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DOMESTIC PETS

THEIR HABITS AND TREATMENT



By

C. PRIDHAM



DOMESTIC PETS:
THEIR HABITS AND TREATMENT.
Anecdotal and Descriptive.

BY
CAROLINE PRIDHAM.

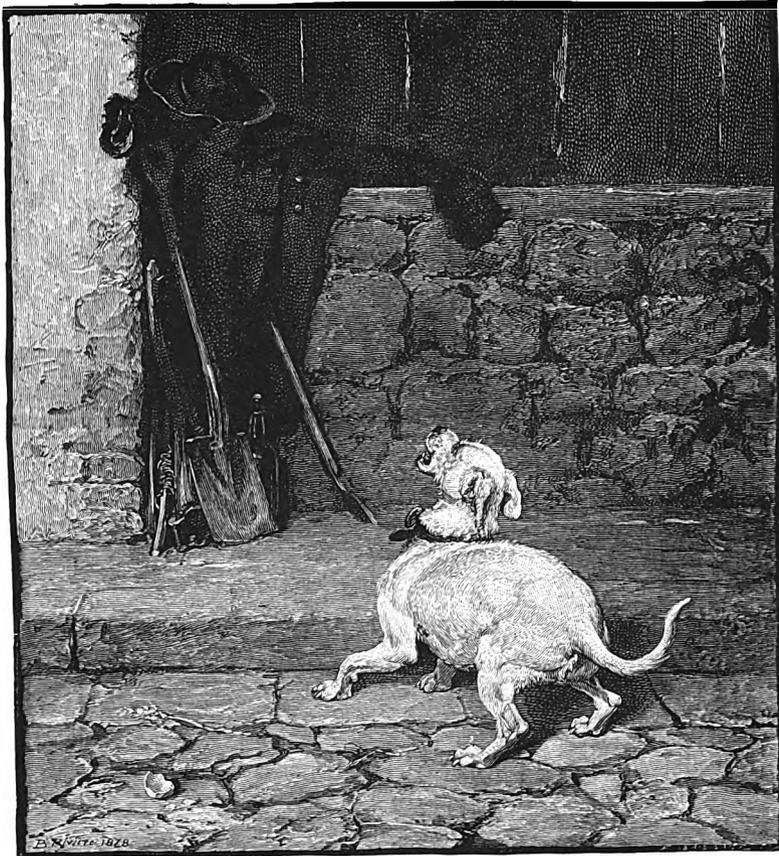
"Only think of the ways, habits, and peculiarities of any creature, and you become tolerant towards it."—SIR ARTHUR HELPS.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

A GOOD many of the anecdotes which are included in this little book have come under the personal observation of the Author, and now appear in print for the first time. The Author, however, acknowledges her indebtedness for the remainder to the following trustworthy and well-known sources: Romane's "Animal Intelligence"; Pardon's "Dogs: Their Sagacity, Instinct, and Uses"; *The Spectator*; *Leisure Hour*; and *People's Weekly*. For general information the Author has found Bechstein's "Cage and Chamber Birds," and Wood's "Popular Natural History," very useful as books of reference.





"SO FULL OF SHAPES IS FANCY."

(From the painting by Briton Riviere, by permission of Mrs. Hope MacDonald.)

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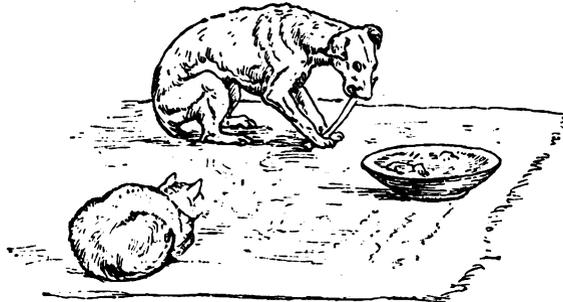
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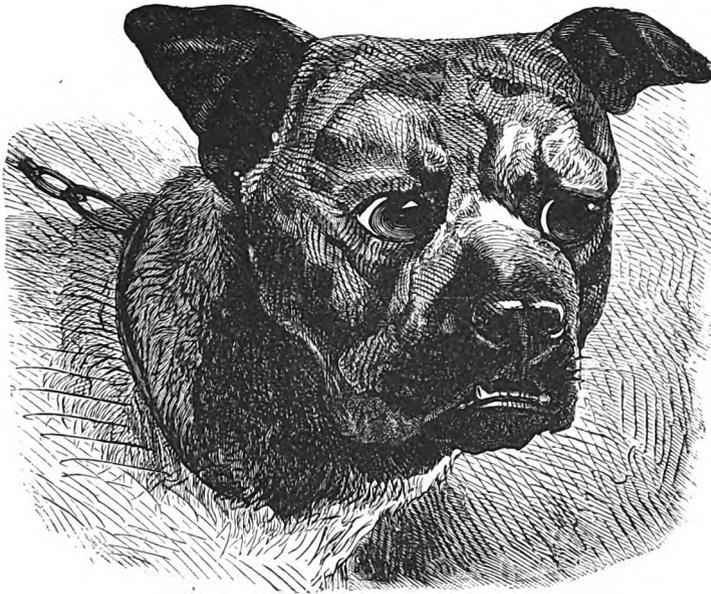
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CZAR.

DOMESTIC PETS:

THEIR HABITS AND TREATMENT.

CHAPTER I.

DOGS.

"Let sleeping dogs lie."—Old Proverb.

THIS little book means to be true to its title, and to tell you boys and girls, who have a love for "creatures" and want to keep pets of your own, a little about them, so that you may learn something of their ways of living before you undertake the responsibility of bringing them up.

The Dog is the first pet of which we will speak, for he is, of all others, the one which seems to seek our companionship for the love of it, so that we need not fear doing him any wrong by trying to attach him to ourselves.

Here is the portrait of a noble house dog. Do you not think he looks as if

he might be saying, "I am on duty here, and I will let you know it, whoever you are, if you dare to trespass on my master's premises in his absence"?

It is often said of dogs that they are just what the men with whom they have had to do have made them. Certainly the wild dogs which are still found in southern countries, and the fierce "prairie wolves" in the Far West of North America, are very different from our constant companions and faithful friends, and must be treated accordingly.

No doubt the Dog is nearly related to the wolf, as well as to the jackal and the fox; but, though it may be like them in the structure of its body, the difference is so great—in the affectionate and intelligent expression of the eye, the upward curl of the tail, the teeth, and, above all, the honest bark—between the veriest cur that runs about the streets and the finest specimen of a wolf which the Zoological Gardens can produce, that I, for one, side with those naturalists who tell us that, though they try in vain to discover the original race of dogs, they find nothing in common between them and their savage relations but "similarity of form and anatomical construction."

It may be that the wild dogs are descendants of those which were once domesticated; just as the wild horses which gallop over the plains of South America are descendants of tame ones long ago brought into that country; for a masterless dog soon changes for the worse. Still, the question as to what country was the original home of the Dog has not yet been answered. Neither do those who say that the varieties—which are now met with all over the world—come from one original type, give us any proof that this is the case, although they may try to account for these many varieties by speaking of the influence of change of climate, and the effect of centuries of the training and the companionship of man upon an animal so especially formed to be his servant and friend.

The Dog was probably the first animal trained by man. In the oldest book in the Bible Job speaks of "the dogs of my flock," dogs which no doubt had been trained, as the shepherd dog—which some naturalists claim as the parent of all the rest—is now trained to guard the sheep from enemies and keep them from going astray.

From many allusions to dogs in the Bible, we may see that they were in olden days, as they are to-day, of very little account in the East, where they are chiefly useful as scavengers, prowling about the towns by night and feeding upon anything which comes in their way, too hungry to stop for much picking and choosing.

But they were honoured in old times by the Egyptians, and the ancient Greeks and Romans were very particular about the breed of their hunting dogs. The oldest of the Greek poets speaks of the faithful Argus, who alone of all the

household recognised his master when he returned home from the wars, after twenty years of toils and perils by sea and land, and died at his feet for joy. And the writer who tells us of the faithful Roman soldier who perished in the destruction of Pompeii, because he would not leave his post, also records the touching story of the fidelity of a dog that clung to the dead body of his master, a slave, who had been put to death, and, "standing over it, uttered such sad cries that a crowd of Roman citizens collected around, and when some one offered him food, the dog took the meat and laid it down beside his dead master's mouth." Can we not in imagination see him do it? The narrative goes on to say, "Even when the body was thrown into the Tiber, the dog



GROUP OF ST. BERNARD PUPPIES.

swam out after it, and was seen endeavouring to support the body as it was carried away by the stream." Ah, it is no new thing for dogs to be tender and true; and I think you will agree with me that this is as beautiful a story as any that can be told of the devotion of dogs to their masters, in life and in death.

But if once we begin to tell stories of the faithfulness of dogs, we shall forget all else about them; and you know you were to learn how to house and feed and train your dog, and how to treat him as any one of God's creatures which has been trusted to your care ought to be treated.

With regard to the housing, much depends upon the kind of dog which you have chosen for your pet. If he is a St. Bernard—a puppy, it may be, from this group of sleeping beauties, which have just won the first prize at the

show—or a Newfoundland, you will not attempt to keep such a large dog in the house; but be sure that you have a shed or a kennel ready for him.

I have been told that it is quite a simple matter to turn a good-sized barrel into as comfortable a sleeping-place as any well-bred puppy could desire. The cask must be scrubbed clean, or, if it has contained paraffin, *burned* inside, and an opening, large enough for the tenant to get comfortably in and out, sawn at one end. This rough-and-ready kennel, when thoroughly dry, should be placed, a little raised from the ground, in the corner of the yard which is most sheltered from wind and rain, but still open to air and sunshine—for you would not wish your dog to mope for want of cheerful surroundings. Straw or hay is the best bedding, and this must often be changed; the health and comfort of dogs, as well as of their masters, in great measure depends upon their having warm, dry, and clean homes. In cold weather the entrance may be protected by a loose piece of canvas.

Smaller dogs, such as King Charles's spaniels, pugs, poodles, or toy-terriers, may be kept indoors. They should, in that case, have a place to call their own, not be left to roam "upstairs and downstairs, and in my lady's chamber"; but if you like to have your pet sleeping beside you, see that he is provided with a round basket lined with flannel, and let him know that *it*, and not his master's bed, belongs to him by inalienable right.

A puppy should, if possible, never be chained. This may sometimes seem necessary, if the dog is of a roving disposition, but you would not like to see the hair on the neck of your favourite chafed and worn away by the pressure of a collar, nor to think of a creature by nature so free and active, as being constantly chained up in his kennel except when you were able to take him out for a walk.

And this leads us to the next point. If your dog, whatever his kind may be, has not plenty of air and sunshine and running about, he cannot be sound in mind or body; therefore, remember that one of your first duties towards this pet of yours, for whose well-being you are responsible, is to see to it that he has regular exercise, and plenty of it.

The picture opposite is a suggestive one, is it not?

I hope it will at least suggest to your dog's master the duty of keeping his favourite's coat clean. This may be done by brushing; but the use of a comb is not to be recommended, as it might deprive him of more hair than he can afford to part with.

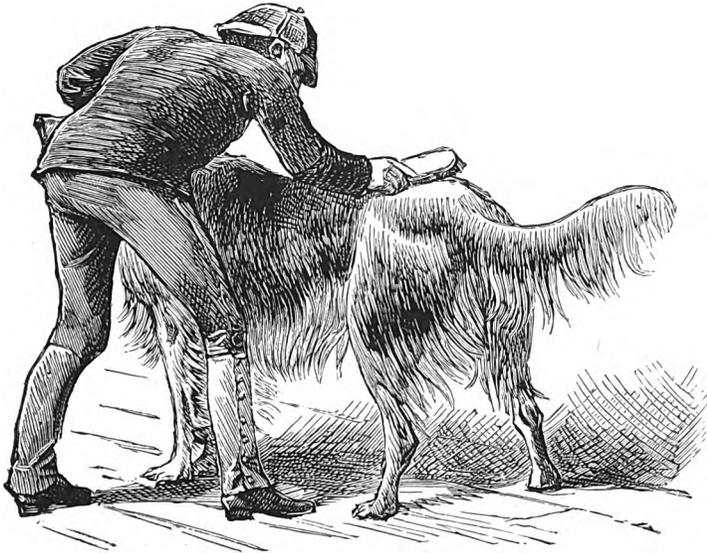
Dogs kept out of doors do not need frequent washing; but if you keep your pet indoors, especially if he has long hair, you must be prepared to give him a weekly bath, and, if you find his coat getting shabby, a pinch of powdered

sulphur, as a weekly dose, which he will take quite kindly if mixed with his food.

And now for the important question—How often shall I feed my dog? What food shall I give him?

Here, again, much depends upon the kind of dog. Large, outdoor dogs are often fed but once a day, and thrive well upon this solitary meal, which is generally given them at supper-time.

Two meals a day—a scanty breakfast, and a more hearty supper—are said



GROOMING A COLLIE.

to be enough for any dog, unless, perhaps, a toy-terrier, or a delicate lap-dog. But I own it is not easy to abide by this rule. When your pet sits on the rug at dinner-time, watching the family eating, and showing by many little signs that he is patiently biding his time, it seems too unkind not to give him his share; and I have always given our indoor dogs, on their own mat, a plate of potato and gravy, with a little meat, at dinner-time, without, so far as I could see, any evil consequences.

The best authorities recommend that a dog's diet should be chiefly vegetable. If you find your pet dainty, and inclined, like many a spoiled child, to pick out the meat and leave the potato, on no account give in to him. A spoiled dog

is almost as disagreeable as a spoilt child. Just take away his plate, and let him have the food which he has despised back again for supper, till he has learned to eat what is set before him.

A little cabbage is very good, for a change; but remember that all vegetables should be well boiled.

Dogs need bones; but beware of giving a young pup very large bones, as they would prove too hard for his baby teeth; or fish-bones, which might choke him. On the other hand, care is needful not to allow small, sharp bones to be mixed up in the food.

Clean, fresh water should always be within your dog's reach; but milk, except in the case of very young puppies, is not good.

Oatmeal porridge may be given; but few dogs care for it, unless it is mixed with broth to make it savoury. If only one dog is kept, there will always be scraps from the kitchen, enough and to spare, for him. If you have many, and it is necessary to buy food for them, nothing can be better than *Spratt's Dog-cakes*, which are made up of animal and vegetable food.

Whatever the diet or the number of meals may be, it is important to observe regular times of feeding.

Grass is often needful as medicine; and if a dog cannot get at it, it should be given him.

Muzzles are very trying to dogs. If you are obliged to use one, see that it fits well, and does not chafe the mouth. The kind made of open wire is the only one which does not deprive the dog of fresh air. Leather collars are the most comfortable, but must not be too tight.

And now I think we must leave any directions about the training of your doggie to the end of our chapter—for it is high time to change the subject—and pass from the ideal pet, for whose welfare we have been taking thought, to the dogs found in song and story who have been the joy and pride of their masters; and to others still living who have distinguished themselves in various ways, and may yet "boldly win a gallant name" by many a noble exploit on land or water.

Naturalists have divided dogs into three classes, distinguished from each other by the shape of the head and face.

The greyhound is the type of the first group, which also includes the Australian dog, and others remarkable for long, narrow heads and pointed noses. He is a very graceful creature, described in the Bible as "comely in going," and his chief characteristic is the swiftness which makes him so valuable for coursing—that is, hunting the hare. You may notice that the pretty creature on page 14 is with difficulty being held in from going in chase of some game which he has sighted.

The "points" of a well-bred greyhound are enumerated in a rhyme more than four hundred years old, which runs in this way, only that the old spelling is altered :—

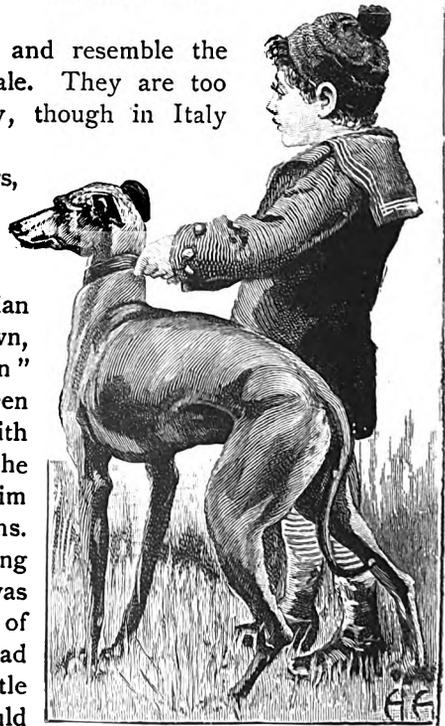
"The head of a snake,
The neck of a drake;
A back like a beam,
A side like a bream;
The foot of a cat,
And the tail of a rat."

I am sure you remember the sad story of faithful Gelert; but perhaps you do not know that a lovely spot near Snowdon is called Beth-Gelert, from the dog's grave being there.

Pet greyhounds are Italian or Turkish, and resemble the English hounds, but are on a very small scale. They are too delicate for any active work in this country, though in Italy they hunt rabbits and squirrels.

Our climate is too cold for these Southerners, so they may often be seen in winter running and frisking in circles, and looking very picturesque in their great-coats of scarlet cloth.

Mr. Youatt tells the story of how an Italian greyhound saved the liberty, or at least the crown, of his royal master, by his judicious "golden" silence, at a time when a bark would have been ruin. This dog was so prime a favourite with Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, that he used to carry the little creature about with him under his cloak upon nearly all occasions. "During the Seven Years' War, Frederick, being pursued by a party of Austrian Dragoons, was compelled to take refuge under the dry arch of a bridge while the soldiers passed by. He had his favourite in his arms, and had the little animal once barked or growled, the monarch would have been discovered and taken prisoner, and the fate of the campaign and of Prussia at once decided. But the dog lay quite still and quiet, clinging to his master in fear and trembling, as if conscious of the danger to which he was exposed. Thus was the King saved from discovery. When, years after, the little creature died, he was carefully buried in the palace gardens at Berlin, the King placing him in the



IN SIGHT OF A HARE.



THE NEWFOUNDLAND

grave with his own hands. Over his remains there was soon after placed an inscription telling all the world of his bravery and faithfulness."

The sheep-dog group is characterised by more breadth of head than the greyhound, and a less pointed face. It includes the Esquimaux dog—which is not unlike our collie, but leads a very different life, being almost born in harness, and beginning his life-long work of pulling the sledge as soon as he is two months old—the spaniel in all its varieties, from the beautiful Alpine dog of St. Bernard to the little King Charles; and the Newfoundland dog, the noblest and best of them all.

As you will guess, this grand-looking dog came from the island that gave him his name, where he may be seen in winter harnessed to a little cart, drawing wood, and not going about as a gentleman at large as he does with us.

The colour of the true Newfoundland is black or brown; black and white dogs are not so highly valued. The pups are easier to rear than St. Bernards, but, owing to their thick coat, very careful grooming is needed. The owner of a fine dog says as to this, "If in good health and properly groomed, a Newfoundland dog ought to smell as sweetly as a lady's muff."

I am sure you could tell me many a tale of what these noble creatures have done as life-savers; but from the one which I am now going to tell you it would appear that in some cases dogs as well as men are not content that "virtue" should be "its own reward."

On a summer afternoon, as a number of children were playing at the end of a pier which projects into Lake Ontario, one of them made a backward step and fell into the water. None of his companions could save him, and their cries were unheard, so that the poor child must have been drowned had not a grand-looking Newfoundland suddenly appeared. He rushed down the pier, plunged into the water, and returned with the child in his mouth.

While some of the children took the rescued little boy home, the others, full of gratitude to the dog, ran off with him to a confectioner's shop, and fed him with cakes and sweets. But now comes the moral of my story, and a very instructive one it is.

The next afternoon the dog went to the same place, found the group of children playing there as if nothing had happened, and trotted up to them in a friendly way. Every one was delighted to see him, and he got many a kindly pat, but not a word was said about cakes and sugar-plums. After waiting in vain for his treat, the dog resolved to *earn* what he could not get for nothing, and presently, watching his opportunity, he crept behind the child who was standing nearest to the edge of the pier, pushed him into the water, sprang in after him,

triumphantly brought him to shore, and stood shaking the water from his shaggy coat, and looking up for his reward!

