

CAT · GOSSIP

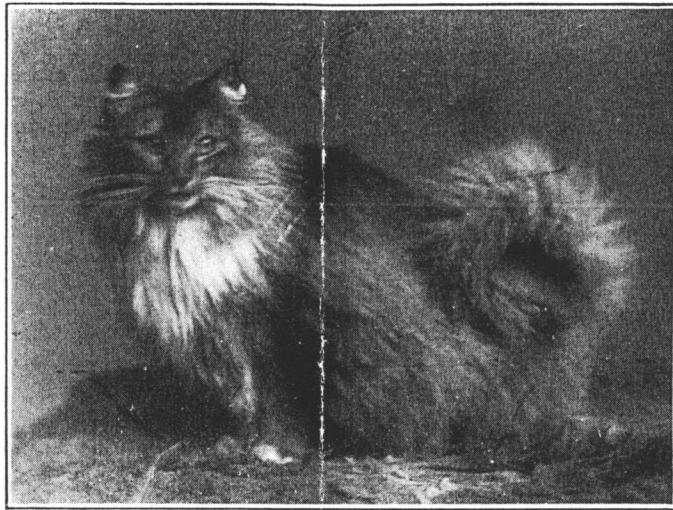
VOL. 3

Edited by H. C. BROOKE

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A CURIOUS CAT.

Some weeks back Mrs. Campbell-Fraser mentioned a cat which she called a "Pom-cat," because his tail carriage gave him the appearance of a toy Pom. Cats with this peculiar carriage are recorded from time to time. (We remember a S.H. black which used to be shown by Mrs. Stoneham late in the 'nineties—Dickie Darling by name.) This cat, the property of Mrs. Roach-Smith, of Sawbridgeworth, is the son of a Persian father and an Abyssinian mother. His very long and soft coat, which touches the ground, is dark sable shading to fawn. He always carries his tail tightly curled over his back. From an enquiry recently addressed to us by the Curator of the Exeter Zoo, we learn that there is a cat with similar tail carriage in the neighbourhood of Exmouth. Incidentally, Mrs. Roach-Smith is a descendant of that Charles Roach-Smith, who, in early part of last century, was noted for his knowledge of and works on Ancient London.

BIRTHS.

April 16th.—Miss Langton's **Weemena**, 4 kittens by Mrs. Campbell-Fraser's **Hendon Alexis**.

LONG-HAIR LORE.

BY MRS. CAMPBELL-FRASER. (Phone: Hendon 1019).

A mistake crept into my notes of a former week, so, to get the trouble off my mind, I will commence my article by setting it right. Ch. Sensation of Hounslow, the dam of Narcissus of Dunesk, was erroneously named as the "sire"—that beautiful and famous white queen is so well known as a "lady" that the public mind would instinctively correct my clerical error, I feel sure. The sire of Narcissus was Snowman, owned by Mrs. Higgins. This stud has to his credit some very good progeny.

The B.P.C.S. are to hold their Annual General Meeting, at Anderton's Hotel, Strand, on Thursday, May 24th. Miss J. M. Fisher, the Hon. Sec., will be sending out the notices in due course. Being Hon. Treasurer of this Club I can speak with confidence of its ambitious policy; it supports all shows in a liberal spirit, and in its turn is well worth joining. A remark I heard the other day was a tribute to the energy of this Club. "Too much blue in the Fancy!" Well, it is up to the other colours to dispute supremacy with this friendly octopus!

At the West Riding Cat Show, Belvedere, the S.C.C.C. Special for Best Cat in Show goes to Mrs. Aubrey's Chinchilla, Langherne Belle (well named),

and Miss M. Grayton, of Husthwaite, was delighted when she found she had bred the Best Kitten in the Show. An entry of 51 I think was a fine record for this embryo Club.

Barleymow Farm, what a delightful name, as one speaks it one smells the new-turned earth, the freshly cut grass, and the perfumed air of the open. Happy the kitties who live in such surroundings, but, like the rest of the country this year, they have experienced unspeakable weather, and Mrs. Quarry, in consequence, says: "I kept all my queens back this season, and am very glad, as perhaps we shall have it warmer when the first babies arrive next week. Willinda and her daughter are both expecting kittens by Blue Craggie, so I shall hope for something exceptional in eyes. Pink Pearl is in kitten to Bubbles of Hanley, and Diana visited her old love, Shere Khan. Pearl's last litter was an exceptional one, Lux winning Cream Breeders' Ch. Cup and first at Reading, his two sisters, Vinolia and Persil, second and third. We were unfortunately prevented by illness from showing at Croydon and the Palace, but Vinolia took several cups, a silver medal, and was Best Kitten in Show, for Miss Langhorne, at Kentish Town; Persil, whom we have just sold to Mrs. Bazeley, running her a very close second. Willinda has a very nice boy and girl by Milord, the girl a beautiful pale colour with lovely eyes. Diana distinguished herself by bring up ten kittens last year, eight of them males, so on the whole, though we had much anxiety, we have much to be thankful for, and look forward to new arrivals with courage and hope. The only thing for novices to do is to keep trying."

