned a polydactyle Manx some thirty years ago, which had four extra toes on each foot—sixteen in all, and these were set so high above the normal feet that they were never used at all in grasping.

THERE is, of course, no precedent to go by, but we think a class of polydactyles should be judged 90 per cent. for polydactylism—not for colour, etc. A cat as described above, with sixteen "extras," should beat one with three extras per foot. Again, one with two "extras" per foot should beat one with three extras on two feet only; and one regularly supplied should beat one with the extras on one side only. Polydactylism as sometimes seen in

other animals, when a small hoof appears near the normal one, is, we believe, the junction of an imperfect fœtus to the normal one in the uterus. The case of these polydactyle cats we put much on a par with the polydactylism shown markedly in some varieties of dogs, notably the St. Bernard. In some of these we find a double dew-claw on the hind feet, which is a great hindrance, not a benefit; though the effort was made to make out that these claws were useful in preventing the St. Bernard from sinking in the snow—somewhat too far-fetched! All these abnormalities do inherit very strongly—as does, for instance, the "double nose" or split septum, formerly so much sought for in the "Spanish Pointer," and in the old-fashioned "Boxer" and "Bullenbeisser" in Germany; they are not, however, on this account to be held as a forward step made by Nature.

Mrs. HIGGINS (Ipswich), who, we regret to hear is almost crippled by rheumatism, writes that it was Snowman, not Sumurun, to whom her White Ladye was in kitten.

S.C.C.C. SHOW. We have arranged with Mrs. Oglethorpe to do our L.H. notes; Mrs. Basnett will review the S.H.; and Mrs. Duncan-Hindley her judges' report on Siamese. Will all friends of "Cat Gossip" help these ladies by giving them all possible information?

WE observe a tension in Siamese circles which bids fair to result in a somewhat heated meeting on February 1st. The Club has done so remarkably well during the past two years, we should greatly regret to see any dissension which would interfere with its smooth working in the future, and hope to see all differences smoothed over. The Club has been "Cat Gossip's" good friend from the first, and we only wish it well.

WE are sorry to hear that Miss Sladen has to mourn the loss of her young Maux, Little Pierrot, a winner at the Palace, who died last week after a very short illness.

AT Brussels, 8th inst., there were 80 exhibits. Prestwick Periwinkle won in Siamese, and Cyrus of Downside in L.H. Three tricolour Spanish female cats and a couple of African Civets were a great attraction.

OUR Veterinary Adviser is looking for a copy of Miss Simpson's "Book of the Cat." Can any reader supply?

MAJOR HAMILTON KIRK ON POLYDACTYLISM.

I read Miss Howey's article on polydactyle cats with interest, and I think her theory as to the appearance of supernumerary toes is quite untenable. The condition is not by any means uncommon among cats, and when occurring is apparently hereditary.

Polydactyle dogs are quite rarely encountered in comparison with such members of the feline race, and if a case should occur, the owner of the dog is



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usually very anxious to have the extra toes removed. In dogs even the dewclaw is an offence, being both unsightly and liable to injury.

Miss Howey holds that two or even three supernumerary toes (as may sometimes be found on all four feet of cats) are an advantage to the animal in its pursuit of prey, and thinks that they are a development of Nature with this object in view. My own opinion is that they are a freak of Nature, and that far from being desirable they are a distinct disadvantage, from several viewpoints. A cat with four good claws is eminently well equipped for tackling any kind of small prey—as we all know; six or seven are superfluous, and the muscles supplying the extra ones are, moreover, far less developed and less powerful than are those of the natural or normal toes. Quite frequently such digits are entirely useless.

I have always considered that one of the essential points of a cat is small feet. Seven toes are certainly not conducive to this effect. The polydactyle cat seems to me to be unnatural, and I hope no effort will be made to perpetuate it. A six or seven-fingered man would be looked upon as a monstrosity, and this is how I regard a cat with similar formation. The cat is a thing of grace and beauty, and it is to be hoped that nobody will attempt to spoil these attributes, or popularise freakishness by affording special classes at cat shows for polydactyles.

H. K.

THE CAT IN BOOKS.

By F. E. LEANING.