You have often met one of these dogs carrying his master's stick, or perhaps at the seaside watched him as he swam out for it and brought it back, over and over again. I believe that almost any dog of the spaniel kind may be trained



A DOG WHO EARNED HIS BREAKFAST:

to fetch and carry; and I know of one who always fetched his master's slippers, posted the letters, and took a penny in the morning and returned with a newspaper, doing all this with the best grace in the world.

With regard to training retrievers, a good authority says, "The first thing to teach a puppy is to lie down; the next, to lie in the exact spot pointed out, and never to leave it till told to do so by voice or signal. When this is accomplished, your dog is more than half broken. After that, never let him pick up anything he sees fall, but teach him to use his nose and work by scent, not sight."

One more story, about an Irish water-spaniel, and then we must leave this group, and pass on to the short-faced dogs.

During a long frost Paddy's master took him for a walk; and as they were crossing a frozen mill-dam, he dropped his snuff-box into a small round hole in the ice. The dog seemed much distressed at finding no means of recovering his master's property, but was obliged to go home without it.

Two months afterwards the spaniel passed the same way with his master, who had forgotten the circumstance until he noticed that his dog stopped just at the spot where the snuff-box had disappeared, and stood for a moment, as if in deep thought. Then, plunging in, he dived, and came up with the lost treasure in his mouth.

You may perhaps wonder that collies have not been mentioned in this spaniel group. They are in some respects the most interesting and faithful of all dogs, and would be perfect as pets, as they can be taught all sorts of clever tricks; but there is one sad drawback—their innate love of sheep-chasing is too apt to bring disgrace upon themselves and sorrow to their owners. On this account they seem to me very unsuitable to be kept merely as pets.

In the mastiff group are also included the bulldog, with his short nose, and all the little pugs whose nasal peculiarity has given their name to a certain, not coveted, type of face among ourselves. The whole group is characterised by a broad head and short face, as different as possible from that of the greyhound; and the dogs are more remarkable for strength and courage and tenacity than for speed.

The fine fellow whose portrait appears on the next page looks as if he might be a formidable obstacle in the way of a would-be burglar; and I think I should hardly like to encounter him if I were going for the first time on quite a peaceable errand to the house where he was on guard. It was of just such a dog that a friend told me, the other day, the following incident, showing that she owed her "safe conduct" past his master's house to the friendly offices of another dog who thus repaid her kindness to him.

A barrister, on a scientific tour in Ireland, was taking a cross-cut through some fields, accompanied by his wife, hoping thus to catch the train. The travellers got into the first field, and sat down there to eat their luncheon. Presently a famished-looking dog joined them, and stood beside the lady, mutely asking for a crumb.

Notwithstanding the remonstrances of her husband, who said, "*Molly, don't!*—you will be hungry presently, when you cannot get anything to eat," the lady, who is a dog-lover, shared her sandwiches with her hungry guest; then patting his head for good-bye, she rose, and they went on, thinking no more of the dog, who did not, however, forget his new friend.

On mounting the stile which led to the next field, they saw a farmhouse which appeared to be empty but for a huge mastiff, who ran out, barking furiously at the strangers. The gentleman stooped to pick up a stone to throw at him, but was reminded by his wife that the dog was only doing his duty.



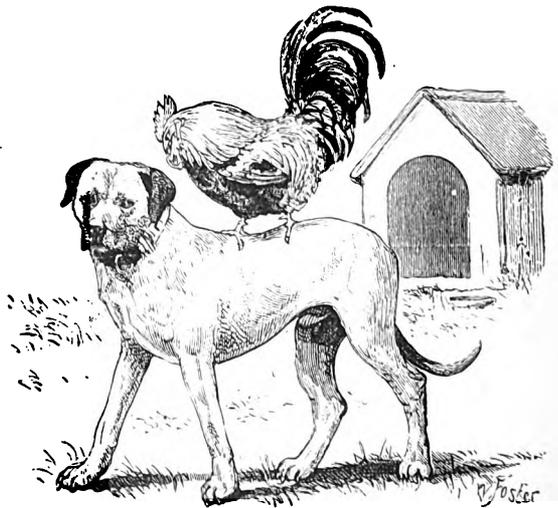
But how were they to get past him, and catch their train? This was the question.

The dog who had just had his dinner given him solved the difficulty for them. He came to the rescue, and signified to the mastiff, in language quite intelligible to him, that the intruders were friends of his, and must be allowed to pass on unmolested. So the big dog retired to the house

without a word, and their protector accompanied them across the field until they reached the station.

When off duty, however, even a house dog can afford to show the soft side of his nature; and this picture of a tender-hearted mastiff almost tells its own story, does it not? only one would like to have some explanation of the means by which the kindly dog conveyed an invitation to share his kennel to the poor maimed fowl which seems so much at home there.

His master gives him the character of being a fierce, uncompromising fellow, a perfect terror to tramps, cats, and to fowls, as long as they are able-bodied; for it was not a well-to-do bird, but one with a broken leg which had the power to melt his iron heart.



After the hurt leg had been put in splints, the owner of it was allowed to go about the yard again; and the first use he made of his liberty was to hobble up to the mastiff, who, instead of pouncing upon him, extended his royal compassion to him to such a degree that before long he was sitting beside him in his kennel, which remained the cock's home until he was able to face the world again.

Even then the friendship was unbroken; and it was quite common to see the mastiff gravely walking about the yard, with his winged companion perched upon his broad back, balancing himself so as to keep his proud but slippery position, to the envy of the other fowls, who had known neither his past misfortunes nor his present exaltation, but remained in the limited sphere to which they were born.

In the following account given by Mr. Foster in explanation of his beautiful picture of "The Dog and the Peacock," it is difficult to say upon which side the romantic attachment was—let us hope it was mutual. He says:—

"Animals are often known to form strange friendships. Cats become very fond of horses, and goats and horses are frequently great friends. Even a lioness has been known to be so much attached to a little terrier that it was miserable at its absence; but the story of our illustration, given to me by Miss Bruce, of Ederline, Argyllshire, shows that birds and animals may become very friendly. Mr. Tyndall Bruce, of House of Falkland, Fife, kept several peacocks; one of which, instead of roosting with its mates in the trees or on the walls, always went to the kennel where the collie was tied up, and squeezed itself in with the dog. The peacock's tail, sticking out of the kennel, had a very funny appearance."

I am sure it had, and I wonder whether the collie admired it!

Dogs have a keen sense of justice, and a great dislike to ridicule; and with some jealousy becomes a passion. More than one dog has killed a favourite puppy or kitten, which he had come to regard in the light of a rival, from seeing undue attention bestowed upon it; and an amusing story is told of a terrier which was jealous of its own puppy.

He had taken great pains with the little dog in teaching it to hunt rabbits; but when he saw himself distanced in the sport, he would no longer allow his son to go hunting, but held him back by the tail when he started a rabbit.

I do not know of what breed was the favourite dog of a poor, blind woman who was subject to fits, but he was in the habit, the moment a fit came on, of going to fetch help for his poor mistress. He would rush into the next house, barking eagerly, and seize the dress of the woman who lived there. If she did not at once go with him, he would seize upon some one else, and show the greatest distress until his object was accomplished.

But we really must not indulge in any more stories, especially as I want to say a few words in conclusion on the training of dogs. Both spaniels and terriers are easy to train; and the advice given by the best authorities on the subject is to begin at once to teach your dog obedience, "absolute obedience to your commands, whether conveyed by voice or action." The dog must be made to know that you are his master, and, when that point is established, the rest will easily follow.

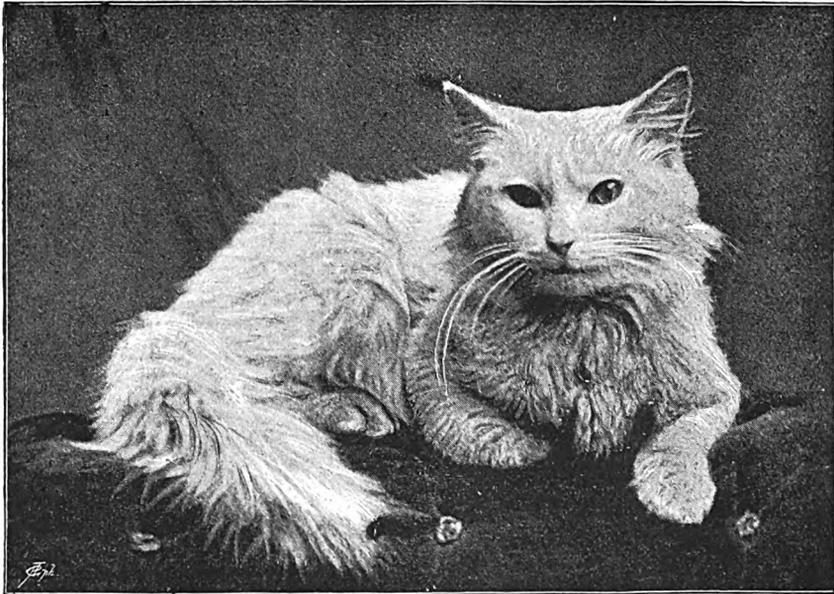
On no account attempt to teach by blows, which probably the poor animal does not in the least understand, and for which he will have a long memory; but try to make him see that there is a connection between the food you give him and what he does to please you.

If you throw a stick, and, in answer to your "Go fetch," he runs for it, and brings it back to you, be sure to reward him with a pat and a kind word, if not with a biscuit, or something which he particularly likes.

If your dog is—if we may say so—wilfully disobedient, there is nothing for it but to punish him; but take care that he has *understood* what was required of him, and never allow any one but yourself to beat him. Remember that he is made, as you are, capable not only of bodily pain, but that his "feelings" are easily hurt by unkindness and neglect. The very capacity for devoted affection which caused a dog, when his master had gone away leaving him behind, to creep upstairs to the empty room and lay his head upon his pillow, refusing to leave it, would render him painfully alive to being, as we should say, "misunderstood."

Indeed it is most important, if we wish to be really kind to a "dumb" creature whom we have attached to ourselves, so that we say "*my* dog," or "*my* cat," with a special sense of ownership and mastery, to begin by trying to become familiar with it, so as to understand, as far as may be, what gives it pleasure or pain, and how much we have a right to expect of it in the way of friendship or service; in both cases we shall probably find that we receive not "what we give," but something far beyond it.





SNOWBALL.

CHAPTER II.

CATS.

“My cat and dog, when I come home,
Run out to welcome me;
She mewling, with her tail on end,
While, wagging his, comes he.”

Old Rhyme.

Do you not agree with me in thinking that this beautiful Angora cat deserves a place among the happy creatures at Lord Allington's White Farm, near Bourne-mouth, where none but white animals are allowed?

I have heard of two white Persian cats which are already there, along with the white ravens and owls and jackdaws and turkeys; the white collie who guards the entrance; the white deer, mules, horses and pigs, which must all look so innocent and irreproachable—if only they keep themselves clean!

Still, beauty is not everything, and I daresay you would not change your own tabby for the fairest pussy among them; and she probably has a much more reasonable temper than any of her grand Eastern cousins, who are not noted for excellence in that particular.

It is said that all cats came originally from the East, but the truth about this is hard to find out. I am sure you know that they are of the same family as lions, tigers, panthers, and other carnivora; they have the same sharp, cutting teeth, the same prowling way of walking on tiptoe; the same long, strong, sharp claws hidden within their velvet sheath; the same habit of hunting alone, and making a sudden spring upon their prey; the same love of darkness and hatred of water, though, strange to say, fish is a favourite food with them all, and one variety, the fishing cat, lives upon fish of its own catching.

The wild cat might at one time have been called the British tiger, for it was common in England in the Middle Ages, and is not yet quite extinct in the mountainous and woody districts of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. It is very destructive to poultry, being larger and stronger than the domestic cat, in fact, more like the lynx, and its cry heard by night in the woods is said to have a terrible sound.

I once saw a wild cat in a cage, and cannot forget its savage expression. It was grey, with a dark stripe down the back, and dark rings upon its tail. No wonder it hated its prison life, for it had been used to creep from branch to branch, and spring upon the birds when roosting, or pounce upon their eggs; making a meal of a red squirrel now and then, and even daring to carry off lambs and poultry. When I saw the poor captive glaring at me from its cage, I was thankful that wild cats are now nearly as rare in England as wolves.

Like all animals, these cats show themselves most fierce when defending their young, and I have heard a dreadful story of a gamekeeper being killed by one which had a nest in a hollow beech-tree. The man took his gun with him, and went to the place where the cat was said to have its lair. He struck the tree with the butt end of the gun, hoping to drive the creature out of her hiding-place; but before he was aware, she sprang upon his neck, causing him in his fright to drop the gun, and, before his cries for help were answered, inflicted such terrible injuries with her claws that he died the same night.

How different from such a fierce animal looks the respectable mother-cat, surrounded by her family, whose picture you saw on the last page. Yet I believe wild or tame are alike in this respect, that both would defend their young even to death, if they were attacked; for this is one of the strong points about these creatures, which carry such a stout heart beneath their soft fur. God has given them an intense love for their offspring, and a noble courage in protecting them from harm.

Indeed, there is hardly anything which a cat will not do for her kittens while they are young. The picture on the opposite page illustrates the true story of a mother's devotion to her family in rescuing them from a burning barn at peril

of her own life. And, apart from any desperate need calling for desperate effort, how tender a nurse she invariably proves! We admire the unselfish care of a bird for her eggs; but I wonder that so little is made of pussy's devotion in sitting upon her kittens to keep them warm during their early days, and the various ways in which her motherly instinct is shown.

A gentleman who was in the habit of noticing the ways of animals, tells a pretty story about this. He says he has more than once seen the grown-up son of his old cat go up to his mother, as she nestled over her young ones in the basket, and apparently whisper something: whereupon she would get out, stretch herself, and go into the garden for a little fresh air, while he got into her place and lay over the kittens to keep them warm till she came back, when he resigned his charge to her again.

You see what interesting little family-histories people who keep their eyes open and notice the ways of animals can tell about them.

There is a curious Welsh law, which dates from before the Conquest, and gives us an idea of how rare the domestic cat was in those days, and how highly she was prized. The price of a kitten before it could see was fixed at a penny—which was then quite a sum of money—from that time until it had caught its first mouse the cat was valued at twopence, while you could not have got a full-grown mouser under fourpence. Any one who stole or killed the cat which guarded the King's granary, had to forfeit a milch ewe, its fleece and its lamb, or as much wheat as when poured over the body of the cat suspended by its tail, the head touching the floor, would form a heap high enough to cover the tip of the tail.

In Egypt, where the cats are very gentle, perhaps on account of the consideration with which they have always been treated, in ancient times any one who caused the death of a cat paid for the deed with his life. No doubt in a country which was then the granary of the world, pussy would be very highly valued for her prowess in keeping the mice and rats at bay; but she seems to have been also, as so many animals were, an object of worship among the people whose proud king said, "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey His voice, to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go." Mummies of cats, carefully embalmed, have been found in Egyptian coffins, and they are often seen sculptured on monuments, sometimes represented in the act of catching birds, so it is possible that they may have been trained to supply their masters' table in this way.

Among the varieties of cats, some are pure white, like the charming fluffy-haired family in this picture, or the Angoras, with their silver-white long hair and tufted ears; some are black as a coal; the tabbies are striped, so that the

French call a tabby-cat *un chat tigré*. The bluish-grey cats are Russians, and the rare tortoiseshells, like the poet Gray's poor Selina, who was drowned in a tub of goldfishes, are of Spanish extraction. Selina's charms—

“The fair round face, the snowy beard,
The velvet of her paws,
Her coat that with the tortoise vies,
Her ears of jet and emerald eyes”—

live in her master's tuneful verse.

The Manx cats are tailless, and, if we may believe the proverb “as deaf as a Manx cat,” do not share the acute hearing which has been remarked in many cats.

Patient, crafty, silent-footed, a sworn foe to mice, rats, and birds, the Cat gives plenty of evidence that Nature intended her to be a cunning hunter, and to get her own living. Her eye is wonderfully fitted for night-prowling. You have noticed how a cat's eyes become luminous and gleam in the dark, and how the pupil, so small by day as hardly to be seen, dilates at night. Her footfall is so stealthy because her claws are kept from touching the ground and becoming blunted, by being drawn back within their velvet sheath, and the under surface of the foot is padded with soft cushions. Her teeth are sharp and strong, and her tongue rough, like that of the tiger.

Many stories are told to prove how keen-witted soft, sleepy, ease-loving puss becomes when she is out on the war-path. She has even been known to use a young bird as a decoy for its parents, and to scatter crumbs, or scrape away the snow from the place where they had been scattered, to attract the sparrows for which she was lying in wait.

A miller's cat used to sit watching for fish to swim up stream, plunging in her head and fore legs, and gripping the unsuspecting trout as it passed her.

Indeed, so strong is this instinct of watching for prey, that a naturalist who tried the experiment of bringing a mouse close to a kitten not yet able to see, noticed that the little thing bristled up at the first touch—perhaps also the smell—of its hereditary game.

It is said, however, that in spite of this strong hunting instinct, a cat may be safely kept with pet birds if only she is well fed, and well accustomed to the presence of creatures which she has learnt that it would be nothing short of high treason for her to touch. Still it is necessary to introduce them carefully to each other, often putting the cages on the table for the cat's inspection.

One who recommends this method says that in time his cats and birds became so companionable that he had no scruple in leaving them together, and they would sit and look at each other by the hour, quite peaceably. Still, I should advise

you to be very discreet and cautious in trying the same experiment ; and, above all, not to leave a hungry cat in the way of temptation, nor a poor little caged bird exposed to its merciless claws.

Our picture of the little maiden sorrowfully considering which of her four playful, furry pets she could best bear to part with reminds me to impress upon you, should you suddenly become involved in the cares of a nursery, that in the case of at least four out of every five kittens it is more merciful to kill them than to let them grow up starved and neglected.

The following has been recommended as the most painless way of ending their little lives, and applies to cats in any stage of existence :—

“It is the duty of people to put out of the way, in as merciful a manner as possible, the cats which must be killed. This result is most easily attained with chloroform if it is properly used.

“Draw a stocking—a knitted one if possible, because it is more elastic—over the cat’s head so that the toe of the stocking shall be brought as near the animal’s head as possible. Then pour almost half a teaspoonful of chloroform on the stocking, close to the cat’s nose.

“Almost as soon as pussy has begun to wonder what it is that smells so queer she goes quietly to sleep. Then a little more chloroform should be added, and still a little more ; and she will never wake again.”

But let us pass from this painful subject to the care of those pussies which have been allowed to enjoy a long and happy life.

With regard to feeding, the fact that the Cat is a flesh-eating animal points to some amount of meat being necessary for it. But, unless you keep a menagerie of pussies, there will probably be plenty of scraps from the kitchen for the cats’ dinner. An authority on this subject gives the following bill of fare, advising punctuality in feeding, and as much variety as possible ; for it is not a good plan to go on giving any creature the same food day after day. Here is pussy’s *menu*, and a very liberal one it is.

Milk and bread.

Spratt’s cat food.

Potatoes and broth or gravy.

Warm tea and milk.

Oatmeal porridge with milk.

Table scraps from dinner wetted with milk.

Lights (these should be boiled an hour and a half).

A little liver boiled for a quarter of an hour.

Cats’ meat.

The last item reminds me of the crowd of cats which follow the cats’ meat man along the street in the neighbourhood of London ; but I really do think your

cat should be very well off without your having to spend your pocket-money in providing for its dinner. As for the "warm tea," the cats I have known personally have not cared for it; but I have taken tea at a friend's house with a very companionable dog and cat who enjoyed their common dish of tea as much as any of the company.

You must change their food as much as you conveniently can; but, above all, remember that no animal can thrive without access to clean water, which should be changed every day.

