

ANIMAL COURTESIES.

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HAT is courtesy? Voltaire defined it as native kindness, or the beauty of the heart; and another has called it the sweetness of disposition that controls the wish to make those brought near to us feel perfectly at home in our company. It is the very essence of good manners, and the grace of companionship. Do animals show that they

possess this grace? Certainly they do, in far greater measure than would be believed, sometimes seeming even to rise above their generic character in giving expression to it. We may observe at least four degrees of it in those animals which we can observe most closely—the domestic animals:—(1) many pretty self-denials, true courtesies, on the part of one towards another of their own class; (2) remarkable testimonies to it in the case of most oddly-assorted companionships in animals; (3) complete triumph over original dislike, and the establishment of the most affectionate regard between animals by nature inimical to each other, so that native enmity is not only overcome, but the finest feelings are developed and expressed with constant courteous devotion; and (4) courteousness developed into the most constant idea of grateful helpfulness and service towards master and mistress. We will present a few instances of these.

Have you ever noticed a cat with kittens? The cat will not eat till the kittens have been satisfied. I have often looked in wonder at a cat of my acquaintance, which would even retire from the dish if the vessel had been set down and she had commenced to eat in the absence of the kitten. She would retire in favour of the kitten when it came running to assert its claim, and sit quietly by, looking on demurely, till the kitten had had its fill; and then the patience with which she would endure the playful onsets of the kitten on tail and head whilst she was engaged in lapping up the morsels that had been left was truly a fine show of native courtesy. Under annoyance such as few human beings would

have in the circumstances borne with equanimity, she would raise her head and give the kitten a loving lick or two.

Perhaps, however, the most remarkable of all instances of feline courtesy that I have witnessed I saw a short time since at a farm-house in Essex, where there are many cats. Three females had had kittens about the same time; and as the rate of increase was too great even for that cat-supporting farm-house, two of the litters were drowned, and the result was that each of the three mothers became mothers in turn to all the three kittens that were left. The one took up the duty from the other in the most loving manner; and the true mother of the cats—a pretty, pure-black, bright-eyed lady—was particularly careful always to give an affectionate mew and a lick at the head of one or other of the two foster-tabbies as they relinquished their charge to her. It was just as though she said, "It is so kind of you to come and help me in this bit of nursing; for you know it is rather confining, and you know I enjoy a scamper after the young rabbits." And in this it would seem to me that the other two cats agreed; for each of the three has been known to bring tiny rabbits, which all the family shared—mutual courtesies of a sort which human beings do not always succeed in imitating.

These instances are quite matched by others which have been noted and recorded by reliable observers. Here is one, verified by the late Rev. J. G. Wood:—

"A cat in a Swiss cottage had taken poison, and came in a pitiful state of pain to seek its mistress's help. The fever and heat were so great that it dipped its own paws into a pan of water—an almost unheard-of proceeding in a water-hating cat. She wrapped it in wet linen, fed it with gruel, nursed it, and doctored



"THE CAT WILL NOT EAT TILL THE KITTENS HAVE BEEN SATISFIED."

it all the day and night after. It revived, and could not find ways enough to show its gratitude. One evening she had gone upstairs to bed, when a mew at the window roused her. She got up and opened it, and found the cat, which had climbed a pear-tree nailed against the house, with a mouse in its mouth: this it laid as an offering at its mistress's feet, and went away.

"For above a year it continued to bring these tributes to her. Even when it had kittens they were not allowed to touch this reserved share; and if they attempted to eat it, the mother gave them a little tap—'That is not for thee.' After a while, however, the mistress accepted the gift, thanked the giver with a pleased look, and restored the mouse, when the cat



"WOULD OF HER OWN ACCORD CARRY TO HIM A SHARE OF HER DAINTIES" (p. 514).



permitted her children to take the prey, which had served its purpose in her eyes.

"Here was a refined feeling of grateful courtesy, persevered in for months, quite disinterested, and placed above the natural instincts (always strong in a cat) towards her own offspring."

