



Vol. XVII.—No. 838.]

JANUARY 18, 1896.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE TREE-KITTENS.



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FT the close of a sultry day in summer I strolled out into my garden to enjoy a ramble in some shady paths.

As I was passing a lime tree whose trunk was surrounded by a perfect thicket of stems and interlacing branches, I heard a plaintive sort of cry which appeared to issue from the depths of the greenery around the tree. Stopping to listen, I heard the sound renewed again and again, and supposing it might be a bird in distress, some fledgling needing help, I called and chirped to encourage the "thing," whatever it might be, to show itself, so that I could render the assistance for which it was appealing.

The cry came from a perfectly dark mass of twigs and branches about eight feet from the ground, so that I could neither see nor capture the creature that had hidden itself there. At length I felt sure the sound must be the cry

of a kitten. I therefore began mewling like a mother-cat and, encouraged by that welcome sound I could dimly discern a little furry creature feeling its way down through the branches.

With the help of a stool I reached up and grasped what proved to be a most impish-looking animal with jet black head, body, legs and tail, but light grey-coloured along the back.

It was very thin and mewed piteously, looking up with its pretty blue eyes as if to let me know it was an orphan and needed my pity and protection.

I now heard other voices proceeding from the tree and, being unable to reach high enough, I sought help to rescue the remainder of the family.

Finally, four of these curious kittens were brought to light, all exactly alike, and I should suppose about three weeks old.

They were placed on the lawn and a council of friends decided that, as parentless waifs, they had a strong claim upon our sympathy and ought to be adopted. The next step was to obtain some milk, but how to induce the kittens to drink it was a problem not easily solved. They had no idea of lapping, and when we tried to feed them they kicked and struggled in a most refractory manner.

The feeding process over, they were placed in a hen coop under a deodar on the lawn, and they soon nestled down contentedly in a warm bed of hay and wool. In the evening they were brought into the conservatory lest a stray rat or weasel might attack them in the night, which would have resulted in a tragical ending for our defenceless little kits. After a few weeks the gambols of our tree-kittens (as we always called them) were a great amusement to us; they frolicked amongst the fir-tree branches, ran races in and out, and up the stem of the tree for some considerable height, had mimic battles and wrestling matches, and as in every attitude they showed the exquisite gracefulness of the cat tribe, one could not help watching such happy little athletes.

It was rather curious that they seemed quite to understand that their domain was

beneath the deodar, for they seldom strayed far from it unless to creep stealthily, towards evening, across the lawn to visit us in the drawing-room.

We became accustomed to see and hear a purring black imp trying to ingratiate itself with us, putting on its best manners and most coaxing ways in the hope of being taken up into a lap and petted, and very frequently these wiles succeeded, for the kittens were most fascinating little creatures, always happy, and good-tempered and ready for play.

My mongoose was a great puzzle to the small cats; they approached him cautiously, and I had to keep guard lest he might give them a fatal bite. What was my surprise, however, to find that he not only tolerated their advances, but allowed one kitten, bolder than the rest, to go suddenly up to him and in the rudest manner to give him a box on the ear! This so utterly astonished Mungo that ever after he affected entire indifference, as if such ill-bred creatures were beneath his notice.

As time went on I found it very difficult to get my small charges to come in at night; they disappeared each evening and would make no response to my call, so I let them have their own way and left them out. Next morning I always found them purring cheerfully in the sunshine, rolling over and over in happy frolics on the lawn.

I managed to find out that their nightly retreat was a cosy recess in the thick branches of a tree, about three feet from the ground, where they were effectually hidden as well as sheltered from rain and wind. A remembrance of their birthplace seemed to suggest this as a much more pleasant home than the one I had given them in the conservatory. Like all young creatures they would grow from kittenhood into cats, and the sorrowful thing was that, with all my various pets indoors and out, cats could not be tolerated, so in course of time my little waifs were all given away, each transplanted into a good home where it would be a household pet, and so my tree-kittens are now only a memory of the past.

E. B.

HIS EXCELLENCY'S ENGLISH GOVERNESS.

By SYDNEY C. GRIER, Author of "In Furthest Ind," etc.

CHAPTER XIV.

NEITHER Cecil nor Azim Bey ever referred in words to the approaching termination of the former's engagement. Cecil had never in the slightest degree hesitated in her resolution to bind herself to remain at Baghdad for the further period of three years. The letters from Whitcliffe had of late been so uniformly cheerful in tone with respect to Fitz and Terry, for the expenses of whose education she had now for two years been wholly responsible, that she could not but conquer her longing to see the dear home faces once more, and decide to remain a member of his Excellency's household. Then, too, her little pupil had endeared himself to her, jealous and exacting though he often was, and she could not bear to think of leaving him. Thus her mind was made up, and she had no anticipation of anything that might interfere to prevent the signing of the agreement.

As for Azim Bey, his silence did not arise from lack of interest in the matter. He knew as well as Charlie did when the first agreement lapsed, and throughout the tour from which they had just returned his mind had been busy on the subject. Over and over again, when he seemed merely to be contemplating the beauties of nature, or listening attentively to the morals which Cecil did her best to deduce for him from the various scenes and incidents of their daily life, he was occupied in planning schemes by which his governess's further stay might be ensured. It was clear to him that the cardinal point was that Charlie should be absent from Baghdad when the agreement was signed. Azim Bey's dislike for the surgeon of the Consulate was not a feeling of gradual growth, but had sprung up, fully matured, on the occasion of Charlie's unauthorised intrusion into the harem. With a good deal of natural shrewdness, and a great deal of precocity, stimulated by the un-

childlike life he had led, and the books in which he had delighted, the boy had divined Charlie's secret, and marked him at once as an enemy. By catechising Cecil after all her visits to the Residency, he arrived at the knowledge that she always saw Dr. Egerton there, and he remarked that she generally spoke of him with a sigh, but what this sigh meant he could not decide. In any case, he was fully persuaded that it would be far better for mademoiselle to remain with him for the next three years than to marry Dr. Egerton. She was doing so much with her earnings for those brothers of hers (whom Azim Bey regarded with interest not unmingled with contempt, as creatures who existed for little else but to play pranks for his entertainment), that she certainly ought not to leave them in the lurch. He had never given a second thought to his loudly expressed intention of marrying her himself, which indeed had only been uttered in the hope of