Also, if you wish your cat to have good habits, you cannot begin her training in this respect too early. The same writer who has given us pussy's bill of fare says:—

"Keep a large flower-pot saucer full of clean, dry earth in a corner, and your kitten will soon learn its use, until, with advanced age, she will, as a matter of course, go outside."

Then you must respect her natural feelings about cleanliness, and never let her food be sour or dirty, or given to her on a dish unwashed from the previous meal. If she is of the long-haired sort, she will need careful grooming with brush and comb; though you may trust her to wash her own face, and keep herself nice in the scrupulous way which is natural to her.

Her chief complaints arise from exposure to damp or wet, especially by being left out all night. You may think that as these animals in their wild state hunt at night, your cat can get no harm by being out; but you must remember that by training animals we often render them delicate, and it is only right that we should give them the care which we have ourselves made necessary to them. Some cats are very fond of going out at night; but the best way to keep them at home is to feed them late in the evening, and not allow them out after their supper.

Cats also suffer from going long without food, from roughness of coat, sickness, running at the eyes and nose—but all these complaints puss herself can remedy better than you can; and if you see her eating grass do not interfere with her, for she is only doctoring herself, and taking it, not as salad, but as medicine. Dr. Johnson used to buy oysters for his cat Hodge when it was old and sick, because he noticed the avidity with which it ate an oyster from his plate; and I have heard of a cat which was so fond of figs that he would smell them even when wrapped in paper in one's pocket; but these were special cases, idiosyncrasies, in fact, and not to be encouraged in cats in general.

The expression "cat and dog" as a condition of constant warfare has passed into a proverb. But you see in this "Happy Family" group how facts may give the lie to it. Here is the water-spaniel, Trixie, submitting, with great serenity,

to the caresses of Jacko, the monkey, while one of the five cats, which the story tells us help to make up the establishment, appears to be taking her afternoon snooze upon his warm-coated back.

A lady living in Leicestershire says she had a small terrier and a fine cat, each of whom had a family at the same time. The pups were all drowned, but the kittens were spared.

The poor mother-dog was very disconsolate; but before long she carried one of the kittens away, and suckled and nursed it as if it had been her own offspring.

The cat, finding out where her kitten was, carried it back again to her nest; but finally the dog, I suppose upon the principle that "might is right," established her right to undisputed possession of her foster-child, and presently began not only to race and gambol with the kitten, but to take it out with her when she went rabbit-hunting. The dog would give a peculiar bark outside the kitchen window, and the little cat was off in a minute to join her.

By-and-by the terrier had another family, and this time she was allowed to bring up her pups. While she was busy in her nursery, her foster-child went hunting on her own account, and many a rabbit did she bring home and lay down beside the mother-dog and her pups.

Of all the strange stories which are told of the friendships between creatures which seem to have nothing in common, none is more surprising than that of the cat and the tame crocodile. There is also a pretty tale of an attachment between a cat called Tiger (so we may assume that he was a tabby), and a pair of turtle-doves, which used to perch upon his back as he lay basking in the sun, and another about a pussy who was on friendly terms with the children's pet tortoise.

But our chapter is getting too long, and we have not yet said anything about the Cat in its relations with the human beings who show it kindness.

It is often said that cats attach themselves to *places*, dogs to *people*; but I think if as much pains were given to cultivate the affections of the Cat as are so freely bestowed in the case of the Dog, there would be no reason to complain of any lack of grateful response on her part.

Cats are shy, and this makes it more difficult to teach them; but I know of a dog and cat in the same family, where the puppy-dog was taught to "beg," but no notice was taken of the kitten, because she was supposed to be incapable of learning this accomplishment, yet, when she saw that the dog was rewarded by being fed, she very soon began to stand on her hind legs and beg of her own accord.

Many cats have learned to "shake hands"; and one, who had been a good

deal petted by her master, had the habit of leaping on his shoulder when he was at dinner, and trying to catch the morsels from his fork as he carried them to his



A HAPPY FAMILY.

mouth; but this "sturdy" beggar now quietly awaits her turn, while keeping her position.

History tells us few more touching incidents than that of the Earl of Southampton's favourite cat. When he was imprisoned in the Tower she felt that her loved master was in trouble, and that she must get to him *any* way, and at last accomplished her purpose by climbing to the roof and getting down the chimney of the room where he lay.

Then, just as we read of many a faithful dog who refused to leave his master's dying bed, and pined to death upon his grave, so I have heard of a cat who watched beside the bed of her master while he was ill; and when all was over, and she had seen the "friend of her heart" buried out of her sight, she lay day and night upon the new-made grave, as though grief had got the mastery of cold and hunger.

Such true stories make us pause and think of the beautiful saying of a Scotch writer, when he exclaimed, "Oh, God, what faithfulness Thou hast put into the hearts of Thy creatures! What pure love must be in Thine own!"

Of a cat named Nero, the cook said, after his death, "Oh, ma'am, he was such a gentleman!"

Nero loved all the family; but his master had the chief place in his heart. When he was no longer young he would jump up and run downstairs at night, that he might be waiting at the door to welcome his master; he would hear the well-known step before any one else could distinguish it; and at last died with his head resting upon his master's hand, looking up in his face with loving, wistful eyes.

And now we really must leave all the tempting stories of *clever* cats, who learned of their own mother-wit how to ring bells and give alarming single knocks at doors; *cunning* cats, who pretended to be dead, and so escaped punishment when in disgrace; *musical* cats, whose performances, both vocal and instrumental, history records; *way-wise* cats, who travelled long journeys sewn up in a basket, yet found their way home again without counting the milestones; *detective* cats, who had an innate perception of a burglar, and an unerring sense of duty in protecting their master's property; *poaching* cats, who went out hunting rabbits, and brought their bag of game home to lay at their mistress's feet; *greedy* cats, who stole cream from milk jugs too narrow for their broad noses, by the simple device of making a black hand serve as a spoon, dipping and licking alternately; *impertinent* cats, who did not scruple to put out their master's candle, when he was too much absorbed by his book to notice them.

But stay: I really think we must have the story of Charles Dickens and his cat, as it is a delightful one, and has been told by his daughter, who knows all about her father's pets.

There was a canary at Gad's Hill called Dick, and a white kitten, Williamina

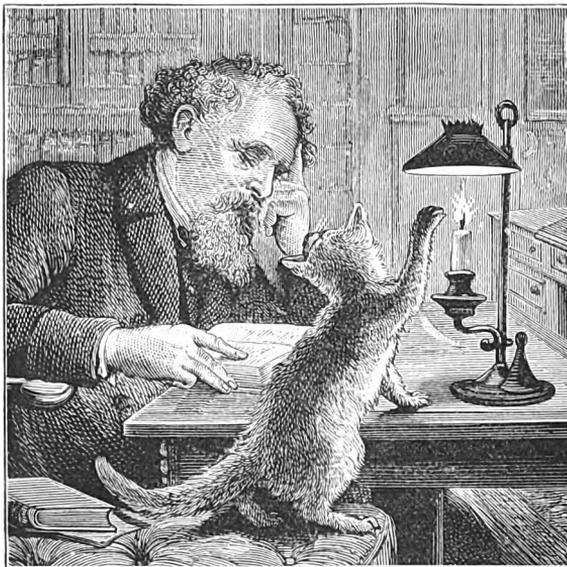
by name, who brought up a large family there; but this cat, which was one of her kittens, being deaf, had no name given to him, but was called by the servants "the master's cat." No name could have been more appropriate, for he was always with his master, and used to follow him about the garden, and sit with him while he was writing.

"One evening," the story says, "they were left together, the ladies of the house having gone out to spend the evening. Charles Dickens was reading at a small table, on which a lighted candle was placed, when suddenly the candle went out. He was much interested in his book, relighted the candle, gave a pat to the cat, who he noticed was looking up at him with a most pathetic expression, and went on with his reading.

"A few minutes afterwards, the light getting dim, he looked up, and was in time to see puss deliberately put out the candle with his paw, and then gaze appealingly at his master. This second appeal was understood, and had the desired effect. The book was shut, and puss was made a fuss with and amused till bedtime. His master was full of this anecdote when all met in the morning."

With regard to Tibby, the tortoiseshell cat, who was not only a traveller by land, but swam ashore in the moonlight, and reached home only to die upon her own doorstep, her story is so extraordinary, that it might be considered unworthy of credit, but that the correctness of it in every detail is vouched for by the narrator, who lived in the neighbourhood at the time.

Tibby's home was at Deal, but she was, without her own consent, either sold or given to the captain of a merchant ship lying in the Downs. She was taken on board ship tied up in a bag, and, on being released, at once took to the rigging. The captain sent a boy aloft after her, promising him half-a-crown if he brought her down safely. He pursued her to the main-top, and then had to return without his prize.



DICKENS'S CAT PUTTING OUT THE CANDLE.

Next morning the captain ordered search to be made, but as poor pussy was nowhere to be found, it was supposed that she had fallen from her dizzy perch, been killed, and thrown into the sea.

But this was what really happened: the frightened creature stole down the rigging under cover of the night, sprang overboard, the sea being very calm, and the shore visible in the moonlight, and actually landed at a place two miles distant from Sandown, off which point the ship lay at anchor (the tide having drifted her so far out of her course), and was received by a coast-guardsmen who was on duty there.

He would have taken the poor little thing home, but, after a short rest under his coat, it struggled away from him, and set out across the sand-hills in the direction of the town. When the door of the house which had been her home was opened the next morning, there lay the tortoiseshell cat, which was supposed to be on board ship, dead upon the doorstep. Alas, poor Tibby!

I think you will agree with me, as we take leave of pussy, that though she may not have wit or wisdom enough to entitle her to be put upon the same "platform" as the Dog, she still has some right to share with him the privilege of being called the "friend of man."

See, then, that you show yourself friendly towards your cat, whether it be white or black, tabby or tortoiseshell, of high or low degree.

If you are changing your house, remember how very strong an instinct—as the above anecdote shows—attachment to *places* is in these animals.

Take it to the new home in a carefully covered basket, and watch it for some days that it may not run away. Some friends of mine, who have made a good many moves, tell me that they always take the precaution to butter pussy's paws before setting her down in a strange house. It seems that after she has licked her paws, she settles pretty comfortably into her new quarters.

I hope, if I came to visit you there, I should find your cat looking sleek and well-to-do, as a cat should look which is the property of a master who has studied her ways so as to understand her well enough to be *uniformly* kind to her, and who recognises the "mutual obligation" which exists between him and his dumb but faithful companion.



CANARIES, NORWICH BREED.

CHAPTER III.

CANARIES AND OTHER CAGE-BIRDS.

"The isle is full of pleasant noises,
Sounds and sweet airs that give delight."—*Tempest*.

It seems strange to pass from the Cat, the enemy of all winged birds within its power, to talk of our bird-pets, does it not ?

It is true, as we have been reading, that it is possible for cats and birds, as well as cats and dogs, to live safely together. This is proved by many stories of the "Happy Family" type ; but I think in the case of pussy and her own particular hereditary prey, the birds, we can only regard such instances as exceptions which prove the rule.

Yet one of these stories seems to throw a strong light upon the way in which affection for a master will induce a creature to give up, for the sake of pleasing him, what is its own by the strongest instinct of its nature.

It is the story of a cat which belonged to a great bird-lover, and once actually caught a little bird for him. Pussy brought her prize in very delicately, and waited for her master to take the poor frightened flutterer out of her mouth; and it was found to be quite unhurt. One can only suppose that she had divined that her master, like herself, had a taste for birds, and wished to gratify him.

Still, interesting as they are, no such stories warrant you in leaving your thrush or canary hung up in a cage within reach of its natural enemy, and deprived of its natural means of escape from him.

For one bird on friendly terms with pussy, there are hundreds done to death by her cruel claws, if the poor little things do not die of fright before she has time to reach them. Only look at the expression of your cat's eyes as she sits watching the little prisoner hung just above her reach, and you will not need to be told that she means nothing short of murder, and is biding her time.

I am sure you will agree with me that you have no more right to expose to such danger a little creature which you have rendered defenceless, than you have to neglect or treat ignorantly one from which you have taken all means of providing for itself.

Worse than death by the hand of its natural enemy is the cruel fate of many a little songster, one day pouring out its heart in glad exultant

melody, the next lying a heap of yellow feathers at the bottom of its cage, starved to death by the young master or mistress, by whom it is mourned when dead, but was *forgotten* when alive.

All living things need care and attention on the part of those who undertake the charge of them. It is easy to go to a shop and choose a canary or a lark, easy to get a pretty cage for it, and to talk to it and give it sugar as a treat; but really to care for your bird you need to make yourself acquainted with its wants, and to exercise self-denial on its account, and "take trouble" about it in many ways.

But it is a trouble which will without fail bring its own reward. And I



ON THE LOOK-OUT.

should like to ask you, What is there in this world that is worth doing which can be done without some pains?

There is an old saying that, "Trouble is how you take it," which I think is as true as many proverbs are.

I should be inclined to say of all caged birds, that they are creatures which were never intended to be made pets of in this way, but that the canary seems to have long ago become quite reconciled to confinement, and cannot, in our ungenial air, live out of doors.

So I shall have pleasure in telling you something of how to treat your canary, as it cannot miss the liberty it never knew. But you must not expect to find here much about the treatment of those of our own song-birds which are often caged; for it always seems to me that when we see a thrush or a blackbird, a linnet or a goldfinch, cooped up and made a prisoner in its own native air, to set it free is naturally our first thought. I should not willingly be the keeper of such a free-born, free-hearted little captive, for it would be hard not to hear in its sweetest song a lament over its lost liberty.

And yet I cannot deny that I have heard a thrush in a tiny cage, hanging in a dingy back street, heralding the spring in notes as full and rich as ever came from the happy, free songster in wood or grove. And the lark which brings the very music of the fields to a sick man in his garret, as it sings in its narrow



SWEETS TO THE SWEET.

cage at his window, sounds as sweetly as the bird which is free to mount and soar, and whose song is "like a waterfall in the sky." Then, too, there are stories which seem to show that even our own song-birds get accustomed to their captivity, especially when taken young: such as the following, which was witnessed by three people, and is told of a lark which had been three years caged, and did *not* embrace the opportunity for breaking its chain which came to it so unexpectedly one fine morning.

This bird was hung out in the garden just when another lark was carolling in the air. The little prisoner's heart was stirred: he rose from the cage, which was covered only by a fine net, in which there must have been a rent, and disappeared in the direction from whence the song came.

You would have given him up for lost, would you not? But no; the owner began to whistle, at the same time holding up the cage to attract his pet back, and back it came, fluttering right down to his feet; just as a free lark might fly to her nest on the ground; and waited patiently while he did just what I should rather not have done—gently replaced it in the cage.

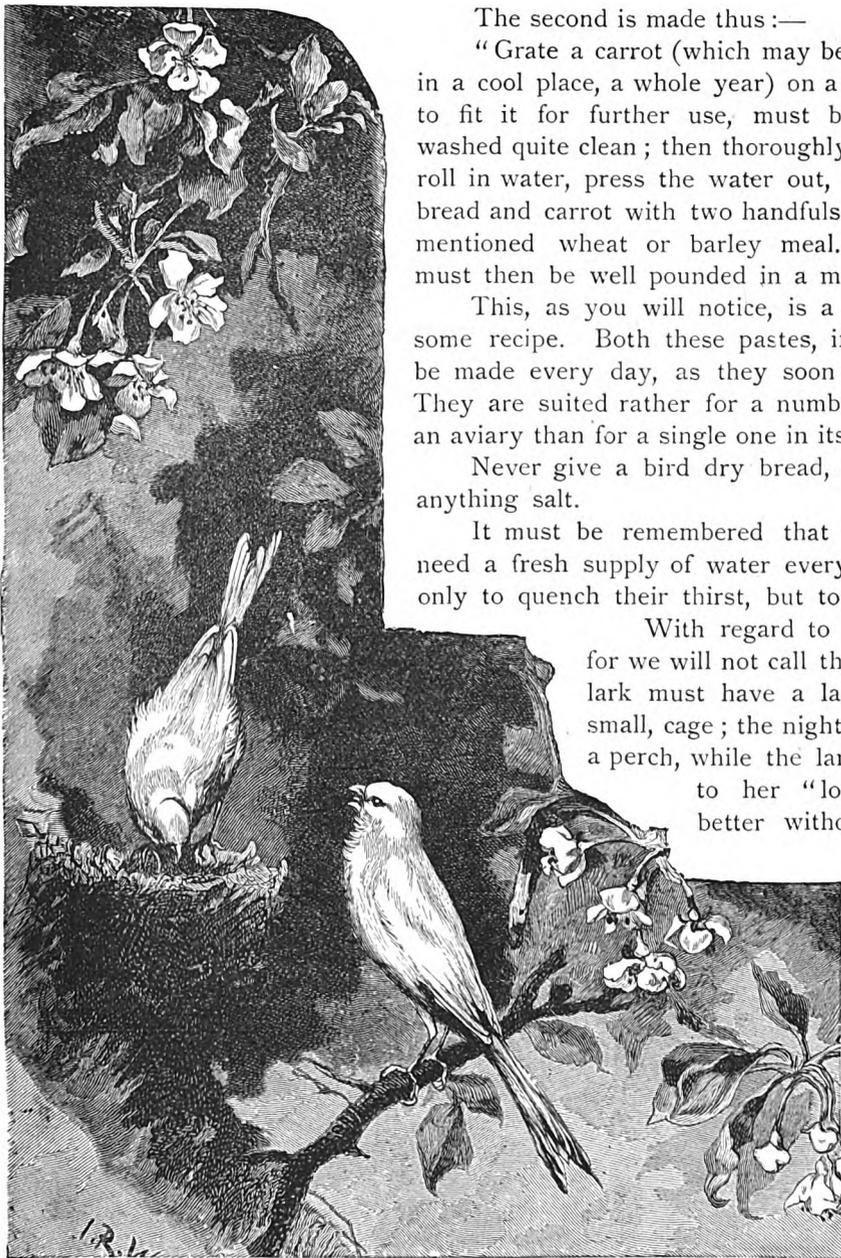
Well, we cannot get rid of the fact that birds *have* been kept in cages ever since Alexander the Great conquered—not a new world, but a ring-necked parouet, and kept it in a golden cage; and probably long enough before. And now that you know my opinion on the subject, I will just mention those of our own English birds which are most frequently made pets of by people who are not content with the foreigners of which it is said that over fifty thousand are imported every year, and give you a few hints as to their treatment.

The soft-billed birds, such as nightingales, redbreasts, blackcaps, and thrushes, larks and starlings, must be fed upon crushed hemp seed and bread-crumbs, and also have meat or insects. They are often given ants' eggs and meal-worms, and are particularly fond of spiders.

The grain-eating British birds kept for song are siskins and linnets, and many of the finches. The goldfinches and siskins like poppy seed now and then mixed with a little crushed hemp seed; the linnets and bullfinches, rape seed alone. Bully is a very handsome bird, with his dress of crimson and black velvet; and a knowing bird too. He seems to thrive in captivity, and improves upon his own rather monotonous note by whistling tunes, which he learns very readily.

While we are upon the subject of feeding, I will copy for you two "universal" pastes, which are recommended as cheaply and simply made, and liked by all birds. This is one of them:—

"Take, and thoroughly soak in cold water, a well-baked stale wheaten loaf; then press the water out, pour milk over it, and mix with it two-thirds of its own weight of barley or wheat meal, well ground and sifted."



CANARIES AT HOME IN THE FORTUNATE ISLES.

The second is made thus:—

“Grate a carrot (which may be kept in sand, in a cool place, a whole year) on a grater, which, to fit it for further use, must be immediately washed quite clean; then thoroughly soak a penny roll in water, press the water out, and mix both bread and carrot with two handfuls of the above-mentioned wheat or barley meal. The whole must then be well pounded in a mortar.”

This, as you will notice, is a more troublesome recipe. Both these pastes, if used, should be made every day, as they soon become sour. They are suited rather for a number of birds in an aviary than for a single one in its cage.

Never give a bird dry bread, cake, buns, or anything salt.

It must be remembered that all cage-birds need a fresh supply of water every evening—not only to quench their thirst, but to bathe.