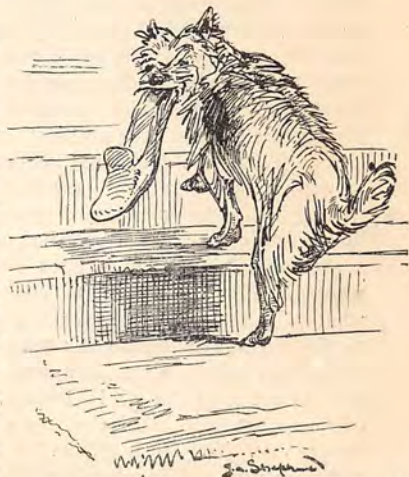
Mr. Wood caps this with a record of his own cat, "Pret," to this effect:—

"He used to kill the animal in a most curious manner—*i.e.*, by taking it, while quite unhurt, by the tip of the tail, carrying it to the top of the house, and dropping it down the well of the staircase. After repeating the process a few times, he would bring the mouse to me, and, while I stroked and praised it, would keep rubbing himself against me and purring his content. He then took the mouse again, played with it for a while, and then brought it back to me. If the

study-door were closed, and he could not gain admittance, he always left the mouse on the mat, previously having bitten off the animal's head. He had a strange fancy also for putting the mice into my bed; and once, on leaving my room in the early morning, I found no less than nine mice laid in a row just outside the door. Afterwards, when we moved into the country, and he took to catching rats instead of mice, he acted in precisely the same manner, sometimes bringing me three or four rats in a single day.

"Now, in both these cases, the motive is one that would show credit to humanity. There is nothing that cats like so well as a mouse, and yet, just because they thought mice the most precious object in the world, the cats gave their mice to those whom they loved. Affection, self-denial, generosity, and courtesy of the highest kind were exhibited in these actions."

At one time I had a little Scotch terrier whose name was "Roughy"—so called partly because of his rough coat, and partly because of his rough ways towards the cats, whom he ruthlessly hunted and drove off, bounding on the garden-walls to follow them. And this despite his affection for his own cat, whom sometimes he would even make for, when, instead of running away, she would come forward and rub against him; and it was very funny to see his sudden pull-up when she came close to him thus. He would give her a quick loving dab or kiss, and then the two would come running into the house together abreast,



"FIRST ONE AND THEN THE OTHER" (p. 514).

tails in the air. But "Roughy" at length began to get the worst of it in his encounters with the cats; first a fierce tom managed to put his paw on one of "Roughy's" eyes, so tearing it that he lost the sight of it; and then, through lack of sight in one eye, he unfortunately lost his footing on the wall and fell, and hurt his back. Not daunted, he still persevered in his cat-hunts till his back got so bad that we had to get the vet. to him. All was done that could be done for him, because he was affectionate and most devoted to his own people. He lost his sight altogether before long, and got so ill in the back that he could not venture out. I made a little soft-lined coat for him, to shield the tender parts of his back from contact with rough surfaces, tied with string round his neck, and in front of his hind legs. The cat became, if possible, more friendly to "Roughy" than ever—the weaker he grew the more devoted—and would of her own accord carry to him a share of her dainties.

But another and more remarkable trait was shown. There was a patch on which the sunlight lay very warmly in the breakfast-parlour in the early afternoon, and faithfully the cat, on the appearance of this patch, would go and gently take the front string of "Roughy's" coat in her mouth, and lead him thus from the kitchen to the warm patch of sunlight, where the two would lie together, the cat not ceasing her watchful care of the dog. I myself would not believe in the first reports I heard of this performance, being usually away in the City at the time; but often afterwards—especially on Sunday afternoons—I saw what surely I may call this true act of kindly courtesy of our cat towards "Roughy"; and there was no doubt about it whatever, for many of our friends witnessed and wondered at it. Even for a time after "Roughy" had, with regret, to get a little dose of poison to ease his going, and was buried in the back garden, that cat would go mew-mewing between the breakfast-parlour and kitchen, and sniffing at the spot where "Roughy's" mat used to be, with an air of pained inquiry and sense of loss.