As the Midland Cat Club has come to the aid of Croydon, the S.C.C.C. are returning to their original date during the fourth week in January, 1929. Dates of all the Ch. Shows for the season are now settled, and most of the judges chosen, so work is well advanced. The G.C. have decided on a generous manner of helping those Shows requiring some support; this will be much appreciated, both by the Show Executive and also by the exhibitor, who will find the class of the more rare specimen still in the schedule.

Since my early days Red Indians have always been my admiration, and now I have fallen in love with a little red lady. What a cheery colour it is—always looking like a bit of sunset. This special darling, for she had all her young life been much petted, made great friends with us, and though only about ten months old, we hope will have some lovely kittens by Hendon Red Arate. He is such a great gentle fellow, we call him our "Ray of Sunshine." Did I ever tell you that he was once caught in a trap (this was in the country), and though the wound was a most terrible one, the dear lad never so much as resisted my rather clumsy manipulations.

DEBUTANTE'S DIARY.

The following is a hint which many may find worth remembering: A newly-kittened puss is usually very

thirsty, as there is naturally a certain amount of feverishness; also we keep them in a more confined compass, which in itself spells warmth. Don't forget therefore, water, or milk and water, must be at hand—a nice bowl of it, where mother puss can help herself ad libitum. Otherwise, like poor thirsty Mrs. Bunny in her dry hay bed, with no nice succulent greens to be found, bunny babies sometimes vanish, and little felines may do ditto ditto!

GOSSIP OF THE WEEK.

It has always been our aim to make the relations between ourselves and readers more intimate than the purely business one between the seller and the buyer of a paper. We are all, I trust, aiming at a common goal—the benefit of the Cat. We have, therefore, when subscriptions have run out, not at once stopped sending the paper; but we regret to say that this well-meant laxity has been abused by some, of course, comparatively few in number, but yet sufficient to make us cry halt! Now obviously we cannot differentiate between our readers, so we want to make it clear that in future we shall send out a notice a week before the renewal of subscriptions falls due, a second reminder the week following, and then stop sending the paper.

We are told that Miss Margery Yeates is giving promise of becoming a poetess, and has written a poem on "Don" (Son o' Flick), which is a quite remarkable effort for one so young.

MANGE appears to be common amongst cats in Vienna. A V.S., lecturing before the local Cat Club, stated that within the last few months 380 cats had been destroyed on this account at the Veterinary College. Urging that better care be taken to keep cats in a healthy state, he stated that this mange may be communicated to human beings, that, in fact, 30 per cent. of the owners of mangy cats are themselves affected. In the human subject, however, it can be cured in a few days. The idea of a tax on cats has, it appears, been considered by the authorities in Vienna, but apparently dropped, it being proved a failure in various German towns where it has been tried.

A CORRESPONDENT kindly replies: "The question is asked, 'Where can I get Pinoleum blinds?' You can get them from T. G. Venus, 57, East Street, Manchester Square, W."

VIENNA Cat Show is fixed for Whitsun. Mr. H. C. Brooke has been invited to judge, and, knowing from old and repeated experience the princely hospitality of the Viennese to their guests, he hopes to be able to accept.

A VERY pathetic occurrence is reported from London. A cat, crossing a busy thoroughfare, became bewildered in the traffic, and crouched terror-stricken in the path of a large car, when a dog jumped from the pavement, seized the cat by the neck, and placed it in safety, but was himself struck and instantly killed. What human could do more?



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THE SIGNBOARD AND THE CAT.

BY THE EDITOR.

"Once upon a time," as the old tales begin, our streets were studded with projecting signboards to an extent almost inconceivable to us at the present day, when such boards are mainly displayed by publicans. Old prints of London, for instance, frequently show us every house flaunting one or more of these boards. In days when the majority of the public were quite unlettered, such signs were not merely a convenience to the trader, but an absolute necessity to the public. The man, for instance, who was told to meet a friend at the Dog and Buck, might wander far in search of the rendezvous were he not aided by the pictorial representation of the title of the house in question. It is not within our province here to enter into a dissertation on the history of signboards in the East, or in ancient Greece and Rome, or even in this country. We will only remark that in years gone by almost every tradesman exhibited his signboard; that they tried to outvie each other in the prominence of their signs, by having them larger and larger, and projecting more and more into the street, to such an extent that as far back as the fifteenth century legislation was introduced putting a check upon "The ale-stakes projecting in front of taverns in *Chepe . . . to the impeding of riders and others," etc. A good and striking sign was often regarded as an heirloom, and passed on from one generation to