Whether Jerome K. Jerome's "Novel Notes" (1893) was a piece of genuine autobiography, or whether it was clever make-believe, I do not know, but in that engaging miscellany he devotes some thirty pages to cats, and the accompanying drawings were by Louis Wain. I picked up a copy recently in a second-hand bookshop (it has long been out of print, of course), and wondered how many of the public who rocked with laughter over "Three Men in a Boat," when they were young, and went to see "The Passing of the Third Floor Back" when they were, well, elderly, knew of this forgotten work.

Jerome, I am afraid, in spite of his profound sympathy and his glorious gift of humour, belonged to a generation and a type which regarded cats as subject-matter for a display of cynical wit. We get that tone in E. V. Lucas's "A Cat Book," and in Oliver Herford's "Rubaiyat of a Persian Kitten." Some men can see nothing in the cat but a supreme egotism, mottled with greed, cruelty, and mischief, ignoring the strong resemblance to their own sex which these unlovely qualities display. Mr. Edwin Pugh, I think, has the unique distinction of having pointed out how much more cats are like men than women, in several ways; though it has been left to a man, Pierre Loti, to produce the most tender and

beautiful story of his "Moumouttes" that has ever been written.

Here is a sample of Jerome's cynicism; not the worst, which is really too painful, but some remarks attributed to his friend Jephson:

"Only this morning" (says Jephson) "I was watching that tortoiseshell of yours on the houseboat. She was creeping along the roof, behind the flower-boxes, stalking a young thrush that had perched upon a coil of rope. Murder gleamed from her eye, assassination lurked in every twitching muscle of her body. As she crouched to spring, Fate, for once favouring the weak, directed her attention to myself, and she became, for the first time, aware of my presence. It acted upon her as a heavenly vision upon a Biblical criminal. In an instant she was a changed being. The wicked beast, going about seeking whom it might devour, had vanished. In its place sat a long-tailed furry angel, gazing up into the sky with an expression that was one-third innocence and two-thirds admiration of the beauties of Nature. What was she doing there, did I want to know? Why, could I not see, playing with a bit of earth. Surely I was not so evil-minded as to imagine she wanted to kill that dear little bird—God bless it."

Later on, in different vein, Jerome tells the story of his own family cat. So long as she had a family, any kind of family, she was happy. "Her brains had run entirely to motherliness, for she hadn't much sense. She thought everything young was a kitten. We once mixed up a spaniel puppy that had lost its mother among her progeny. I shall never forget her astonishment when it first barked. She boxed both its ears, and then sat looking down at it with an expression of indignant sorrow that was really touching. . . . He was a good little dog. He did try to mew, and he did try to wash his face with his paw, and to keep his tail still, but his success was not commensurate with his will.

"Later on we gave her a baby squirrel to rear. She was nursing a family of her own at the time, but she adopted him with enthusiasm, under the impression that he was another kitten, though she could not quite make out how she had come to overlook him. He soon became her prime favourite. She liked his colour, and took a mother's pride in his tail. What troubled her was that it would cock up over his head. She would hold it down with one paw, and lick it by the half-hour together, trying to make it set properly. But the moment she let it go, up it would cock again. I have heard her cry with vexation because of this.

"One day a neighbouring cat came to see her, and the squirrel was clearly the subject of their talk.

"'It's a good colour,' said the friend, looking critically at the supposed kitten, who was sitting up on his haunches, combing his whiskers.

"'It's a lovely colour,' exclaimed our cat proudly.

"'I don't like his legs much,' remarked the friend.

"'No,' responded his mother thoughtfully, 'you're

right there. His legs are his weak point. I can't say I think much of his legs myself . . . but they'll come all right in time. And then, look at his tail. Now, honestly, did you ever see a kitten with a finer tail?'

"'Yes, it's a good tail,' assented the other; 'but why do you do it up over his head?'

"'I don't,' answered our cat. 'It goes that way. I can't make it out. I suppose it will come straight as he gets older.'

"'It will be awkward if it don't,' said the friend.

"'Oh, but I'm sure it will,' replied our cat. 'I must lick it more. It's a tail that wants a good deal of licking, you can see that.'

"And for hours that afternoon, after the other cat had gone, she sat trimming it; and, at the end, when she lifted her paw off it, and it flew back again like a steel spring over the squirrel's head, she sat and gazed at it with feelings that only those among my readers who have been mothers themselves will be able to comprehend."