The courtesies of dogs are many. I once had a little Scotch terrier whose delight it was to bring up his master's shoes in the morning, first one and then the other, which he was careful to set near each other, and who was sometimes entrusted to carry up his master's letters, which he would lay down on the floor before him with the prettiest and most courteous looks. This same dog, when his master was engaged in writing late at night, knew that the result of the writing had to be posted, and would go down to the hall and bring up his master's hat, and lay it down on a sofa near him, often a good while before it was wanted. When at length the packet was ready, with what pride little "Dick," packet in mouth, would trot to the post-pillar before his master, and then turn round, and wait till his master came up to take it from him to put it in the slit! Indeed, there is a touch of fine courtesy in all the efforts a dog makes to be serviceable. He says, in effect: "I shall spare no pains to please you, and in pleasing you I gain for myself the highest pleasure in the world. My service to you,

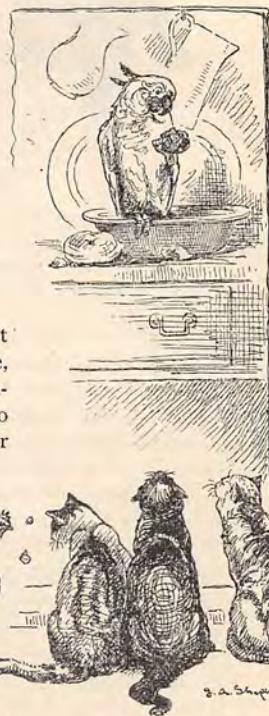
if it meets your approbation, is my reward"; and this is of the very essence of courtesy. Men not seldom fail where the dog succeeds (in their calculated civilities), because they make it too plain that they have ulterior ends.

Among birds many instances of courteous behaviour may be found. The Rev. Edward Spooner, some years ago, gave this very fine illustrative instance of generous courtesy on the part of a cockatoo to other animals. He wrote:—

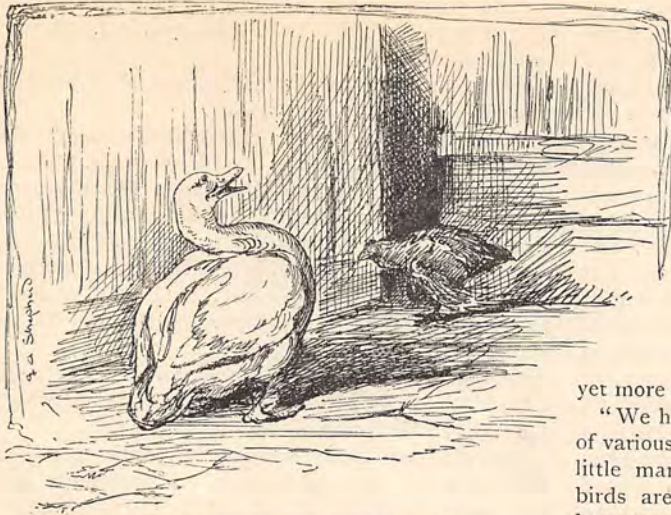
"I have been lately visiting a friend in Staffordshire who owns a large grey cockatoo. 'Poll' is a most communicative bird, and a great friend of the family. On a fine day she generally passes several hours in the back yard, outside her cage; for though unchained, she rarely leaves the house. She is on good terms with all the yard-dogs, the house-cats, and the poultry; but if a strange dog or cat enters the yard, she flies at him at once with a tremendous scream. At night she sleeps in the kitchen, where her usual companions are three cats. One morning the kitchen-maid went downstairs early, and before she entered the kitchen she heard 'Poll' talking loudly. On opening the door, she found 'Poll' seated on the dresser, with a large piece of bread in her claw. Round her, on the floor, were the three cats, and a chicken which had lately taken refuge there. With strict impartiality, the bird was breaking off pieces of bread and dropping them to her pensioners, or favourites, in turn, who received the dole without squabbling and with gratitude, listening all the time to all the words in her vocabulary, which were poured forth in rapid succession."