With regard to their homes—for we will not call them prisons—a lark must have a large, a finch a small, cage; the nightingale requires a perch, while the lark, accustomed to her “lowly nest,” is better without one. The

cages must be kept very clean, and the floor of them strewed with river sand: birds often suffer from diseases of the feet, from want of attention to this.

The ailments of birds are generally due to excessive feeding—sugar and other dainties are said to spoil their digestion—and to the want of exercise which the confined space in which they live ensures. If *possible*, allow your bird to stretch its little wings in a good fly pretty often, carefully closing windows and door.

It is well not to give cage-birds a larger supply of food than is sufficient for one day. With regard to medicine, the safest and most universal is a drop of castor oil, put into the mouth with a camel-hair brush.

Heated rooms and the fumes of gas are very injurious to birds; and it is cruel to hang the cage in a window, for they suffer from draughts more than *we* do. A bird exposed to them is always in bad health and wheezy.

The picture on page 44 takes us away to the "Fortunate Isles," as the Canary Islands were once called, and shows us the beautiful little birds which are so familiar to us, in their native home. How lovely it must be to see them flitting from lime-tree to orange, singing as they fly! But even there it seems that they do not dislike the neigh-



TYROLESE BIRD.

bourhood of man, but build their nests of moss and feathers and hair not far from human dwellings.

I think, from this picture, we might imagine that the canary-bird, when at home in the islands from which it has its name, is of the same colour as *our* yellow beauties, and I am just a little sorry to tell you that it is not so. The original bird, which is one of the finches, is grey, or olive-green; the yellow birds have been produced by pairing them with others of the same family, such as the goldfinch. Change of climate and variety of feeding and other treatment has also affected these little strangers, as is the case with all domesticated animals,

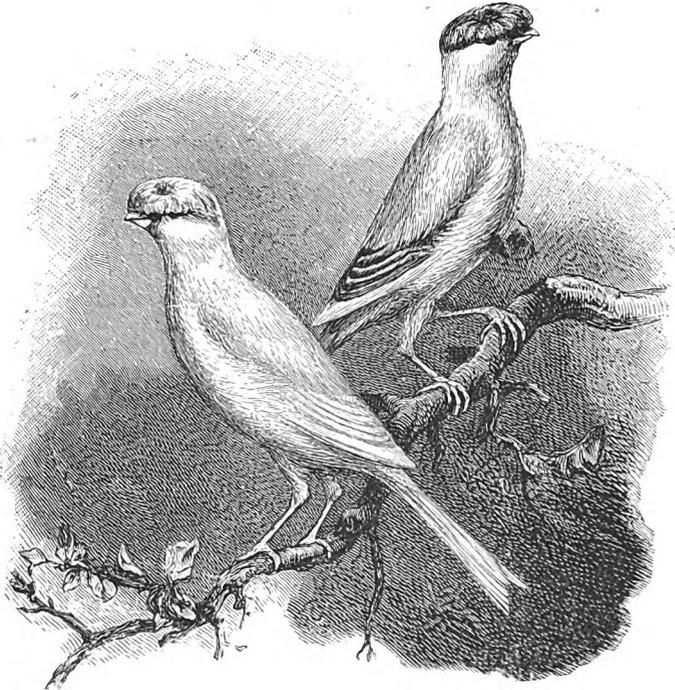
so that a canary of the original type is now a *rara avis*, and there are thirty different varieties known at present.

There is also a great difference in the characters of these birds; "some are melancholy, others lively; some are of a peaceful, others of a quarrelsome disposition; some docile, others stupid; some eager to pair, others delighting in solitude." But whether domestication and "selective breeding" have any influence upon the canary's *morale* as well as its *physique*, is a question far too abstruse for you and me.

There is quite an air of romance about the true story of the introduction of these little foreigners into Europe. In 1478—very shortly before "Columbus gave to Spain a New World"—the Fortunate Isles were conquered for her by Henry the Navigator; and some of the beautiful little birds were brought home as curiosities. The Spaniards were charmed with them, and began to breed them for themselves; and this they did so successfully that we read, two hundred years later, of a Spanish ship being wrecked off the Isle of Elba, with a thousand canaries on board, which were on their way to Italy for sale there!

The birds seem to have survived the shipwreck, and to have made themselves at home upon Napoleon's desolate island, where the climate was warm enough for them to live and thrive; and no doubt the place would have been alive with them in the exile's time, if they had not been caught so greedily that they were soon exterminated.

The Italians from that time began to breed them; soon after, they became known in the Tyrol, and then in Germany, everywhere finding a welcome, and



ENGLISH BREED (CRESTED NORWICH).

becoming a profitable article of commerce, especially when trained and taught to pipe and whistle and play tricks.

After being thus domesticated in different parts of Europe, the greeny-grey birds began to get patches of yellow here and there, and it was by carefully matching those which had the largest number of spots that the pure yellow colour was at last obtained.



LONDON FANCY.

Thus, from the Tyrolese bird, three distinct breeds—Dutch, English, and German—have been obtained. It is said of these breeds that “the Dutch altered principally the figure, the English principally the colour, and the Germans especially developed the capacity for song.

The Tyrolese birds which imitate the nightingale are the most valuable; next to them comes the English canary, with its bright gold-yellow plumage, its head “like a snake’s, and its song like that of the lark.”

Of these, the Norwich with its crested cap is considered the hardiest; the Manchester Cobby, the largest; there are also the Yorkshire, the Lizard, and the London Fancy.

Those birds which are descended from the old Hartz

race are exquisite songsters, and well repay the great pains taken with their education.

The bird-trainer is constantly with his charge, and his great care is not only that they shall hear melodious sounds, which they readily “pick up,” but also to keep far from them every harsh unpleasant note. The training is thus described:—

“The music-leader several times a day exercises the young birds. They sit quiet, close beside each other in a row on the poles, and listen intently.

Then they break forth and exercise their throats, each intent on himself and his own study."

I believe it is never a case of

"A bird that *can* sing and *won't* sing must be made to sing";

for the young birds all show the greatest anxiety to excel, and will set themselves to master a difficult song by the simple rule of

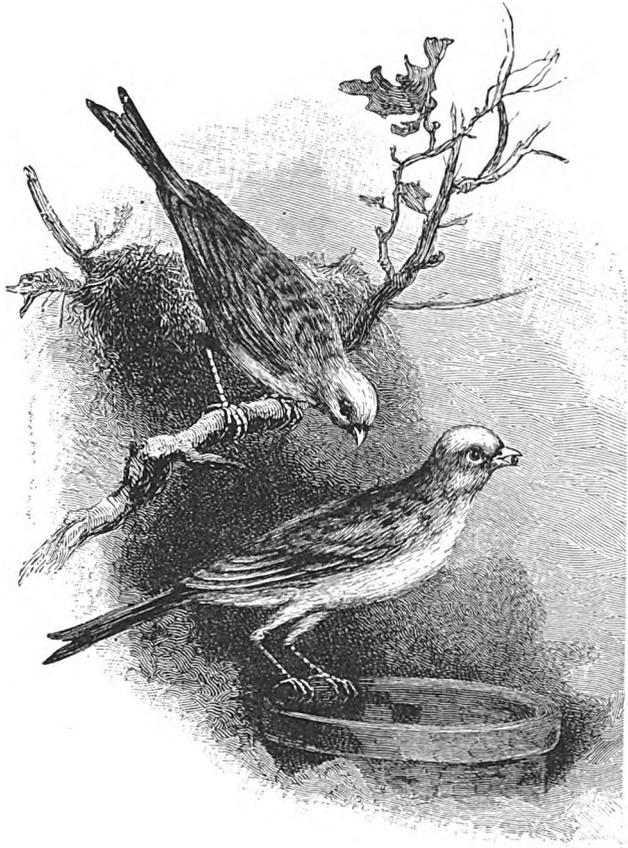
"If at first you don't succeed,
Try, try, try again."

Indeed, there are instances of birds having split their little windpipes in the effort, and become silent for ever! The great point which the trainer aims at is to get a low, soft note; and, after practising in company, this is often best obtained by keeping the bird who sings too loudly or violently alone, and in the dark for a time; thus "learning in suffering" the self-restraint which it will "teach in song," when perfect in its hard lesson.

But though the German birds sing as no others do, they are sickly; and I should advise you to choose a

Norwich or Yorkshire canary as being much hardier, and withal a sweet singer.

The female can hardly be known from the male, except by the latter being brighter in colour, especially round the eyes. See that the plumage is clean, and the eyes bright, and try and hear the song of the bird before you buy it. From the first, accustom it to your voice. Talk to it and pet it as you are busy about its cage, and you will soon be rewarded by its sweetest song.



ENGLISH BREED (LIZARD).

The best food for singing canaries in summer is rape seed, with millet, flowering groundsel, chickweed, or other "green stuff"; the place of which may be supplied in the winter by tiny slices of apple or pear. By giving sponge cake and pepper mixed, instead of seed, at moulting time, very brilliant plumage may be produced. The birds like this change of food, and seem to thrive upon it.

If well cared for, canaries will live fifteen or sixteen years, simply dying of old age. One of their greatest enemies is a tiny red parasite which hides in the cracks of the cage by day, but comes out at night and torments its poor little victim, and will soon cause its death if not got rid of.

The cage must be plunged into boiling water, and the bird given warm baths, always taking care that the water is not more than luke-warm.

Canaries may be bred in large cages, in the corner of which a box or basket to contain the nest has been placed. If they are kept in an aviary, a fir-tree growing in a tub will attract them to build among its branches, and this must be a very pretty sight.

The best time for pairing is in April. Give the parents hay, moss, feathers or wool to use for the nest; but do not watch them or in any way interfere with their building.

The number of pale blue eggs will be from four to six, and the hen, occasionally relieved by her mate, will sit patiently for thirteen days. When the brood is hatched, you must feed the young birds on hard-boiled eggs, chopped fine, and bread which has been soaked in water and pressed dry. Be sure never to allow the nestlings to touch sour food. They are not very attractive at first, as they do not get their feathers till they are twelve days old, but they learn to feed themselves in a fortnight, and then begin to twitter, and when a month old may be put into separate cages, as the parents will already be preparing for a fresh brood.

I have heard of one canary, reared from the nest at Gravesend—but whether a Lizard or a London Fancy, history does not say—whose owner used such efforts to teach it to talk that it learnt to speak English "quite distinctly," but never sang at all! He shall tell his own story.

"Wishing," he says, "to possess a very tame bird, I had one from the nest (quite a squab) without feathers, and its eyes not open. Talking continually to it when feeding it, I was astonished one day to hear it repeat my words, 'sweet little bird!' It was then perfectly fledged, and able to take care of itself.

"I had no idea of teaching it to speak until that time, but I at once commenced its lessons, and before its first moult it said, 'Sweet pretty little dickey, dear.'

"For successive seasons, during the moulting time, I taught it a new

sentence. Besides those already named, he said, 'Kiss me, sweet dear bird'; 'Do you hear me speak?' 'I hope you are quite well.'

"I consider the facility with which the bird learned was because he had never heard a bird of his own species sing. And he never did sing; but any sentence I began (we may presume this to refer only to the sentences learnt during each moulting-time) he would finish.

"The bird was my companion night and day, always flying about my room, and pined if I left him. I was obliged to take him wherever I went. He died of old age. Many residents now in Gravesend can corroborate these statements."

And now our chapter must close with two very pretty incidents, one of a canary which I will give you in prose, the other of a sparrow which is related in verse.

The first comes from America, and is about a bird which was allowed to fly round the room, and one day happened to light upon the chimney-piece, and catch sight of himself in a mirror. After gazing long and curiously, he came to the conclusion that he had found a mate, and flew back to his cage, returning with a seed in his bill, which he brought as an offering to her.

Finding his efforts to make the stranger eat of no avail, he presently tried what his voice would do. Stepping back a few inches from the glass, he sang his sweetest strain, pausing now and then for a reply.

As none came, the disappointed and sorely puzzled birdie flew back to his perch, and hung his head in silence, refusing to leave his cage again that day, though the door was repeatedly left open for him.

The story in verse is told of a London sparrow, and may well make us think of the words of our Lord when He drew the attention of His disciples to these birds, so common as to be hardly noticed except by Him without whose knowledge "not one of them shall fall on the ground."

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."

"*Of more value*"—what gracious words are these, spoken by the lips of the Son of God, the One who created all things, and for whose pleasure they are, and were created; yet who, when speaking of the men who were creatures of His hand, and had gone far away from Him, could say, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

The sparrow story is told by a lady living in Chelsea, who used sometimes to hang a favourite canary in a tree close to her window. "One morning a sparrow was seen to perch upon the top and twitter to the bird within. After a few moments he flew away, but shortly returned and dropped a worm into the cage.

This was repeated day after day at the same time for several months. The two friends at length became so intimate that the canary often received the food with his own bill from that of the sparrow."

Here are the pretty verses—

- "I dote on every little bird
That twitters in the sun:
I love them all, from having heard
The simple tale of one
- "In cage that 'neath the eaves was hung,
When morn put forth her smiles,
A little yellow warbler sung
A song of distant isles.
- "One morn, when loud his melody,
There came on idle wing
A sparrow, and from sympathy
Thus seemed to say or sing:
- "Fair captive, why this joyous lay,
When sad should be thy heart?
Art thinking of a happier day,
Forgetful what thou art?
- "Perchance, while high thy music floats
Where ne'er thy wings may flee,
Thy spirit rises with thy notes—
For they at least are free!
- "Thy song goes forth among the trees,
And up to heaven's high dome,
And haply bears thee o'er the seas
To thine own island home.
- "Poor bird! could'st thou come forth with me,
I'd lead thee to the grove,
Where all that's known of slavery
Is servitude to love.
- "How sweet to join our airy chase,
Or cower within thy nest,
Yet only bound to that one place,
Because thou loved'st it best.
- "Alas! alas! the wish is vain,
Thy prison-bars are strong;
But I will come to thee again—
Adieu, sweet bird of song!"

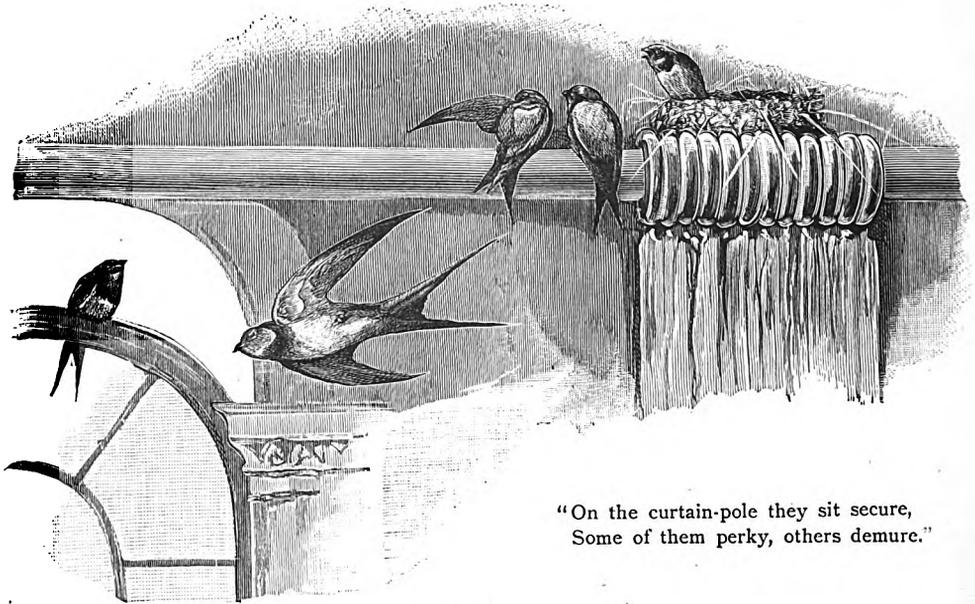
“Away it flew, but day by day
Returned with gathered food;
And through long months, the watchers say,
Went on this work of good.

“I felt my happy thoughts ascend,
Such heaven-taught love to trace,
And deemed, perchance, this captive's friend,
The Howard of its race.”

J. HEDDERWICK.

When I tell you, if you do not already know it, that John Howard was a philanthropist, and devoted his life to relieving the sad condition of prisoners in dark and unhealthy dungeons, and pleaded their cause with many of the sovereigns of Europe, you will better understand the application of the last line of Mr. Hedderwick's poem ?





"On the curtain-pole they sit secure,
Some of them perky, others demure."

CHAPTER IV.

PARROTS AND COCKATOOS, MAGPIES AND JACKDAWS.

"And strange, bright birds, on their starry wings,
Bear the rich hues of all glorious things."

MRS. HEMANS.

You will, perhaps, think our picture has not much to do with "Pretty Poll" or any of the so-called talking birds. But if you are as fond of pictures and feathered folk as I am, you will not quarrel with the portraits and story of two undaunted little swallows, who chose for their nesting-place a country house in Yorkshire, and, not satisfied with the eaves, actually built inside the house, making themselves thoroughly at home in a snug corner which they had deliberately spied out behind the rings of a curtain-pole overhanging the staircase window.

Perhaps it was only a proof that they were foreigners and had never learnt what we know so well, that an Englishman's house is his castle. But far from being shy or aware that they were doing wrong, no sooner had the pair of swallows distinctly arrived at the conclusion that this corner was to be their summer residence than they began to build their nest there.

Very deftly and tidily they worked; the considerate mistress of the house giving orders that the window should be left open day and night for their convenience; and before long a beautiful little nest appeared behind the rings.

Presently it received three tiny eggs, pinky-white, spotted with brown; and the mother-bird began her labour of love, sitting patiently all day long upon the nest, while the father might be seen every evening at dusk seated on the curtain-pole, mounting guard over his treasures.

By-and-by it became a matter of great interest to watch the parent birds teaching the young ones the first principles of flying.

Both father and mother flew round and round, giving an object lesson, and then, finding their children were slow scholars, took the strong measure of turning them out of the nest. The little flutterers, thus forced to make their first flight, alighted on the curtain-pole, were coaxed or driven from that perch to a ledge a little lower down close to the open window, and, before they were aware, found themselves with their parents quite at home among the branches of a large tree which grew near—that momentous question, “To fly, or not to fly?” settled once for all.

But had they all flown away for good?

Oh, dear no! Five o'clock the same evening saw the young birds safely back in the nest, where they were settled for the night, not without much chattering—squabbling perhaps. And there they sat in a row on the edge, while both father and mother darted backwards and forwards in and out of the window, giving them their well-earned supper of flies. And this was the programme of every day after that eventful one. At six in the morning the whole family flew off to spend the sunshiny hours out of doors; at five in the evening they flew back again, and spent the night in the old home. At first, mother sat in the nest, spreading her wings over her young brood; but when they were full grown she joined father in keeping guard, until at last the pretty sight was to be seen every evening of the whole family roosting side by side upon the curtain-pole.

As the summer advanced, the birds took their departure one by one; and towards the end of September all had disappeared, flying South, no doubt, and leaving the nest deserted.

The mistress of the house gave orders that it should be undisturbed; and on King Charles's Day next year there was a great commotion and chirruping at the same window. A number of swallows flew in, and kept fluttering round the old nest, and at last, as if by common consent, a pair took possession of it.

They at once began to clean it out and freshen it up, and then history repeated itself, and that summer saw another brood taught to fly from the same window.

I am afraid we shall never get to the parrots if we go on wandering away after the pictures, and yet I think I must tell you two stories which have just been sent to me. The first is about a cage which was cleverly contrived out of an old basket, hung up, as you see by the picture on page 55, with a bit of wire netting over the mouth, and a teacup and basin for water and seed.

The artist who made a sketch of it says that he has since passed by the cottage where it hung, and seen the two doves who once lived there in a grand cage. He thought the happy pair might be more comfortable in their new quarters, but to his eye their new cage was not nearly so quaint and pretty as the old one.

The picture on the previous page of the blue tits in the bottle almost tells its own story; but you may be glad to know that the clever little creatures who brought up a family in a bottle fifteen inches deep, with a neck only an inch in diameter, were North-country birds. The incident happened at Bolton, near Lancaster, and is told by Mr. Morris in his "Book of British Birds."