another. Many tradesmen used as signs wooden or metal figures of some object characteristic of their trade; for the purposes of this article we are concerned with those pictorial signboards, which, announcing the title of the house, were, and are to this day, principally used by "licensed victuallers." Not unnaturally, these, to a great extent, were representative of the taste in sports of the general public; thus, in the days of bull-baiting, the Bull was one of the commonest signs. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that the cat, at that time a despised and neglected animal, regarded generally as a fit subject for the grossest cruelty—a state of things which even in these days some people seem to think right, encouraged as they are thereto by the leniency of callous or knock-kneed magistrates, even in this fair county of Somerset—was but comparatively little represented on the signboards of a century or two ago.

Perhaps one of the most frequent "feline" signs was that of the Cat and Fiddle, which, as we mentioned in an early number of "Cat Gossip," is thought to have been a corruption of Chat Fidèle, or faithful cat, from a sign exhibited by a French emigrant who had brought her favourite minousse with her. If so, the original meaning must early have been lost sight of, for the sign of "The Catte and Fidle," illustrated by the picture of a cat, surrounded by dancing mice, playing upon the fiddle, is recorded from prior to 1600.† Moreover, the Cat and

† Another meaning attributed to this sign derives it from La Catherine fidèle, meaning St. Catherine.

* Cheapside.

Bagpipes was a sign formerly often seen in Ireland. Puss in Boots, of course, appeared, and in this connection it is of interest to remark that Dutch shoemakers, about the seventeenth century, were specially prone to exhibit various booted animals to call attention to their establishments. A rare and curious sign was that of The Sneezing Cats. The Mad Cat was a sign exhibited at Pidley, Hunts. The Red Cat was to be seen at Birkenhead, and also at the Hague, this latter sign having an historical meaning. It was put up by a Frenchman exiled from his native land for having conspired against Cardinal Mazarin. He opened a cutler's business at the Hague, and displayed a sign entitled "The Two Evil Animals," showing on the one side the red cat, on the other the Cardinal in his red robe. However, the Burgomaster, afraid of giving offence to the powerful Cardinal, prevailed upon the owner to paint out the picture of His Eminence, which was replaced by that of another Red Cat; the Cardinal was forgotten, but the sign of the Red Cat was handed down, and at any rate in the middle of last century the cutlery business, owned by a descendant of its founder, still existed under this title at the Hague.

The Cat and Wheel is stated by a seventeenth century writer to have been but the old sign of the Catherine Wheel, thus altered by those singularly objectionable creatures, the Puritans, from whose loathsome influence this country has not even yet succeeded in freeing itself.‡ Incidentally, we may mention that it was a hypocrite of that ilk, the celebrated Banbury Puritan, who thought it right to

"Hang his cat on a Monday

For killing of a mouse on a Sunday."

At any rate, we hope that the sign of The Cat and Wheel was not drawn from some devilish form of torment devised for poor puss by our merry ancestors! though in no case were these torments worse than those described with gusto as being performed to-day by our governmentally-licensed torturers, men and women, at Cambridge and elsewhere! In the case of the Cat and Basket, we fear there is no doubt possible; this sign was derived from the "sport" of shooting at a cat in a basket, which found especial favour, as shown by old prints, when the Thames was frozen over in the eighteenth century; many booths then exhibited this sign in reality, not merely in colours on a board. The Cat and Cage is probably also related to this form of cruelty, though some signs bearing this name have represented a cat trying

to drag a bird out of a cage. The Cat and Parrot was the sign of a bookseller near the Royal Exchange early in the seventeenth century.

The Cat and Lion seems to have no meaning, but probably was originally meant to be a tiger and lion, which from bad painting was taken for a striped cat. The artist having thus failed, the poet was, in one instance at least, called upon to improve the sign, which he did with the inspired words:—

"The lion is strong, the cat is vicious;

My ale is strong, and so is my liquors."

Which is almost as dreadful as the London butcher's sign: The Shoulder of Mutton and Cat, with the words:

"Pray, Puss, do not tare,

Because the mutton is so rare;

Pray, Puss, do not claw,

Because the mutton is so raw.

The Cat and Kittens was to be seen near Eastcheap about a century ago. It is possibly not connected with the feline tribe, but bears reference to the old slang name of cats and kittens, given by publicans of the lower order to their large and small pewter pots.