Note by Editor.—In his book, "They and I," Jerome had the following with regard to the philosophical nature of the cat: "You put the philosopher down anywhere. It is all the same to him, he takes his philosophy with him. You tell him he is an emperor, or give him penal servitude for life. He goes on being an emperor just as if nothing had happened. We have an old tom cat. The children lead it an awful life. It does not seem to matter to the cat. They shut it up in the piano; their idea is that it will make a noise and frighten one. It doesn't make a noise; it goes to sleep. When, an hour later, someone opens the piano the poor thing is lying stretched out on the keyboard purring to itself. They dress it up in the baby's clothes and take it out in the perambulator; it lies there perfectly contented looking at the scenery—takes in the fresh air. They haul it about by its tail. You would think it was grateful to them for a new sensation. Apparently it looks on everything that comes its way as helpful experience. . . . Now, he is your true philosopher, that cat; never minds what happens to him, and is equally contented if it doesn't."

CAT CALLS.

TO THE EDITOR.

I noticed in last week's "Cat Gossip" that a lady says lemon juice is poisonous to cats. May I assure readers that that is NOT so, as I myself actually doctored one of my adult cats with lemon juice, and he not only got better, but quite well, and was sold only a few months ago to Germany, where he delighted his new owner.

(Mrs.) A. H. CATTERMOLE.

TO THE EDITOR.

Mrs. Harvey asks as to lemon juice being poisonous to cats. This is no new danger. In a leaflet published by the British Union Anti-Vivisection Society, quoting Dr. Herbert Snow on the use-

lessness of experiments on animals for the benefit of humanity, amongst other examples, we read: "We enjoy lemonade—its basis, citric acid, is a potent poison to cats and rabbits. And a writer in "The Abolitionist," November, 1927, commenting on experiments in feeding rats with orange and lemon juices, says, "Had the experimenters fed cats instead of rats on lemon juice the result would probably have been to kill the cats, and then (if the result had not been concealed) we should have been told it was dangerous to take lemon juice.

(Miss) A. PARKER.

[We have consulted the "Cat Gossip" Veterinary Adviser; but from the above it would seem that there is certainly a risk in lemon juice for cats, and, therefore, it would certainly be well to see that no cat gets any fish scraps on which lemon juice has been used. It may well be that some cats would feel no ill effects; others of more delicate constitution or more easily affected by this particular acid might suffer severely, therefore it is wisest to run no risks.—Ed.]

SHOULD THE CAT BE BIGGER THAN THE RAT ?

TO THE EDITOR.

Dear Sir,—What is the object of Championship Classes at Cat Shows? Is it not to maintain the different breeds at their proper standard? Are not those cats which are awarded championships in the various classes meant to be looked upon by breeders of such classes as models of what they should aim at in breeding? And by the "standard" should breeders not understand that size is a very important point? Recently the standard of size in breeding cattle for beef has been reduced because present-day people make no demand for large joints of meat. But surely there is no adequate reason for reducing the size of cats. Above all things, it seems necessary to maintain, if not to improve, the size, for no one, I should imagine, wants to produce "pocket" cats, for at any rate they should be larger than the rats which they are supposed to deal with. At one of the Shows last year the late Mr Shakespeare, who was a breeder of great experience, said that he was sorry to note a loss of size in the Siamese. No one wants to see huge ungainly cats in this breed, and it is not necessary to go to that extreme, but surely it is very desirable to keep them at a reasonable size. At the Worcester Show the judge awarded the championship in the female class of Siamese to a cat which she herself describes in her notes as "a little gem, but she must grow, she is very small." That being so, and I believe the description to be quite correct, would it not have been better to withhold the championship altogether (which the judge has power to do) rather than to award it to such a small thing? I am not writing this because my wife's cat was placed below the winner. My wife is too good a sportsman to mind being beaten. But on the face of it I think this judging wants explaining. Siamese breeders ought to be told now whether they are to aim at "little gems" or at normal sized cats in the approaching breeding season.

FRANK HARVEY.

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All correspondence re "CAT GOSSIP" to the Editor,

H. C. BROOKE,

Bishop's Hull, Taunton.

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