The bottle was placed on a garden wall. It had no cork; and he says, "the birds had no other way of entrance than through the mouth, going up and down the neck of the bottle every time they carried food to their young ones, all of which, ten in number, were reared without accident, and made their escape unmolested through the neck of the bottle. When they were fairly gone, the bottle was taken down and the old nest found within."

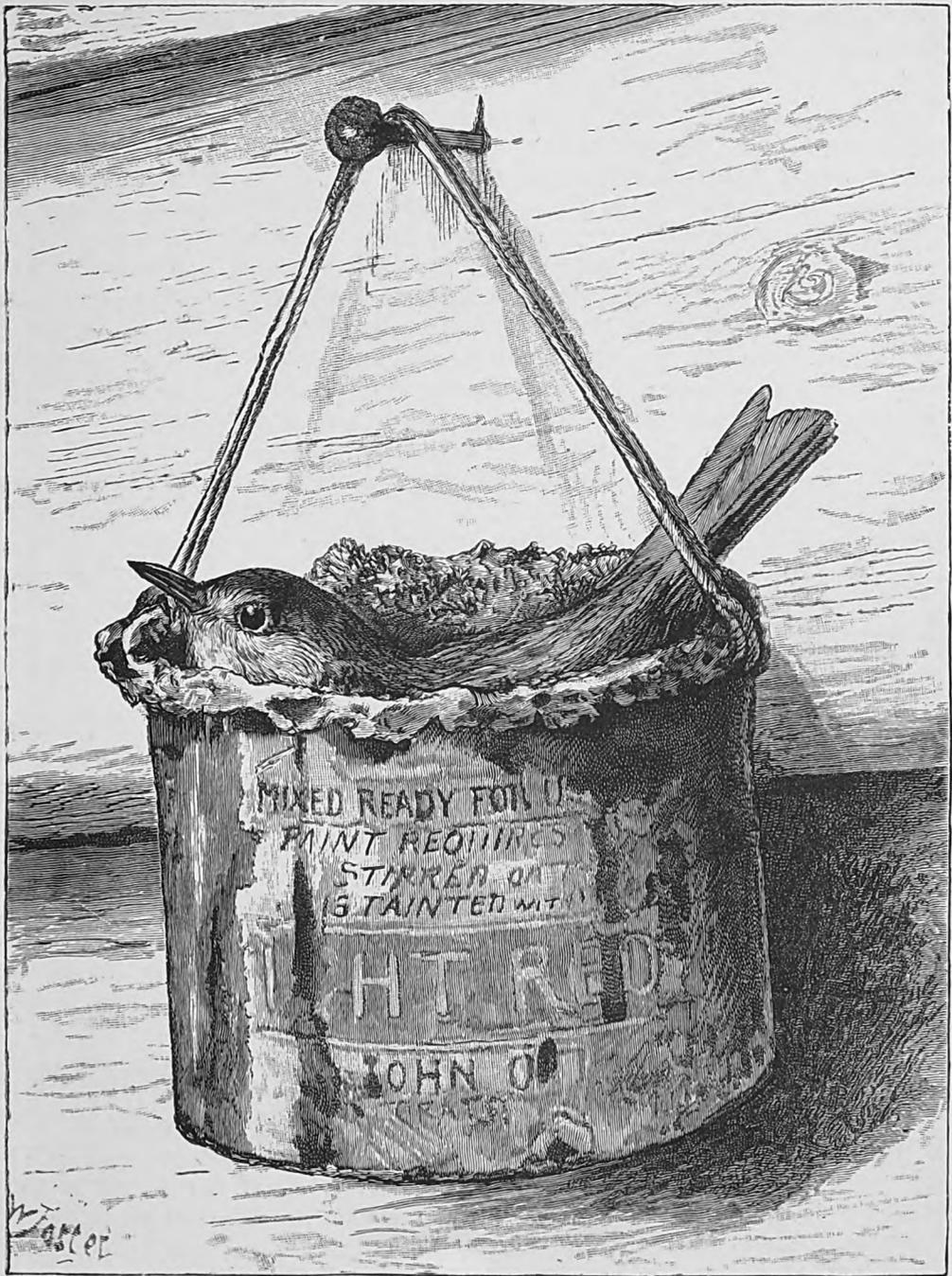
It is indeed wonderful to think of ten birdies—and tits have a name for being quarrelsome—hatched and reared in such a nest; and when we remember the narrow entrance to it, we are not surprised that Mr. Morris should say, "I am at a loss to know how the birds could manage to ascend." How would it do, instead of saying "packed like herrings in a barrel," to say, "like blue tits in a bottle"?

They certainly must have been glad to get out of such close quarters, even smaller than the red-paint-can, hung well out of reach of the cats, appropriated by a mother-robin, of which Mr. Foster has given us a sketch.

And now let us pass on to the "large-beaked birds," as the parrots, macaws, cockatoos, and paroquets are called.

Michelet, in his beautiful book on "Birds," says that, "besides song, the bird has many other languages. Like man, he prattles, recites, converses. He and man are the only beings which really have a language. *Man and the bird are the voice of the world.*"

I think this is going rather far; but naturalists tell us that every species of bird has a peculiarity of voice possessed by no other, but understood by all of the same species; and it is an interesting fact that what may be called the danger-signal is universally understood.



A ROBIN'S NEST IN A PAINT POT.

If one bird sees a hawk or kite hovering near, it utters a cry of distress which is recognised by every bird within hearing. In the same way, the note of one warbler will rouse the feathered people of the whole aviary or wood, just as reading aloud or talking will make your canary sing until you have to cover him up, that he may not drown the voices of the company.

Every bird has a song or a call; the ravens, crows, and jackdaws will respond to each others' call, and seem to understand it. The "songs without words" of our sweet-voiced birds seem to us always expressive of love or joy—very different from the harsh, discordant scream of the tropical exquisites with their gorgeous plumage; but probably parrots and macaws understand each other's strange speech quite as well as do linnets and chaffinches.

It is a mistake to think of all the noisy birds of the parrot tribe as talkers. The power of imitating our language is confined to those which have a broad fleshy tongue; they generally have *even* tails, and are less gaudy in plumage, and more easily tamed than those which can only scream.

Little Peter—for that is the meaning of the name parrot, which comes from the French *perroquet*—is at home in America, chiefly in the South, and also in Central Africa, while the smaller paroquets belong mostly to Australia and New Zealand, where they are caught in great numbers in the tall grass, and taken to England for sale.

The best talkers are the double-fronted yellow-faced Amazons. But I think the one likely to give his owner most satisfaction, is the ash-coloured African parrot, a bird about the size of a pigeon. These large grey parrots are hardy enough to need only ordinary care, and have been known to live sixty years.

You should buy your parrot in spring, as the birds are then just imported, and it is useless to think of training them to talk unless you have them quite young. Remember in the case of all the tropical birds that they need warmth. The cage should never be left in a draughty place, and should be covered with baize at night, and in the daytime placed where its occupant will get all the sunshine possible in this climate; but always carefully shaded with a dark cloth on the side required; for it has no forest trees to keep off the glare. Let it stand in the open air whenever the weather allows, or in the greenhouse among the sweet scents of flowers which may remind the bird of home.

The cage should be a roomy one, bell-shaped, with a ring for Polly to swing in, and a perch or two. It should be made of strong wire, unpainted; the floor sprinkled with coarse sand, and the cage cleaned every day in hot weather, twice a week during the winter. Eating and drinking vessels should be of glass or china, not of zinc.

You may notice the parrots and cockatoos at the Zoo sitting on open

perches; and they certainly look more free than the caged birds, especially if attached to the perch by a long chain.

The best food for all the large-beaked birds is bread and milk, made by pouring boiling water on the bread, draining it off, and then adding milk. This may be given twice a day, care being always taken that the cup is clean. If Indian corn is given, it should be boiled, drained dry, and allowed to cool.

Then we must not forget that tropical birds in their wild state live on fruits, berries, nuts, and seeds—all these may be given them; but too much fruit of the soft kind does not suit Polly when in confinement.

Of grain you may give canary seed, and indeed almost every kind. Parrots and cockatoos are delighted to have a bone now and then to sharpen their beaks upon; but beware of giving them meat, or anything in the least salt. You would be sorry to give your pet an attack of scurvy, and see him tear out his feathers and throw them on the ground, as I have known a beautiful red macaw do. Above all, let me impress upon you again the importance of letting all caged birds have a constantly fresh supply of clean water, both for drinking and bathing.

With regard to training your parrot to talk and whistle, I have heard that these birds like best to imitate children's voices, and learn most readily from them. It is a good plan to teach them in the dark. Place the cage beside your bed, draw the curtain, and then repeat the first word of a sentence, and wait to see whether your bird will say it after you. You will probably find that he learns with great attention, repeating his lesson over and over "like a parrot," as we say of a child who learns by heart without taking the trouble to understand what he can say so correctly.

Be very patient; reward him for his diligence, but always speak gently, and never punish or threaten your pupil, lest you should spoil his temper; and be sure to stop the lesson when he is tired. You will soon see that Polly loves to be petted and stroked, and will stretch out her neck to your caressing hand. I have heard that all animals have nerves about the throat and jaw which are very sensitive, so that to stroke their cheeks gives them intense pleasure—you know how much dogs and cats like to be petted in this way.

I have read of a parrot which laughed in a very human way, and in the midst of a fit of laughter would stop and cry out, "Don't make me laugh, or I shall die, I shall die!" She would sometimes cry and sob, and when her mistress asked, "Poor Poll, what is the matter?" the bird would say, "So bad, so bad, got such a cold," and then cry again, until she would make a noise like drawing a long breath, and say, "Better now!" She learned to call "Puss, puss," very plainly, and to bark so naturally as to set all the dogs in the neigh-

bourhood barking too. Another accomplishment was crowing and clucking in such a way as to astonish the cocks and hens; altogether this Polly was the wonder of her day and generation.

But some parrots know only one or two phrases, and just repeat them over and over, like the bird of which the poet Addison relates that he chose him from among a number of chatterers because of his very appropriate utterance. The bird remarked, "I speak in season!" but when he had taken him home, the purchaser found to his disgust that this was the only remark he ever made.

The tongue of the cockatoo is not so thick and fleshy as that of the parrot, but rather rough and horny, so these birds seldom make good talkers; they are very excitable and noisy, and this makes them rather unsuitable as cage-pets. They will imitate the cries of animals, but chiefly repeat the cry "Cockatoo!" which has given them their name.

Buffon writes of them: "The ease with which they are reared seems to arise from their docility, in which they surpass all other parrots. They listen and understand better, and are more obedient, but in vain attempt to repeat what is said to them, and seem as if they tried to make up for this by affectionate caresses and other expressions of feeling. Their mild dispositions and graceful motions add much to their beauty."

This is a nice character, is it not? and I think the history which a lady gives of her rose-crested cockatoo quite bears it out; though we must admit that Kākā—the name given to her because it was her first effort at speech—was a genius, far above the ordinary level of her kind, especially as the accomplishments here related are only some among many.

Perhaps this "midget" portrait hardly does her justice; but it at least shows her in a true light—as the trusted friend of the family with whom she lives.

Kākā came from India, so it was only to be expected that she should talk Hindoostani as her mother-tongue; but she learnt enough English to be able to say "Cockatoo" on every occasion, and "How are you?" as a special effort; and we all know that talking is not everything. "Handsome is that handsome does"; and Kākā's manners were very faultless.

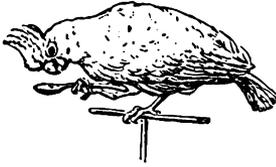
She travelled a good deal by train, and was always prepared for the journey by being put into a soft bag; and there she lay, perfectly quiet, though at a suitable time she could make noise enough and to spare. When staying



KĀKĀ.

with her mistress at an hotel, she was allowed to come down to dinner, and not only treated all the company with studied politeness, but ate her pudding with a spoon held in one claw, just as you see her in this little sketch.

Her favourite food is rice-milk, and she gives a squeak just to draw attention to the fact, when it is on the table, reminding one of the modest "Anne doesn't ask!" of the little girl who was forgotten. She also likes grapes, and

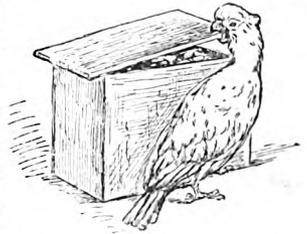


eats them discreetly, never swallowing the skins or stones, and having proved herself worthy of a position of trust, she is now and then



allowed to open the box and choose a biscuit for herself. Kākā is very affectionate, and will climb upon the knee of any member of the family who has returned after absence from home; but her own particular place is upon her mistress' shoulder, and if she is afraid of being taken away from it, she holds fast to the lace round her neck with her beak.

Occasionally she stoops to play with buttons or bricks given her by her mistress, or exerts herself to draw her little carriage. All these attainments are much admired; but what her family especially appreciate in Kākā is her loving, confiding disposition, which no doubt is partly due to the kind and gentle treatment she has always received

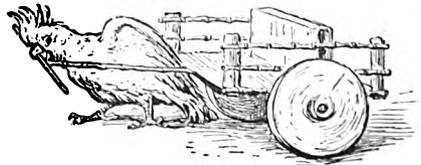


at their hands, for it is a true saying that "love begets love."



I want to tell you, before we leave the parrot family, of another cockatoo, a large white one with a lovely yellow crest which stood up like a fan when he was surprised.

This bird lived to a good old age, and was, like Kākā, allowed the run of the house. He was particularly fond of going up and down stairs, saying to himself, "Come, Cockie, come!" But his greatest effort of speech was displayed when any vehicle drove up to the door; he would then repeat a sentence which he had learnt from hearing his mistress give the order—"Pony carriage at the door at a quarter to four!" This was really a triumph of memory and mimicry for a cockatoo.



I wonder whether you know the following verses by the poet Campbell! I

believe the touching incident which they relate is quite true, though it may seem almost incredible.

THE SPANISH PARROT.

- "The deep affections of the breast
That Heaven to living things imparts,
Are not exclusively possessed
By human hearts.
- "A parrot, from the Spanish Main,
Full young, and early caged, came o'er,
With bright wings, to the bleak domain
Of Mulla's shore.
- "To spicy groves where he had won
His plumage of resplendent hue,
His native fruits and skies and sun,
He bade adieu.
- "He changed for these the smoke of turf,
A heathery land and misty sky,
And turned on rocks and raging surf
His golden eye.
- "But, petted, in our climate cold
He lived and chattered many a day,
Until with age, from green and gold,
His wings grew gray.
- "At last, when blind and seeming dumb,
He scolded, laughed, and spoke no more;
A Spanish stranger chanced to come
To Mulla's shore.
- "He hailed the bird in Spanish speech,
The bird in Spanish speech replied,
Flapped round his cage with joyous screech,
Dropped down, and died!"

The picture of the boy teaching his pet jackdaw to whistle the tune he is playing to him reminds me of *our* poor Jack, though I do not remember that he gave token of any talent for music, though it might have been developed if he had not come to an untimely end by drowning himself in the washing-machine.

His short life was a very merry one; and from the day when he surprised

us all nearly out of our wits by tumbling in upon the family circle, a half-fledged nestling from his nest in the chimney, till that which saw its inglorious close, no bird could have been happier or more at home in a position to which he certainly was not born.

Jack was by far the most inquisitive and mischievous pet we ever had, but so pert and amusing that his many offences against decorum were forgotten in sorrow for his fate. I do not remember his saying anything except the perpetual "Jack, Jack!" with which he strutted up and down the hall; but his sparkling eye and knowing look spoke volumes of fun and roguery.

I do not think we gave him anything but porridge, and as he had the run of the poultry-yard he did very well; but, if you keep either a jackdaw or a magpie in a cage, you may feed him with acorns, peas, corn, nuts, and berries, as well as worms and insects.

Jackdaws are found wild in many parts of London, where they build in roofs and church-towers. Numbers are sold quite young in the markets, to be reared as pets, and they, as well as the magpie and the starling, may be reckoned among the talking-



THE STARLING.

birds. They require a cage as large as you can afford them, unless you can keep them tame in the garden, where they are said to make themselves very useful by clearing the plants of slugs.

Both jackdaws and magpies are fond of stealing and hiding bright things; and many lost thimbles, pencil-cases, scissors, teaspoons, and costly ornaments have been carried off by them to their secret hoard, while innocent people have sometimes suffered suspicion on account of the theft.

It is, however, only fair to the magpie to say that in Norway, where he makes his nest like the swallow, under the eaves of the houses, his character is "without fear and without reproach."

But it would be too ungrateful even in a magpie to steal from people who are so kind to birds that they cut holes in their houses on purpose to admit the starlings, nail pieces of wood against them to support the nest of the house-martin, and in December hang out a sheaf of corn so as to ensure to birds of every wing a merry Christmas, if not a Happy New Year.

We *must* find room for some of Phoebe Cary's verses about

THE CHRISTMAS SHEAF.

"Now, good wife, bring your precious hoard,"

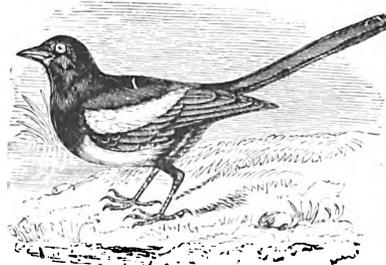
The Norland farmer cried:

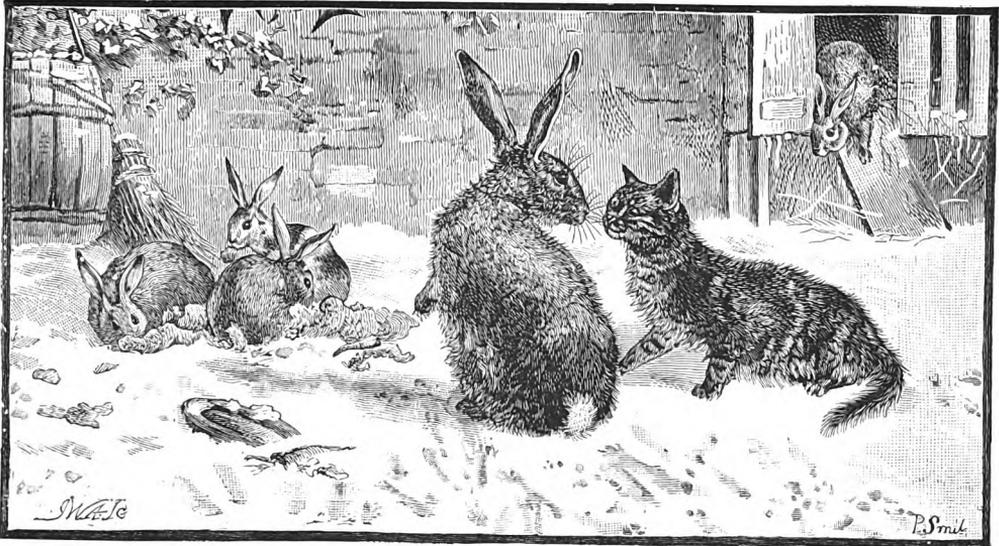
'And heap the hearth and heap the board
For the blessed Christmastide.

"And bid the children fetch," he said,

'The last ripe sheaf of wheat,
And set it on the roof o'erhead
That the birds may come and eat.

"And this we do for His dear sake,
The Master kind and good,
Who of the loaves He blest and brake
Fed all the multitude."





THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON.

CHAPTER V.

RABBITS AND GUINEA-PIGS.

"And the little noises flung,
Out of clefts where rabbits play."

I AM afraid this picture of Puss and Bunny on intimate terms must have been taken at a happy moment. If old tales speak truly, there is little in common between them but their fur, and a certain friskiness which characterises Puss in her very early days, and lingers about Bunny till past middle-life, as if loath to forsake him.