The Black Boy and Cat was the sign of one of the booths at Old Greenwich Fair. The Civet Cat was very common all over Europe as a perfumer's sign. If we remember rightly, it is still to be found, or was until quite recently, in Bristol, and we have also seen it in Paris. The Civets produce from a pouch between the hind legs a sticky greasy substance which was formerly much used (and still is in the East) in the preparation of perfumes; it has now fallen into disfavour, though, personally, we are very fond of it. We well remember how fifty years ago the old keeper of the Small Mammal House at the Zoo was wont to scrape the deposit off the bars of the Civets' cages and sell it to a perfumer.

Although not principal figures, cats appear in the curious and famous sign, The Man Loaded with Mischief, originally painted by that extraordinary genius, Hogarth. In a somewhat kindred French cobbler's sign, "La botte pleine de malices" (the boot full of mischief), the cat forms a principal figure.

The Black Cat is on record; but though we have Blue Boars, Blue Bulls, Blue Lions, Men, Dogs, Cocks, and Pigs galore, our ancestors do not seem to have thought of a Blue Cat! or of a L.H. cat of any colour whatsoever.

We learn from the Harleian M.S.S. that certain tradesmen "thay hauing been domestic saruants to some nobleman, thay leauing ther masters saruis toke to themselves for ther signes ye crest, bag (badge), or ye arms of ther Lord": thus the cat was displayed by ex-servants of "ye Lord Euers, Cat of Mount and Leper ((Leopard), Marquis of Worster and ye Lord Buckhurst."

As regards the other members of the feline tribe, naturally the lion is best represented in old signs, and we cannot resist giving this delicious bit of Natural History, accounting for the sign of the Cock and Lion, once common: "The Lyon dreadeth the white cocke

‡ Note.—Flecknoe wrote (Aenigmatical Characters, 1665) of "fanatick reformers" . . . "As for the signs they have pretty well begun their reformation already, changing the Katherine Wheel into the Cat and Wheel. . . such ridiculous work they make of their reformation, and so zealous are they against all mirth and jollity as they would pluck down the sign of the Cat and Fiddle too, if it durst but play so loud as they could hear." The insufferable asses we of to-day are pestered with, who prevent us from buying cigarettes after 8 p.m., and enact other pieces of childish legislation, are evidently the lineal descendants of those complained of nearly two centuries ago! Blood will tell.—Ed.

because he breedeth a precious stone like to the stone that hight Calcedonius. And for that the Cocke beareth such a stone, the Lyon specially abhorreth him." (Bosswell Workes of Armorie, 1597).

And the sign of the Lion and Ball was due to another weird and wonderful belief, which shows what utter fools our forefathers conceived animals to be. (Though are the people of to-day, who exclaim with wonder, "He knows you still!" etc., when your dog or cat greets you with joy after a week's absence, very much better?) It was thought that those who wished to rob a lioness or tigress of her cubs could do so if they threw a glass ball before the "damme, . . . whereat she useth long to gaze, whether it be to behold her owne beauty or because when she seeth her shape in the glass she thinketh she seeth one of her young ones." The glass ball, when used in sculpture, could only be represented as a globe, and in course of time the original meaning was lost and the lion with paw resting on a globe came to be regarded as emblematic of sovereignty and might.

And so ends our little study of the Cat and the Signboard. Poor Puss! In all the combinations in which she appeared, she was either the laughing-stock or the victim, with the sole exception, and that only if we believe in its Gallic origin, of The Cat and Fiddle.

CAT CALLS.

TO THE EDITOR.

I crave a few lines of your courtesy. There is to be a cat section put on at Prescott in May, at which a very old cat fancier is judging—Mrs. Furniss. Would anybody who reads this send a 1s. or so to help the Show, or offer a small "special"? And, if they would be very kind—as we do so want a bumper entry—would a few readers send an exhibit, to gratify the kind heart of Mrs. Furniss? The schedules are not yet out, but the Secretary, Mr. McClelland, will send one to anybody on receipt of a p.c. We all know what a true lover of animals Mrs. Furniss is, and in spite of her continued ill-health she is as devoted as ever, but it would be very gratifying to her to feel that all cat (not catty) lovers had shown a little interest and helped her to make it a success. E. L. ELLIOT.

VISITS.

March 20th.—Mrs. Elliot's queen, to Miss George's Love-a-Duck.

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Bishop's Hull, Taunton.

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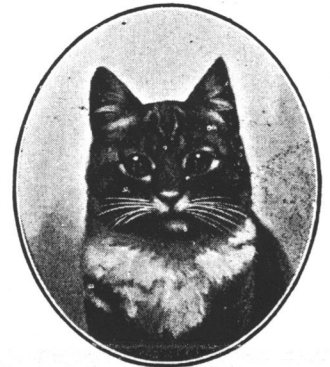
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