Ducks are generally held to be somewhat stupid birds; but they certainly are not quarrelsome, and have been found capable of courtesy. Here is one instance, given by Mr. Hawkes, a correspondent of the *Spectator*:—

"The duck is considered a particularly uninteresting and prosaic animal; yet I venture to affirm that in point of intelligence, social kindness, and sagacity he is vastly superior to the barn-door or any other cock and hen. I have kept and closely watched hundreds of ducks: I never saw them fight with each other, nor ever knew a duck the aggressor in a dispute with some other kind of fowl.



"WITH STRICT IMPARTIALITY, THE BIRD WAS BREAKING OFF PIECES OF BREAD."



"SHE PROCEEDED TO THE FOWL-HOUSE."

But I have witnessed striking instances of charity and kindness in ducks. Let one such case suffice. Among some fifty or sixty head of ducks and fowls, I once had a solitary little old bantam hen. She became blind, or nearly so, and, like other birds in that condition, 'sulked,' as it is called—*i.e.*, kept by herself in a dark, retired corner of the fowl-house, knowing instinctively that her cruel and cowardly brethren and sisters would persecute her to death if she appeared amongst them. Here she might, perhaps, have starved, but for the constant and sympathetic attentions of a duck. Twice daily, every day as long as the poor bantam lived—some three weeks—this good Samaritan in the form of a duck was observed to fill her capacious beak with from twenty to thirty grains of barley, with which she proceeded to

the fowl-house, and there deposited her store immediately in front of the bantam. Several members of my family, as well as myself, were frequent witnesses of this beautiful incident."

Those who have kept birds in aviaries, where they have a chance of displaying character in relation to others, have many pretty incidents to report in the way of delicate attentions and courtesies to each other. Here is one from the pen of Bishop Walsham How, which appeared in the *Spectator* of April 19, 1884, and which surely deserves to be

yet more widely circulated:—

"We have a large cage in which there are a number of various birds, among them a cock goldfinch and two little mannikins. These latter little sober-coloured birds are considered very uninteresting. Wishing, however, to provide a mate for the goldfinch, I one evening bought a hen canary, and the next morning turned it into the cage with the others. None of the other birds took the least notice of the new arrival; but the two little mannikins placed themselves side by side by the seed-vessel, and the canary being on a perch above, they fed her in turn with seed, lifting up their little black heads one after the other, and letting her take the seed out of their stumpy white beaks. This appeared to be pure courtesy towards the lady stranger. We have seen no repetition of the act; but one of the mannikins having got wet one day, we watched the canary returning the courtesy by trying to dry its feathers by passing them through her beak."

Surely, after these instances, our readers will admit that we did not claim too much for animals when we said they were, in many instances, capable of the finest courtesy.

THE TUTOR'S ENGAGEMENT.



"HOW did you get to know these people, Wyndham? They don't seem much in your line."

"I only know the boy. I met him at the Aylmers', and he asked me to stay with him for a few days. It will be a new experience, and that is worth something."

"Come on to us if you are bored," continued his friend; "and we can go back to town together."

"Thanks; but don't be surprised if I turn up at the Towers to-night. The fact is, I lost young Sutton's invitation, and an awful fear has seized me that it was for next Tuesday instead of to-day. But I shall know when I get out at Coalfield, because he said that he would send to meet the 3.40; so if there is no carriage there, I shall come on to you by the next train."

"Awfully glad to see you, old boy; and I hope your luggage will turn up all right."

"I wired after it; but if it doesn't, I shall have to borrow Sutton's dress clothes. What beastly ugly country this is! Good gracious! I believe it is Coalfield. Ta-ta," as the train stopped, and a few busy-looking men, with top hats and black bags, alighted quickly, while Sir Jocelyn Wyndham called a porter to carry his rug and dressing-bag, and strolled leisurely after him in search of the Suttons' carriage. It was there