I fear, too, that in spite of fair appearances, if any breach in their friendship should occur, it will be on the ground of Puss having taken too great a liking to Bunny's little ones. You remember the story of the cat who used to go poaching by night, and would bring home a young rabbit as a present for her mistress. I think the light which that incident throws upon the present situation warrants us in the belief that such a friendship rests upon a very slender foundation, and that unsuspecting "Lop" would find herself far from being a match for crafty Grimalkin, if once this same poaching instinct came to the front.

Like George Stephenson, the great engineer, many a boy has first developed his love of animals by keeping rabbits. George began to keep them when he was quite a young lad, too poor to buy a nice hutch for them, and too hard-worked to spend much time in looking after his pets; yet they were not neglected. The "grit bare-legged laddie" built a house for his rabbits behind his father's cottage, and tended them so well that they became famous in the district, and purchasers were readily found for any that he could spare.

It is interesting to know that near the end of his busy life, when Stephenson lived in a beautiful country home of his own, and had his favourite cows and horses and dogs about him, in the leisure of his honoured old age, he again began to keep rabbits, and took a special pride in improving the breed.

Meantime "Geordie Stevie" had had many pets. We are told that when he had charge of keeping up an engine-fire, he used to save the crumbs from his dinner to tame the robins with, as they hopped to his feet.

Then, when the lad was a little older, and worked all day at the coal-pit, he trained his steady little dog to bring him his dinner in a tin box strapped to its collar; and a desperate encounter this doggie once had, in his determination not to give up his charge to a big butcher's dog, who fought hard to rob him of it.

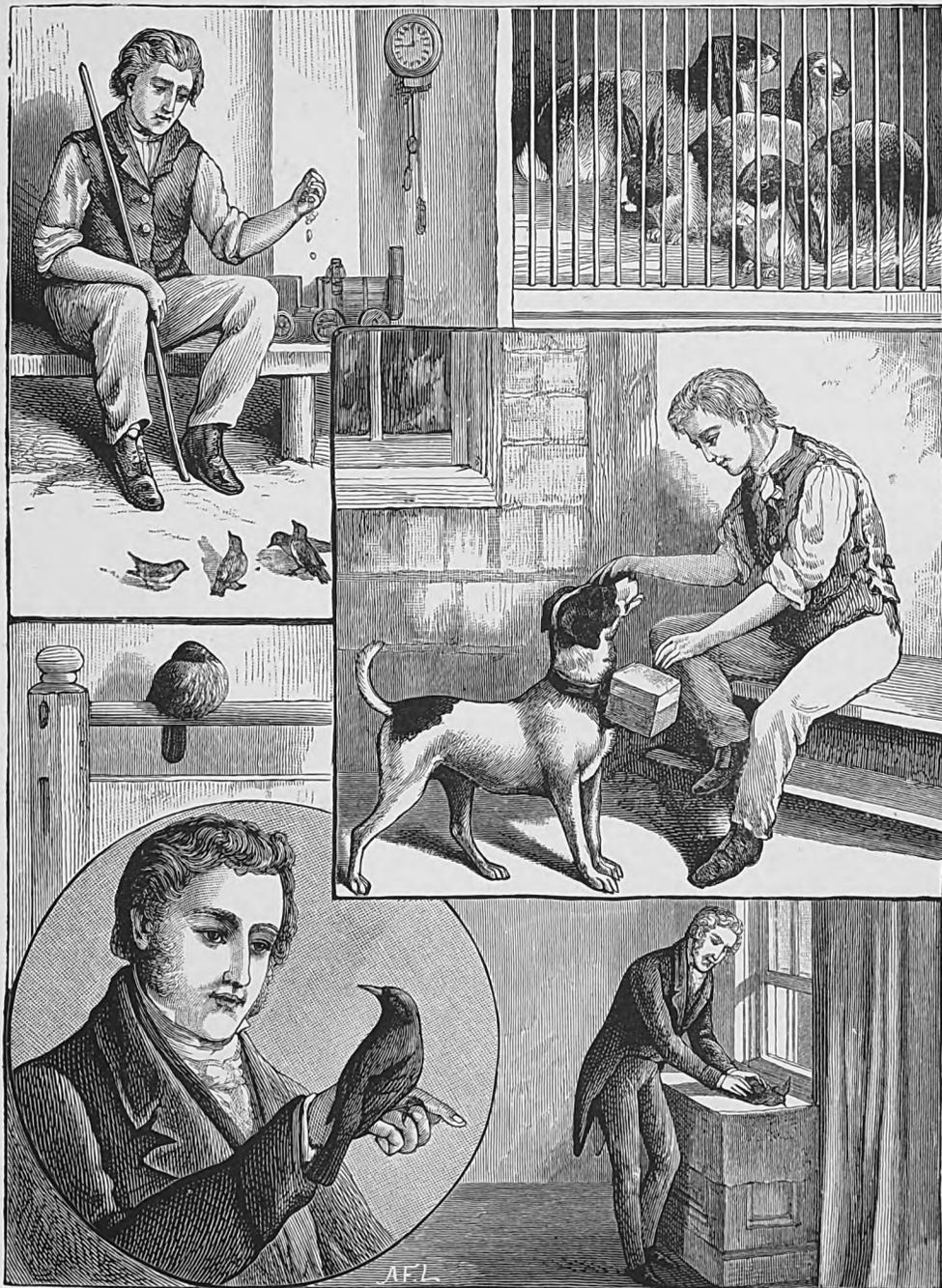
George was only a tiny child when his father, who loved animals and birds as much as he did, held him up to look into a blackbird's nest. It was a sight the boy never forgot; and when he was a man grown he so completely gained the confidence of a blackbird that it always spent the winter at his cottage, eating from his hand, and sleeping perched on the foot of his bed.

Every spring this bird flew away to the woods, and no doubt brought up a family there; but never failed to return to the cottage until one winter, when his friend looked for him in vain, and felt sure he must have died while absent from him, leaving no one to tell the tale.

I don't know whether you have ever chanced upon the pretty little grey rabbits with their white tails at home in one of the warrens where they live in such numbers; but if you have you will not forget the pretty sight.

The word "warren" means a citadel, and the wise little creatures, who have no weapons but their keen eyes and ears to make them aware of their enemies, and their swift feet to hasten their escape from them, choose for their fortress some breezy, furzy down where the soil is loose and dry; and then they set to work and honeycomb it with galleries and tunnels.

It is said that rabbits taught men sapping and mining, and their burrows are "strongholds though without strength, impregnable though without armament." They are of great length, and wind along the hill-side, beneath the smooth turf.



GEORGE STEPHENSON AND HIS PETS.

The little miners take special care that these winding passages shall be quite dry, and shall have several openings to the surface, which are avenues of escape. Then there are clever little tunnels branching off here and there from the main-street, and these lead to snug chambers where the nest, lined with fur from the mother's soft breast, is carefully concealed. There the little ones, born naked, blind, and helpless, are tenderly nurtured.

I well remember coming suddenly upon a rabbit warren one summer evening rather late.

We had been taking a walk from Ilfracombe to Morte-Point, a beautiful headland covered with short turf, soft as velvet, but with a shore where such treacherous rocks lie beneath the smooth water that the place had got its grim name from having been so fatal to ships. As we climbed the hill-side, for one moment it seemed as if the whole Point was alive with rabbits, and that a game of hide-and-seek had been going on. One or two were sitting demurely on their haunches, washing their faces with their little paws; but most of them were racing about, leaping over each other, and giving great bounds on their long hind legs, almost like small deer.

But our exclamations of delight put an end to the sport. One headlong scurry, a gleam of

"Bobbing rabbits,
Their white tails glancing,"

and the whole coast was clear; not a rabbit was to be seen, nor did one venture out of his hiding-place while we were there.

No doubt if we could have hidden ourselves, as did Thomas Edward the "Scotch Naturalist," whose very interesting life-story you must read one day, we should have seen something like what he describes; for the moon rose as we were on our way home, and we could imagine that the fun had begun again, and would get more and more furious until it was supper-time, and the mad-cap play-fellows would be scattered over the sweet turf, nibbling away in the moonlight.

These wild rabbits are nocturnal in their habits; at sundown they begin to be lively, and at the opening of each burrow a little bright-eyed fellow will appear and sit upright, with ears erect, intently listening; for in his case "discretion is the better part of valour," and if a fox or weasel should be lurking near, there is nothing for it but to give the alarm and then beat a hasty retreat.

Thomas Edward was obliged to work hard at his trade and make shoes by day; but he delighted to go out at night and get acquainted with the wild creatures



LOP-EARED RABBITS.

in their own homes. He tells us that he often watched the grey rabbits into their burrows at sunset, and out again a little before sunrise. They made no cry, like the "bleak-bleak" of the hare which he so often heard by night; but every now and then there was a peculiar "tap-tap" sound which he could not understand.

Early one morning, as he lay hidden by the gorse near a sandy knoll, where there were plenty of rabbit-holes, he heard this mysterious noise very close to him. It was made by a rabbit, beating with its hind feet upon the ground close to the mouth of another rabbit's hole.

"After he had finished his tapping at the first hole," Edward says, "he went along the hillock and began tap-tapping at another.

"He would smell the ground about the hole first, and would sometimes pass without tapping. At last he got to a hole where his progress was stopped. After he had given only two or three thuds, out rushed a full-grown rabbit and flew at the disturber of the peace.

"He rushed at him with such fury that they both rolled headlong down hill, until they reached the bottom; there they had a regular rabbit-fight."

The naturalist describes what he saw, but could not be sure of the meaning of this signal.

I remember that a fine white bunny, who went about our house like a cat, even sitting on the table at breakfast-time, had a habit of stamping which none of us could explain, and I suppose he was only making this same signal.

Edward found out that another sound, like "tap-pat," was a sign of danger. The rabbits were frisking about the mouths of their burrows in high glee, but the moment this signal was heard, away they all rushed to their holes, and were not seen for some time.

And now it is high time to say a little about tame rabbits; for it is with "domestic" pets that we have especially to do.

It is believed that all rabbits originally came from Spain, and that our many varieties have been produced by domestication. The tame rabbits are larger and heavier than their wild relations, and not so nimble, being encumbered by their long hair, and sometimes by their ears.

Among the most important breeds are the "silver" rabbit, with bluish-grey, silvery fur; the Russians, with their grey bodies and brown heads; Angoras, with short ears and very long silken fur; and Albinos, with white hair and red eyes.

As a rule, lop-eared rabbits are the most expensive and the most delicate, easily catching cold if exposed to damp or draughts. You must not attempt to keep them in ordinary wooden hutches, unless the hutch be under cover. In

any case, remember the free life of the wild creatures upon the open heath, and you will agree with a lover of animals, who says :

“An old box on the ground, with boards on the top, and decaying stuff underneath, is an unhealthy, miserable *prison*, but not a *home* for rabbits. No one can keep them without cruelty who has not a nice yard or garden where a good hutch can stand in summer, and a light, dry place under shelter, into which it can be moved in winter for warmth. He must also be able to buy them proper food (for turnip skins and kitchen refuse are only food for rabbits to starve on), and to give them a good run every day. He should also try to rail in a good-sized space by the hutch, in which they may run about at pleasure.”

I do not think George Stephenson was able to do all this for the furry pet which he kept so successfully ; but I have no doubt he considered them in every possible way, and used his mother-wit, sharpened by kindness, to keep them as clean, dry, and comfortable as he could.

The great points to bear in mind are : rabbits are natives of warmer countries, and are very particular about cleanliness. The hutch should be well raised from the ground, so that a current of air may pass underneath. The roof should be sloping, to allow the rain to run off, and high enough to enable the little inmates to sit in their favourite position—on their hind legs ; and the floor should be bored for drainage. At one end there should be a dark compartment (answering to the little brood-chamber at the end of the burrow) ; for the doe cannot bear to be watched while making her nest and caring for her young. This small dark compartment may be about three feet square ; the feeding one should be large and light, with wire-netting in front.

When the mother brings her little family to this part of the hutch, you may look at the young ones ; but be careful not to handle them ; they dislike it very much, and it often injures them, or may cause the parents to desert them.

When they are ready to be taken from the mother a large cage will be needed. They must have room to play about and exercise their young limbs. Old boxes turned on their sides make good sleeping-places, but be sure to keep the boxes very dry.

Clean your hutch thoroughly, and change the bedding at least once a week. For bedding, use clean dry straw or hay—never grass. Food should be given regularly, two or three times a day, and you should vary it as much as possible.

As you know, rabbits will eat any kind of vegetable food ; they are particularly fond of cabbage and turnip leaves and celery and carrot tops. In your walks you can think of your pets, and bring them home chickweed, dandelion, sow thistle, and many other weeds which they would find for themselves if allowed to run wild. But

be sure never to give green food wet, and not to forget that corn and dry food should be often given; also sweet hay, and an occasional mash made of barley meal and a little bran and oatmeal, mixed with boiling water, and allowed to stand some time before using.

Make it a rule to remove all old food before giving fresh, and to supply fresh water whether the rabbits seem to want it or not.

One hint more. Never lift up rabbits by the ears alone—this hurts and injures them more than you can tell—always support their weight on your hand.

With regard to the intelligence of tame rabbits, of which we know most, it does not seem to be of a very high order. Our white bunny used to follow us about like a cat, but I don't think he ever did anything more remarkable than seizing an opportunity of escaping to the woods. If he had stayed longer with us, and his natural "parts" had been cultivated, perhaps his "annals" would not have been so "vacant"—at any rate, the following story of a baby rabbit brought up by hand seems to show what cultivation and good society can do when enjoyed early in life.

What a quaint little creature it looks, and how entirely the two terriers realize that it is under their protection, not at their mercy! But I must tell you the story as it was told to me.

Some friends of mine in Argyllshire caught a tiny baby rabbit that appeared to be quite lost, and brought it home with them. They fed it with milk from a spoon, and succeeded in keeping it alive. It was put for safety into the waste-paper basket (one of the tall Japanese sort) and, when let out for a scamper in the drawing-room, it would come to call like a dog. In the house were two fox-terriers; and it was rather a question as to how they would receive the little bunny. At first the dogs and the rabbit were very cautiously and judiciously introduced; but soon the tables were quite turned, for the rabbit drove away the dogs from the hearthrug in the bravest way when it thought they had too good a place; and not only that, but it slept on them when they were curled up, and actually licked the face of one of them—kissed it, in fact—an operation the terrier could not understand, and perhaps did not quite like. This bunny was the most delightful little creature in every way, and seemed quite happy in its new home.

Before taking leave of the rabbits I may mention that their skins are an article of commerce, about thirty thousand being imported every month from Tasmania; they are chiefly used for making felt hats and imitation furs.

Tame rabbits were first introduced to our Australian colonies about the middle of the present century; but they speedily became wild, and are now counted anything but welcome invaders, as they make sad havoc of the farmers' crops.

As the guinea-pig is *not* a pig, but belongs to the same family as the rabbit, and its manner of eating and food is much the same, very little need be said of its management.

I am sure we cannot but admire the pretty, nimble creatures, although their short, rounded ears and lack of tails may take off a little from their beauty. No doubt you have heard the joke that if you hold up a guinea-pig by the *tail*, his eyes will drop out, and in telling this to your young friend who was, perhaps, ignorant of the fact that guinea-pigs have no tails, you have thus raised a laugh against him.

They are very quiet and harmless animals, and are so fond of eating that they never seem satisfied. On this account they should make rather interesting pets, as young people take delight in feeding them.

It is thought that they owe their name to Guiana, as there is no doubt that their ancestors were introduced to this country from South America, soon after its discovery. The Restless Cavy, which still flourishes on the banks of the La Plata, is believed to be the parent of the much prettier animals which are so much admired by boys: it is a sober, brown, little thing, much more like a mouse than a pig—in its cry and its way of running—and is often shot for food; while our “guineas,” if they suffer the privations of captivity, certainly enjoy immunity from the sportsman’s gun. I do not think I should care for the flesh of the guinea-pig as food; although it is said that if scalded—to remove the fur—and then stewed with sweet herbs, it is very delicious eating.

But it is a mistake to think that guinea-pigs must be always shut up in this country. If the cleverest of them is kept in his hutch or cage, the chances are that he will never show any sign of intelligence, but be timid and stupid to the end of the chapter. I have seen these animals under very different conditions, however; for I once knew two little girls whose pride and delight it was to take quite a tribe of guinea-pigs, young and old, for a walk along the terrace where they lived, and to let them scamper about the grass of the adjoining field, getting their own dinner under the trees, and enjoying their freedom thoroughly.

Some of these favoured “guineas,” “Amy” and “Andromache” among them, were accustomed to run up and down stairs; but the downward course was, I am sorry to say, marked by many a fall, and I must own that I did not care for such an unnatural exhibition, but preferred seeing them nibbling the grass and scurrying hither and thither, with their funny, mouse-like squeak. They were all very well on the lawn, which they helped to keep in order by eating down the grass; but could not be trusted among vegetable or flower-beds.

I never knew them do any harm in the house, unless they got hold of something on which to exercise their good gnawing-teeth. We must remember that the sharp, chisel-like teeth of rodents are always growing longer, and need to be kept down by constantly biting at something.

This may account for the fact that some guinea-pigs once unconsciously wrought much mischief by tearing up a manuscript which was left on a shelf to which they had access.

They are very clean little creatures, and never let a spot remain upon their glossy coats; indeed, I have heard that a mother will not put up with an untidy child, but neglects, and has even been known to kill the little sloven.

Stories of their feats, intellectual or otherwise, do not abound; but a gentleman who kept a good many of these pets in his rooms relates that when the laundress came from the country early in the morning, bringing a carrot or lettuce for the guinea-pigs, a perfect chorus of screaming was set up at the sound of her bell. He also tells an amusing story of how an audacious little animal, having smelt an apple in a lady's pocket, quietly ate his way through and devoured it!

The moral of this for every school-boy must be: if you keep a guinea-pig in each of your coat-pockets, take care at the same time what else you keep there.





"THORNY HEDGEHOG, BE NOT SEEN!"—*Midsummer Night's Dream*.

CHAPTER VI.

MICE, RATS, SQUIRRELS, AND HEDGEHOGS.

"Rats and mice and such small deer."

I WONDER what there is to be afraid of in such a "wee, cowrin', timorous beastie" as the mouse? and yet how many people *are* afraid of it! Those who would fearlessly face real danger will shrink from this tiny creature; and it can strike terror even into the relentless heart of a tiger, according to a story which Mr. Wood tells.

He says, "No fine lady ever exhibited more terror at the sight of a spider than this magnificent royal tiger betrayed on seeing a mouse." It seems that while mousie, who had been introduced into the wild beast's cage, was running backwards and forwards, unconscious of her perilous position, the tiger "stood trembling and roaring in an ecstasy of fear"; and in order to avoid the little creature, "made a kind of flying leap so high as nearly to bring his back in contact with the roof of the cage."

I remember meeting a little brown mouse on the stairs one night when all the house was asleep. He did not immediately run off, but sat looking up at me

in a deprecating way, as if he would have said, "You and I both know that we have no business here. *You* ought to be in bed like the rest of the world, and I have no rights to plead, so just throw myself on your mercy."

On another occasion I was brought into still closer relations with a poor beastie, who was caught in the act of stealing. I took up a small bag of flour, and was carrying it from the storeroom to the kitchen, holding it loosely round the neck with one hand, while the other held a large bowl. I had just been aware of a curious movement inside the hand which grasped the bag, when, quick as thought, out ran the little intruder, his whiskers all white; he scampered down my apron, and escaped by some lucky hole, of which there were too many in the house for the proverb which tells us that, "The mouse that hath but one hole is quickly taken," to have any force there.

Besides the touching story of the mouse tamed by Baron von der Trenck while he was a prisoner—a creature so faithful and loving that, when taken from him, it watched beside the prison door, and crept in as soon as it was opened, and being again removed, refused all food and died in three days—there are many instances of wild mice which have been made tame and become very amusing pets. I have had no experience, however, of any in that character, except the white mice. These "albinos," like the white rats, are only a variety of the common kind. Both white rats and mice may be bought for a few pence, and are very tame, being generally bred in cages; but they are less hardy, and much less intelligent than their brown relations, who have to live by their wits. Instead of scurrying away as soon as they catch sight of a human creature, these animals, reared in captivity, will be delighted to run all over you, if you have no objection, hiding in your pockets and nestling inside your sleeves.

The rats will soon know when you call them, and play all sorts of games, jumping on to your lap, running up your back, and sitting perched upon your head; but I never found the same responsiveness about the mice.

They are very pretty little creatures; but their peculiar scent, which nothing can remedy, is much against them. You ought to have a roomy cage for them, with more than one compartment, and the upper story should be reached by a ladder, which the little inmates will delight to climb, looking very pretty in the ascent and descent.

Be sure to keep these compartments scrupulously clean. Mice are very particular about cleanliness, and you may see them, after every meal, lick their pretty little pink paws, and then sit up and stroke face and ears with a rapid motion very curious to watch.

Their health depends upon their house being kept dry from top to bottom. You may give them a little corn of any kind, but their chief food is dry bread.

with now and then a tiny bite of cheese. They must, of course, be supplied with water or milk, which they will lap like a cat.

From my experience of what mice will do with paper if it is left in their way, I am afraid I should not very long trust the demure little student, whose pink eyes are fixed upon *The Daily Telegraph*, with such a temptation in its way. The mice I knew well used to seize upon every scrap of paper they could find, and tear it up into shreds, either as bedding for themselves, or a nest for their young ones. Sometimes, when, after their evening frisk on the white tablecloth, they were put back into their cage, where a fresh supply of paper had been placed, we could hear them tearing it up, and the next morning the shreds would be rolled into a ball quite neatly and compactly.

When asleep the little creatures tuck their heads so completely under their bodies that they look as if they were sitting upon them.

The young ones, eight to ten generally forming a family, are very tiny, almost like transparent, pink caterpillars. No "features" are discernible; and it is most interesting to watch how the little bodies take form, developing something new day by day. You can see the eyes dawn beneath the clear skin—those eyes that will shine like rubies in their setting of soft white fur by-and-by. Then the ears grow, and the soft whiskers come where no mouth appears to be, the tails lengthen and become scaly, and with a lens you can see the faint sprouting of fur all over their pink bodies. And this goes on until the creature is perfect, after its kind, with a completeness which made an old lady exclaim, when the mother-mouse, with her ten little ones, were brought up to her bed for her to see, "Oh, how can any one doubt that there is a God!"

It is very interesting, if you hide one of her many young ones for a minute, to see the anxiety of the mother. She misses the lost one at once, and runs backwards and forwards, peering about for it; and when she has found it, carries it off in her mouth, as a cat carries her kitten.

I have never seen any young white rats; but I must warn you, if you have both rats and mice, not to leave them together. We once put our baby mice in their cage down on the carpet, where the white rat was moving about, just to see whether he would take any notice of them. Sad to say, before we could prevent it, he had rushed to the cage and killed one of them with a blow of his paw.

This cured us of trying experiments of such a life and death nature; but I am sorry we did not try the effect of music upon our pets.

I must tell you a story about this. The gentleman who is responsible for it, says he was alone in his room, playing the flute, when he saw a mouse creep from its hole and come quite near his chair. It did not manifest the least



RATTO'S" DESSERT.

alarm while he continued playing, but the moment he ceased the mouse scurried back into its hole. Presently he began again, and the little creature stole out, took up the same position as before, "crouched itself on the floor, shut its eyes, and appeared in ecstasy," disappearing as before the moment the music ceased.

And so the entertainment went on, the little listener "always differently affected as the music varied from the slow and plaintive to the brisk and lively," until one day he went off and came no more.

There is nothing musical in the "squeak-squeak" of our little friends; but it seems that a mouse which had taken up its abode behind the wainscot in a kitchen where a canary hung in its cage, took to imitating its song so successfully that a visitor once asked, "Is that a bird singing?"

Here is an incident which seems to show that mice, as well as their clever rat-cousins, have the faculty of putting "this and that together" upon occasion.

A pot of honey was left in a closet in which a quantity of plaster-rubbish had been left by the builders. The mice took advantage of the situation; they piled the bits of plaster in a heap against the side of the pot, and so reached the honey.

The Iceland mice are said to have their own ideas of boating. They collect in parties, choose a flat piece of dried cowdung, pile it with berries and other provisions, drag it down to the stream by their united efforts, launch it, embark, and sail across to the other side.

I own that when I first read this I said to myself, "That is just a little *too* clever"; but the account has been confirmed by a lady living in the island, who remembers when a child spending whole afternoons on the margin of a small lake, amusing herself by driving these intrepid little Argonauts away from the shore, just when they were about to moor their rafts in safety. It was *too* hard-hearted of her, was it not?

The brown or Norway rat is the one now found wild in England. It is larger and fiercer than the original black variety which had possession here until the foreigners came and settled in the country and turned them out.

Both kinds of rat are very agile and skilful in burrowing. They find their way everywhere, and will gnaw and burrow through everything. They will run, leap, climb—taking hold by their hairy tails—swim, and never seem to lose their presence of mind, but avail themselves of every possible means of escape if in danger of being caught.

Rats like animal food; and their boldness when hungry is astonishing. Corn, eggs, young birds—all is grist that comes to their mill. And there are stories—which almost pass belief—of the way in which eggs have been conveyed by them from the top to the bottom of a house—one rat passing the egg down to the other at each step of the stairs, and then changing places with him.

Their sense of smell and hearing are very acute; and there can be no doubt that, when wild, rats have the power of communicating intelligence to their kind, and there are many instances of their fearlessness in defending each other in case of danger.

Mr. Whymper, who was the first traveller known to set foot on the Matterhorn, tells us that while he was resting in a little hut on the mountain-side below the peak he was startled by a sudden rustling noise, which made itself distinctly heard in the silence of the night—a silence only broken in those vast solitudes by the crash of a distant avalanche. Presently he saw that he had a little companion in a mouse which came creeping over the floor, picking up the crumbs he had let fall while eating his supper, and now and then crunching a bit of egg-shell.

The poor little thing was quite unaware of the traveller's presence, as it was evidently both blind and deaf. Mr. Whymper thought it might have lost its sight by the snow-glare; but it seems that blindness is not uncommon in the case of both mice and rats. The strange thing was to find a blind mouse in a little hut on the mountain-side, more than twelve thousand feet above the plain, and, as far as could be seen, with no friend to take care of it.

It is well known that rats go in parties when leaving one home to seek another. A gentleman once, when walking in the meadows, observed a crowd of rats, and had no doubt that they were on the march—or “on tramp” perhaps we should say. Looking at them more closely, he noticed one, old and blind, which was being gently led along by a friend or relation—not by the hand or the tail, but by means of a piece of wood which each held in his mouth. He says the guide of this poor old rat took as much care of him as a child could take of its blind father or mother.

Such anecdotes ought to make us a little soft-hearted towards animals which we naturally dislike, and which are really very mischievous, and most clever and audacious thieves,—witness the two friends who helped each other to get oil out of a narrow-necked bottle, one standing on some support by the side of it, dipping his tail in and giving it to the other to lick.

Field mice, too, are formidable corn-destroyers. They are often carried home with the corn at harvest-time; and it is said that while their fellows are asleep in their cosy burrows, these little invaders of the barns and rickyards, surrounded with plenty, stay awake all the winter so as not to lose their opportunity!

We know what a terrible plague “the mice that marred the land” were when God sent them to punish the Philistines, and how thankful the people were when the plague was removed.

Then the old saying, “There be land-rats and water-rats, land-thieves and

water-thieves," tells its own tale; but there are rats *and* rats, as Douroff, the Parisian rat-trainer, tells us he finds to be the case. He exhibits hundreds of all varieties, black, white, and brown; but such as he proves to be intractable and fierce he rejects as not worth the trouble of training; and I suppose we may count the rejected ones the fortunate ones in this case, though the training is said to be all accomplished by very gentle methods.

Douroff speaks to his beasts in soft caressing tones—most animals feel the power of the human voice—and does not touch them, but uses his hand only to direct their movements. At the end of every effort he rewards his pupils with a grain of corn or a bit of bread, so that they feel it is worth while to do their best. He allows those rats which are accustomed to live in families to have a cage to themselves; in fact, he makes it his study to win the confidence of the whiskered nibblers in every possible way, and succeeds so wonderfully that the wildest rat is tamed in a few hours.

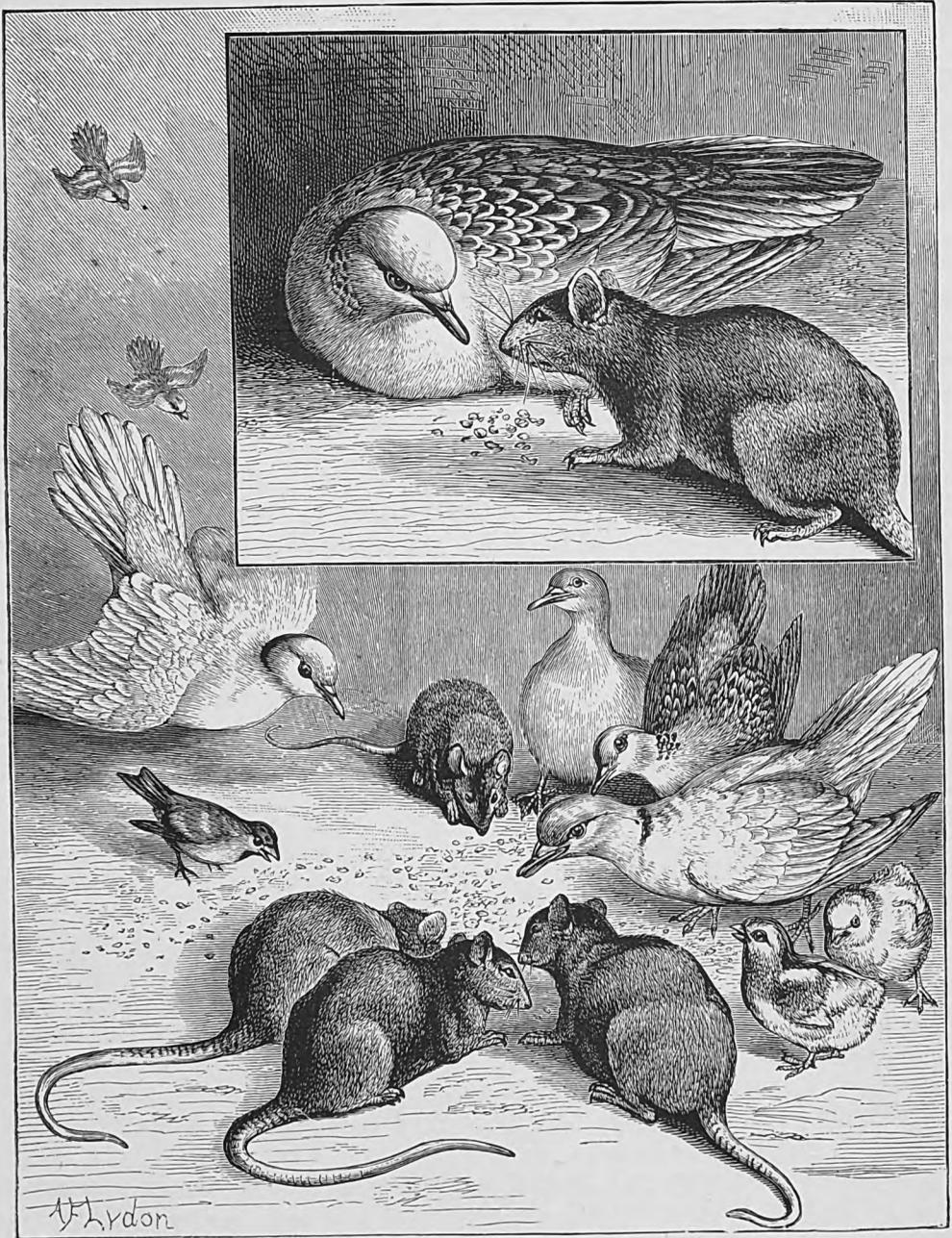
Another example of his skill is shown in a beautiful black cat with long hair, to whose vigilance he trusts to keep his scholars from playing truant.

I think I must copy for you the account which is given of the rat's railway exhibition by a visitor who saw the performance. After describing Douroff's gentle method of training, he says, "He makes all his troupe take a journey in a train of cars run by machinery. This sight astonished me. On the floor of the stage he places a circular road of more than twenty yards in circumference, with tunnels, a station, a semaphore or signal apparatus, and a train of several cars fastened to a locomotive."

With infinitely gentle motions, Douroff directs his rats upon the platform. He carefully drives them out of their cage, caresses them, teaches and persuades them so well that each one keeps his own *rôle* without making any confusion among the rest. One rat is taught to go to the locomotive, he is engineer; his assistant, the stoker, follows him; the tender is filled; the travellers get into the cars. One rat raises the semaphore lantern; other travellers hasten in the direction of the station; the cars fill up, and heads are seen at all the windows; the bell rings, the train moves, and without accident comes back to its starting-place."

This shows what higher education will do for rats; but the following anecdote gives an idea of how beautifully they can give evidence, without any training, of the "kindness" which God has "put into the hearts of His creatures."

A very interesting and singular exhibition of friendship in animals, usually great enemies to each other, was observed a short time ago. A gentleman who has a large number of doves, says that when they feed, the corn attracts the chickens, sparrows, and even rats. The birds do not seem to be in the least frightened at the hungry rodents, although these are of unusual size. No happier



FRIENDLY RATS.

family exists inside or outside of a menagerie. But this unusual agreement was shown at its height when the gentleman noticed one of the rats run to the corn, feed heartily, and then go to the coach-house, twelve or more feet away. He repeated the visit quite a dozen times. The observer's curiosity being aroused, he went to the coach-house, and found one of the doves—a sick one—eating corn there. The object of the rat's movements was made plain: he had been carrying corn to the dove which was unable to go for it himself!

Just one word more before we take leave of the mice and rats.

I cannot promise you that your white mice will do anything more wonderful than wash their own faces and run over yours, climb their own little ladder, and creep into your waistcoat pocket, frisk about every evening, and take good care of the young ones in their paper nest.

As to the rats, there is no knowing what they may or may not do—so much depends upon the animal, and so much more upon his master. But I can at least promise that a white rat of ordinary capacity, kindly treated and well cared for, will soon become a delightful pet, knowing when he is called, and playing many a merry game with any one who will be his play-fellow.

I need not further impress upon you the necessity for keeping these creatures' homes "as clean as a new pin"; but I must warn you on no account in winter to allow them to remain even for half an hour in a room without a fire. A much-beloved rat of my acquaintance fell a victim to the anxiety of his mistress for his safety, and her forgetfulness of the danger of change of temperature in his case. Some friends, accompanied by their terrier Jack, were coming to dinner. There not being time during a short visit to establish an understanding between him and Ratto, the latter was put away out of sight for the time. He got a severe bronchial attack, and neither food, physic, nor nursing availed to save his life. Poor Ratto went the way of so many of the pets, after all the love and care bestowed upon him.

Now let us turn our attention to the squirrel, or "shadow-tail," as his name means.

Many a time in the beech woods have I seen the shy, frisky, red-coated, furry, bright-eyed little "wingless squirrels" careering about in their own domain, darting across the woodland paths, "skimming up the silent beech," ever mounting higher and higher, and pertly hiding among the branches; then down again, like lightning, they come, clinging by their claws to the smooth bole of the tree—never tired of the endless chase.

It does seem strange that such a shy, wild-wood creature should ever submit to be made a pet; still more that it should quickly become so very much at home as one generally finds pet squirrels are, with such fond, winning, playful ways

of their own that we cannot choose but give them the petting in which they take such delight. But so it is, especially if the little creature has been taken from the nest when quite young.

Mr. Wood says one may easily be cheated into buying an old squirrel, and gives this mark by which its age may be known.

The teeth, white when it is young and can crack its own nuts, become large and yellow with age. Also, if a squirrel seems unnaturally quiet and tame, it is quite likely that it has been just taken from the nest, but has been given so much laudanum—poor wee beastie!—to keep it from being troublesome to its captor, that it will probably die in a few hours.

The squirrel is a very clean little creature, and if you have one which has come to you very young, or been bred in captivity, you may allow it to go about the house as it pleases; for it will become so fond of you that there is not much fear of its trying to escape, unless, indeed, its own wild woods are dangerously near.

With regard to the cage, I do not know what to advise, as opinions differ. It has always seemed to me that the round cage, with the "wheel" upon which the little prisoner goes round and round, working his own treadmill, is a cruel mockery, an abominable invention.

But there are those—the squirrels' masters, not the squirrels themselves—who assure us that this spinning wheel is an instrument, not of torture but of pleasure, for the possession of which mice and squirrels have contended.

So I must leave this an open question, and only say that nothing will so well help you to give your pet as happy a life as may be, as observing the habits of his uncaught, uncaged brothers of the beech or pine wood.

Still, you cannot, with the best intentions, climb the trees and rob the birds' nests, nor scuffle and rummage among the dead leaves to pick up beetles for him.

All you can do as to food is to see that your "brown hermit" has all the year round in his cage just such a supply as his winter hoard contains: a little more varied perhaps, inasmuch as your resources are more abundant.

He will sit up, under the shadow of his wiry tail, and crack with great satisfaction hazel nuts and walnuts and chestnuts and acorns. Biscuit, or bread soaked in milk, will always be welcome, especially if he is not so young as he once was, and his overgrown teeth fail to grasp the nuts—in which case his master should crack them for him.

Several meals a day must be the rule, with a lump of sugar to nibble at between whiles; for he does not eat much at a time.

It is a pretty sight to watch a pair of squirrels preparing to build their nest.

As you sit in the beechen shade, holding your breath in the hazy stillness, there they are, as busy as birds, choosing tiny twigs and bits of moss and lichen, and then running off with the burden in their mouths and disappearing into the hole high up in the fork of a tree, where the nest is to be safely hidden away.

When finished, it will be a very cosy home for the young ones, softly lined with wool, or rabbits' fur, or perhaps some torn from the parents' own reddish-grey coats by their clever little fingers and thumbs; for a squirrel has what naturalists call a "rudimentary" thumb in addition to the four fingers with which his fore paws are furnished.

I have heard a charming story of a pet squirrel who was devoted to his master.

Filbert was taken from the nest when a baby, and soon became so tame that he would eat from his master's hand, and lie contentedly on the table while his master read or wrote, but when he had an idea that there was the chance of accompanying him on a walk, all this demure propriety gave way to the greatest excitement.

The little ball of fur became suddenly animated, and would run up its master's legs, and try to get into the pocket outside his coat which had been contrived for its special convenience. All went well as long as the walk was through the streets, but as soon as they were fairly in the country, Filbert's games began. Jumping out of his master's pocket, he used to scamper away, up the trees and down again; then presently he would come back a tame squirrel once more, nibble at his master's fingers, lick the beloved hand, and nestle in his pocket retreat, now and then poking out his head with its tufted ears, and taking in the landscape with his bright eyes.

Filbert used to show off sometimes, leaping over a stick held before him, and going through other dog-like performances; but I do not think he ever knew so well how to "efface himself" in his master's service as did a squirrel whom a Russian lady taught to crack nuts for *her*.

The hedgehog or urchin, like the shrew, is not one of the gnawing-animals, but lives chiefly upon insects and snails, frogs, young birds, mice, and even snakes.

It is interesting as being the only English animal which is protected by a coat of mail armed with spikes. These inch-long "spines" are very curious, and are fixed in the skin by a root, like the head of a pin. One evening, as I was walking through the long grass, I tripped over something which proved to be a "thorny" hedgehog, rolled up tight in a ball.

When the animal is thus rolled up, the skin is stretched, and this causes the spines to stand erect.

Having heard of him as a pleasant little beast to make a pet of, and knowing that he was perfectly harmless, and would do me a good turn by exterminating,

the plague of cockroaches in our kitchen, I took him up, intending to carry him home. But the way was long, and I found my burden so inconvenient to carry, that I was glad to put him down again. The sweets of civilisation were never tasted by this particular urchin; and I never had the opportunity of hearing the "hedge-pig's whining" of which the old poets tell.

I have heard of a family of four, born quite unexpectedly in the dining-room. Their tawny-white little bodies were covered with very soft spines; and they



lived to trot about the house, carrying their peculiar musky smell everywhere, and causing great astonishment, if not consternation, to the cats already in possession, and much amusement to the owner of the house. He taught them to know their names, and took all possible care of them, but found much difficulty in feeding them, from want of knowledge of their habits.

One trick which they had was packing themselves up "into a parcel, which would have done credit to a grocer's assistant," in any newspaper which was left in their way.

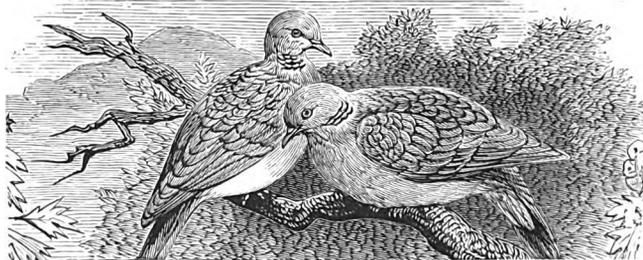
In winter, in their wild state, they become torpid; and it was noticed that about October these home-born urchins began to eat prodigiously. Before many cold days had passed they and their mother were all sound asleep in their basket, and during sleep the strong musky odour was quite absent. This is a beautiful provision for their safety during their state of torpor, as the musky smell would disclose their whereabouts to their enemies.

Gipsies, who eat these creatures, and know more of their habits than do naturalists, say their holes for sleeping in are nicely lined with grass and moss; and that, like other hibernating animals, they store up berries, crab-apples, and even mice. They also say that hedgehogs make their homes in hollow trees and crevices of the rocks, and sometimes burrow.

The story which our picture illustrates has sometimes been doubted, but it was told by an observer, who says he not only saw the mother hedge-pig rolling herself upon the fallen apples, so as to get them fixed upon her spines and carry them off to her retreat, but also saw half-a-dozen hungry young urchins in the hedge which enclosed the garden "waiting for the coming of their prickly parent!"

After what I have told you, you must judge for yourself whether or not hedgehogs deserve to be reckoned among "Domestic Pets," and whether you would care to bring up a family of them in your own house and garden.





“‘Coo,’ said the Turtle-dove.
‘Coo,’ said she.”

CHAPTER VII.

DOVES AND PIGEONS.

“And God them taught, at every close
Of water far, and wind,
And lifted leaf, to interpose
Their chanting voices kind;
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.”

MRS. BROWNING, *My Doves.*

THE dove is interesting to us as being the first bird mentioned by name in the Scriptures, and many are the allusions to her beauty, her gentle “harmless” nature, and her soft, mournful note.

“A pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons,” was also the sacrifice graciously appointed by God to be brought instead of the “lamb for a burnt offering,” in the case of a poor trespasser who could not procure the more costly animal; but the first mention of the gentle creature is in connection with the birds sent out of the ark by Noah.

How welcome must the soft-winged messenger,

“Returning fondly home”

from her flight over the watery waste, have been to the “prisoner of hope” in the ark! Yet not half so thankfully was she taken in with the “olive branch plucked off” in her gentle bill, as the soaring flight, “as far as the East is from the West,” of the “living bird dipped in blood” and “let loose into the open field,” was watched by the seven-times sprinkled leper in the day of his cleansing.

The Lord, who had Himself “shut him in, remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark”; but as the

window was "above," it would seem as though the first knowledge that the earth in all its fresh greenness was appearing, came to Noah through the dove-borne message of peace.

But apart from all which is so interesting about the dove as an emblem of purity and symbol of peace, she is a very attractive, graceful bird, with her small head, long wings and tail, and slender bill. Her plumage may not be so brilliant as that of the pigeon, but the reddish-brown and grey tints shade softly into each other, and harmonise with the blue of the head and neck, the delicate purple of the feet, and the tail tipped with white.

The female is paler in colour than the male, and the spots on her neck are smaller. But "fair" as these birds are when at rest, it is on the wing, in the evening light, that their beauty is really seen; and as we watch them flying Westward we think of the words, "as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

The turtle-dove is with us only a summer visitor. She is one of

"The happy birds that change their sky
To build and brood; that live their lives
From land to land"—

but is found all the year round in the warmer countries of Europe.

An allusion to her as a bird of passage occurs in the beautiful description of the return of spring in King Solomon's "Song of Songs"—

"The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

The prophet Jeremiah, too, speaks of the turtle as one of the birds which "observe the time of their coming." Travellers to the Holy Land tell us that turtle-doves are to be seen in amazing numbers wherever palms—whether wild or cultivated—grow. They especially frequent the Jordan valley, while the rock-dove abounds in the wild, hilly parts of Palestine, building in the "clefts of the rock"; and the ring-dove, known by its pale creamy colour and black half-ring round the neck, builds in the woody country.

Doves seldom visit our Northern shores; but in the Kentish woods their soft coo may be heard from May to September. They are fond of building in the pine, as they feed upon its seeds. The nest is of the very simplest construction, merely a platform of twigs laid upon the branch or in the fork of a tree, very near the ground. Two eggs only are hatched at a time, but there may be several broods in the season. The male helps in hatching and rearing the young; and the parent-birds are protected from birds of prey by their power of flying swiftly and almost noiselessly in and out among the trees.

The affection of doves for each other and for their young has passed into a proverb, and makes them favourite cage-birds. They are easily tamed, and will breed in captivity; and they have been known to live fourteen years after having exchanged their free woodland surroundings for the narrow limits of a wicker cage.

A friend has just told me of one of her doves, cage-born, which lived twenty-six years; and adds, "I am now awakened morning by morning by the loud cooing of its great-grandchildren!"

But it is a mistake to think that doves must of necessity be cage-birds. If provided with a large round basket, where they will go to rest, and in which the nest will be made if you give them a little straw, they will be much more at home there than in a cage.

You may feed them with peas, maize, barley, or any kind of grain; seeds, such as linseed or millet; green-stuff now and then; and be sure that they always have fresh water, and a plentiful supply of sand.

Talking of doves being "at home" reminds me to tell you of a pair which lived on a table in the kitchen window, and were very much at home indeed. They became on such friendly terms with the cat that they would perch, unforbidden and unafraid, on his back as he lay basking beside the fire. A very obliging cook encouraged them in their free and easy ways, and allowed them to sit on the edges of her dishes and investigate all her cookery; while, above stairs, they were admitted to such confidential relations with the family that it was nothing uncommon to see one or other of these privileged birds pruning his feathers, perched upon somebody's head during breakfast.

This, we may well imagine, was more delightful to the rest of the family than to the member of it thus selected as a *pied-à-terre* by the too-familiar favourite.

For those who keep pigeons I should like, before saying a little about the varieties of breed, to copy a very beautiful and touching letter which was sent to the *Spectator* of April 1st, 1893, by Mr. Ross of Edinburgh.

"Some years ago," he writes, "my father had a pair of common white pigeons. They were very tame, and became very much attached to him; so much so that they were almost his constant companions, accompanying him in his walks or when he went out driving. They would answer his whistle like a dog, and would alight on his proffered hand, or enter his pocket if opened for them.

"A sceptical friend thought they would show the same familiarity to any other persons; and, to give them a fair trial, he procured a suit of clothes of the same colour as that which my father wore. Arrayed in his disguise, our sceptical friend, imitating my father's whistle as closely as possible, called to the pigeons.

"Immediately they left their perch on the housetop, and flew down to the hand held out to receive them; but when they came within a few yards of it, they suddenly checked themselves, fluttered perplexedly for a few moments around our friend, and then flew back to the housetop. This was conclusive evidence.

"But a sad accident happened. One morning one of the pigeons was found upon the high road dead, its body bearing marks of injury, but from what cause we never knew.

"We carried the dead body home, and buried it in a sunny and quiet spot in the garden. For three days the surviving pigeon, with untiring energy, searched the country far and near for its mate, but in vain.

"It refused to touch food; and even the influence which my father usually exercised over it was gone. On the third day we found it dead in the dove-cote, its little heart broken with grief for the loss of its life-long companion.

"We buried it beside its mate. Since then my father has never kept pets."

The name "pigeon" seems to come from an Italian word meaning to peep, or chirp. It is thought that our many varieties are all descended from the Blue Rock pigeon, which is so easily recognised by its colour—"bluish-grey, with green and purple reflections, with two broad and distinct black bars across the closed wings." The black bar also crosses the end of the tail; the bill is dark brown, and the legs and feet reddish-orange.

You will see these characteristic bars on wings and tail—which may be traced in all English varieties—very plainly marked upon the plumage of the blue pigeon opposite which seems to be so much struck by his own appearance; though, no doubt, he mistakes the reflection of himself in the mirror for a relation of his, whose acquaintance he would like to make.

The pouters are so called from their large crop. The English pouter is a large bird, the Norwich cropper a smaller one.

The Jacobins may be distinguished by the head feathers being in the shape of a hood.

The fantails carry their heads thrown back, so that they almost touch the fan-shaped tail, and the bird looks as if it were falling backwards.

Tumblers get their name from their tumbling or turning motion in the air.

The frilled pigeons, like Queen Elizabeth's brave knights and wise counsellors, wear a very becoming ruff, their feathers curling round their necks, and some of them are crested like the cockatoo.

The largest pigeon is the Antwerp variety; and Belgium is still the chief pigeon-flying country.

With regard to the keeping of tame pigeons, when they are allowed to fly about, small cotes for four pairs, mounted on tall poles, may be easily made, and

are very pretty, especially when the graceful tenants are flying in and out, or sitting at their doors in the evening light. In the case of "fancy" birds, too valuable to risk their flying away, special arrangements must be made, and each pair should be allowed a separate nest. The pigeon-house should be so constructed as to allow of its being easily cleaned; for the birds, which have delicate lungs, are very sensitive to their surroundings, and carriers and croppers are liable to disease from bad air. Take care that they are constantly supplied with fresh water; also give them crushed mortar, if in confinement, and green food occasionally. They may be fed with Indian corn, oats, wheat, barley—but not too much of it—peas, and beans. You must be careful, however, not to overfeed; the best plan is to notice how much they take at one meal, and so regulate the amount given. A prettier sight can hardly be seen than a crowd of eager pigeons flocking to be fed. One who treasures it among her childhood's memories has thus described it:—

"And as I watched
The softly rustling crowd, the marvellous charm
Of varied colour rushed upon my sense.
What rainbow wonders!—only richer far
Than any rainbow, deepened by the depth
Of plumage, and swift flashing into change
With every movement, clothed their lovely necks.
What delicate ash-tints overflowed their sides
And shining shoulders! As I gazed I grew
Dumb with delight."*

If it is true that pigeons kept in dove-cotes and allowed to fly about will almost keep themselves, you will see that they may be very inexpensive pets when once their home is provided for them. Shelves for breeding should be arranged; and when the birds are sitting they should be separated, as they are jealous, and may neglect their eggs if overlooked by one another.

It used to be a favourite schoolboy joke to send a new boy to buy "pigeons' milk." Since the discovery made by John Hunter that all birds of the dove kind have the power of feeding their young until they are capable of digesting their ordinary food with a curd-like substance from their own crops, the joke has lost a little of its piquancy.

He says both the parent-birds thus feed their young at first with this "curd" only. "About the third day some of the common food is found mingled with it, and as the pigeon grows older the proportion of common food is increased; so that by the time it is seven, eight, or nine days old the secretion of the curd ceases in the old ones, and of course no more will be found in the crop of the young."

* "Philip Molesworth," by Mrs. Frederick Prideaux.

If you live in London, you will know how true to life is Mr. Heath's picture of the pigeons in the gardens surrounding St. Paul's. I well remember, the last time I was there, how beautiful they looked, flashing in and out of the dark shadows of the old cathedral.

We have not yet spoken of the carrier-pigeons. They are large birds, and are remarkable for "wattles" of white skin at the base of the beak and round the eyes. Carriers were used as message-bearers by the Egyptians and Romans, and were very valuable, from £50 to £100 having been given for them, according to the perfection of their training. At the present time, I believe, a Belgian breed, the homers, more like the common pigeon, are chiefly used as messengers, and from £40 to £50 has been paid for the winner in a five-hundred-mile flight.

Their training begins at three or four months old, by putting them in a basket and taking them about a mile from home. Then the basket is opened, and the birds are encouraged to find their way back. A few days intervene, and the experiment is tried again, the birds being set free at an increased distance from home, say three miles. This distance is doubled on the next occasion; and so complete is the training that at three years old the best birds will fly five hundred miles, at about eight hundred yards a minute. The greatest distance accomplished is eleven hundred miles; but this feat was performed, as might be expected, in America.

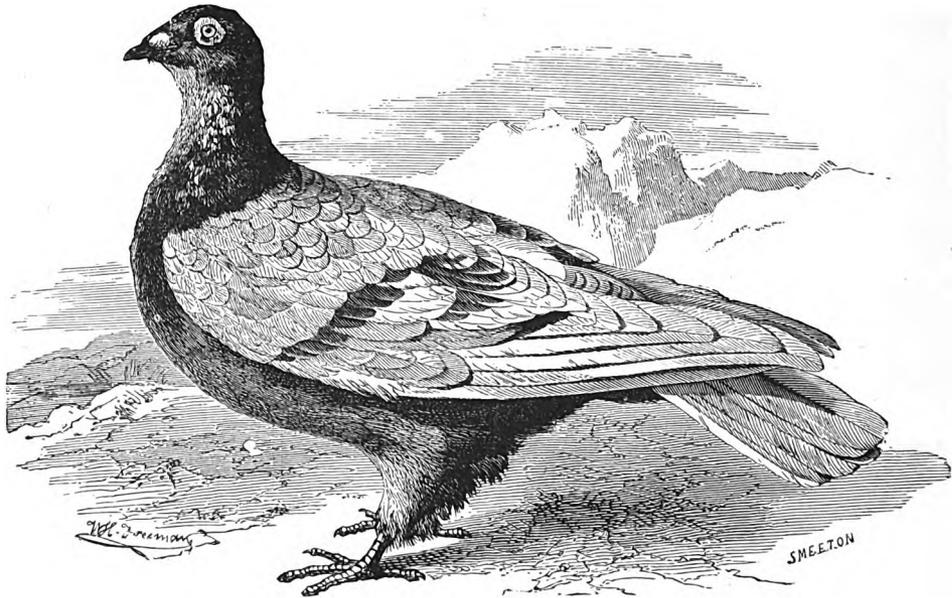
It is thought that the birds upon such long flights may be helped to know their way by noticing the directions of warm or cold winds; but this faculty of returning over long distances once traversed has not been explained, and, however much may be due to the quickening of sight and memory by persistent training, it remains a very remarkable fact.

During the siege of Paris, in 1870-1, the pigeon-post was much employed. Mr. Forbes, in his "Diary of a Besieged Resident," mentions the excitement caused by the arrival of a pigeon covered with blood. I suppose some one had tried to shoot her as she flew with her message, bringing news from M. Gambetta of a French victory. All the pigeons which brought messages to the besieged had previously been sent out of the beleaguered city in balloons, over the heads of the Germans.

By the use of microscopic photography, one bird was made the bearer of an incredible number of despatches. The message was first printed, then photographed upon a very thin film, less than two inches square. The films were rolled up and inserted in a two-inch goose-quill, which was fastened by a wire along the upper-surface of one of the tail-feathers of the bird; and the messenger was sent off with its precious freight, all unconscious of the tidings of weal or woe of which it was the bearer.

In 1834 the first English "loft" for these pigeons was established at Dover, and four were regularly employed to carry messages from Boulogne to London, a distance of one hundred and thirty-five miles. In summer they arrived at midday, and the Paris mail not until midnight, so that several hours were gained. But this was, of course, before we had learned to send messages with lightning speed by the electric telegraph.

I have never read anything about these birds which showed intelligence apart from their special office; but some have long memories. Mr. Buckland tells of



CARRIER-PIGEON.

one which knew the voice of its mistress after an absence of eighteen months. Some, too, manifest a love of music. We are told of a pigeon in Cheshire which came down from the dove-cote to the window of the room when a particular air was being played. He flew back again as soon as it was finished, and never could be induced to return, unless the air which had taken his fancy was played.

Great flocks of wood-pigeons settle in Lincolnshire in the autumn, and most unwelcome to the farmers are these consumers of grain and home-produce; for, as winter comes on, these colonists not only devour the turnip-tops, but by scooping out the root spoil more than they eat; for the rain settles in the holes thus made, and the turnips decay in the ground.

Here is a description of their roosting.

“As soon as twilight commences, the various flocks begin to collect, and settle in numbers upon the larch-firs. When they arrive at their roosting-ground they not unfrequently take two or three turns high in the air, and then the whole flock commences dropping, with closed wings and a rustling sound, upon the trees.”

As spring approaches, these pretty marauders desert the woods and build their nests in trees near gardens, in which they regale themselves upon the newly-sown peas. The naturalist Jesse tells us such a touching story of the affection of a pigeon for its mate, that I will copy it for you.

“A man, set to watch a field which had been much preyed upon by pigeons, shot an old cock-pigeon which had long been an inhabitant of the farm. His mate, around whom he had for many a year cooed, and nourished from his own crop, and assisted in rearing numerous young ones, immediately settled on the ground by his side, and showed her grief in the most expressive manner. The labourer took up the dead bird, and tied it to a short stake, thinking that it would frighten away other depredators.

“In this situation, however, his partner did not forsake him, but continued, day by day, walking slowly round the stick. The kind-hearted wife of the bailiff of the farm at last heard of the circumstance, and immediately went to afford what relief she could to the poor bird. She told me that, on arriving at the spot, she found the hen-bird much exhausted, and that she had made a circular beaten track round the dead pigeon, making now and then a little spring towards him.

“On the removal of the dead bird, the hen returned to the dove-cote.”

And as this chapter began with an allusion to the dove in the Ark, it may fitly end with Mrs. Sigourney's beautiful little poem on the same subject.

“‘Tell me a story, please,’ my little girl
Lisped from her cradle. So I bent me down,
And told her how it rained and rained and rained,
Till all the flowers were covered, and the trees
Hid their tall heads; and, where the houses stood
And people dwelt, a fearful deluge rolled,
Because the world was wicked, and refused
To heed the words of God.

But one good man,
Who long had warned the wicked to repent,
Obey, and live, taught by the voice of Heaven,
Had built an ark; and thither, with his wife
And children, turned for safety.

Two and two,
 Of beasts and birds and creeping things, he took,
 With food for all. And, when the tempest roared,
 And the great fountains of the sky poured out
 A ceaseless flood, till all beside were drowned,
 They in their quiet vessel dwelt secure.
 And so the mighty waters bore them up,
 And o'er the bosom of the deep they sailed
 For many days. But then a gentle dove
 'Scaped from the casement of the ark, and spread
 Her lovely pinion o'er that boundless wave.
 All, all was desolation. Chirping nest,
 Nor face of man, nor living thing she saw ;
 For all the people of the earth were drowned,
 Because of disobedience.

Naught she spied,
 Save wide, dark waters and a frowning sky,
 Nor found her weary foot a place of rest ;
 So, with a leaf of olive in her mouth,
 Sole fruit of her drear voyage, which perchance
 Upon some wrecking billow floated by,
 With drooping wing the peaceful ark she sought.
 The righteous man that wandering dove received,
 And to her mate restored, who, with sad moans,
 Had wondered at her absence.

Then I looked
 Upon the child to see if her young thoughts
 Wearied with following mine. But her blue eye
 Was a glad listener, and the eager breath
 Of pleased attention curled her parted lip.
 And so I told her how the waters dried,
 And the green branches waved, and the sweet birds
 Came up in loveliness, and that meek dove
 Went forth to build her nest, while thousand birds
 Awoke their songs of praise, and the tired ark
 Upon the breezy breast of Ararat
 Reposed, and Noah with glad spirit reared
 An altar to his God.

Since, many a time,
 When to her rest, ere evening's earliest star,
 That little one is laid, with earnest tone,
 And pure cheek pressed to mine, she fondly says,
 ' Tell me the story of the Dove.'



