

## CARTER'S INCANDESCENT CATS.

BY W. L. ALDEN.



ON the voyage home from Bombay I shared my cabin on board the *Gwalior* with an American globe-trotter. Of course, I began by hating him. The Anglo-Saxon is so constituted that he always hates the fellow-traveller who prevents him from monopolising a railway carriage or a steamer cabin; whereas the Frenchman, or the Italian, is in like circumstances invariably delighted at the prospect of companionship. However, I ended by liking my room-mate; for I found him to be a simple-minded, honest fellow, who, if at times a little tiresome, was at others extremely, though unconsciously, amusing. Before we had been twenty-four hours out of port he had furnished me with his autobiography, and I knew that he was a locksmith, who had made a fortune by inventing an improvement in door-locks, and was a prey to an insatiable longing for culture. It was to cultivate his mind that he was making a journey round the world by the shortest and quickest route, and without sparing any time for visiting the various countries at whose ports he stopped. He had stopped in Japan only three hours, and had not gone ashore at Hong-Kong or Singapore.

"They tell me," he remarked, "that nothing cultivates the mind like a journey round the world, and I want to do it as quick as it can be done, so as to try some other plan. I need a lot of cultivation, and I'm going to try everything that is good for it."

It was for this purpose that he persistently read a volume of Herbert Spencer's philosophy during the voyage from Bombay. He had heard two clergymen on board the steamer from Vancouver to Japan discussing philosophy, and he made up his mind that philosophy was an excellent aid to cultivation.

"So," he continued, "when I got to Calcutta I went to the book-store, and I said, 'Who do you consider the boss philosopher?' The chap behind the counter, he says,

'Herbert Spencer.' 'Then give me his book,' says I. The chap told me that Spencer had written a lot of books, and which one would I have? So I says, 'Give me one that is about an inch and a half thick, for I want something to last me between Bombay and England.' He gave me thisyer book, and I'm bound to finish it or bust, though I can't seem to make head or tail of it so far."

Parker, as my room-mate was named, was, as may be presumed from what I have said of him, a totally uneducated man. He was fully aware of his deficiencies, and there was something pathetic in his efforts to use what he imagined to be correct English. When interested in a subject he usually forgot his long words and careful phrases, and talked in the homely dialect of his native Cincinnati. The changes which he made from one method of speech to the other were sometimes extremely abrupt, and added much to the variety of his conversation. He certainly amused me, but I am glad to say that he never knew it; for only a hopeless cad would have laughed openly at the poor man's struggles after culture.

One night Parker and I had turned in early, and when the electric light was extinguished, I heard a low chuckle from his berth.

"You seem amused at being left in the dark," I remarked.

"Oh, it ain't that," he replied; "I mean, you misinterpret the cause of my amusement. I happened just then to think of Carter's incandescent cats, and it sort of made me smile."

"Tell me about the cats," I said. "I'm not a bit sleepy, and I'd like to hear a story, if you have one."

"Certainly," said he. "Always glad to oblige. There ain't very much of a story to it, but I shall regard it as equally a pleasure, and—well, anything else—to tell it to you."

When I lived in Cincinnati—which, by the bye, is the best town I've seen yet, and lays away over Calcutta and Bombay—my next-door neighbour was an odd little chap, who was forever trying to invent something. He was employed in a place where they made electricity—Edison lamps, and alarm bells, and such—and he believed that the time was coming when every blessed thing would be run by electricity; I should say, when the electric fluid would be the inspiring medium of every sort of industrial occupation. One



day he comes into my house and says, 'Tom, tell me how I can get two dozen full-grown cats, on the quiet.'

"What's the matter with you now?" says I. 'Are you lonesome, and going in for general cat society?'

"I'm going to try an electrical experiment," says he. 'My wife's away from home, and now's the time to do it. I'm going to light my house with incandescent cats.'

"What are you giving us?" said I. 'What's an incandescent cat, anyhow?'

"This is what I mean," says Carter: 'Did you ever rub a cat's fur in the dark?'

"Of course I have," said I.

"Well then," says he, 'you know that a cat is just chock-full of electricity. I rubbed our cat for a full hour last night, and she gave off on an average twenty-five sparks a second. I've calculated that at that rate a cat can furnish enough electricity to run a ten candle-power Edison light for just as long as the cat's fur is rubbed. What's more, it isn't necessary to rub her fur. The electricity is there all the same, whether she is rubbed or not; and if you attach an Edison lamp to a cat, and complete the circuit, that there lamp will burn just as long as the cat lives.'

"How are you going to complete the circuit?" said I, beginning to get interested in the thing.

"That's what I haven't worked out yet," says he, 'and I want two dozen cats for experiments.'

"Limp or stiff cats?" says I.

"I don't know what you mean," says Carter.

"Why," says I, 'there's one kind of cat that is as limp as a rag when you pick her up, and you can do pretty near anything with her. Then there's another kind that is as stiff as a poker; and when you try to handle a stiff cat, the chances are that you'll wish you had let her alone.'

"Then give me two dozen limp cats," says Carter, 'and I'll be eternally obliged to you.'

"Well, I told a boy who worked in my shop to gather in some cats without attracting any attention, and in the course of a couple of days he'd gathered in the two dozen that Carter wanted. I didn't see much of Carter for about a week, but by the cater-wauling that came from his house I calculated that he was working at his experiments. At last he got through with them, and called me in to see how his invention worked.

"Carter looked as if he had been having an argument with a dozen drunken Indian squaws. There wasn't an inch of his face that hadn't been scratched, and as for his hands, they were pretty near raw. However, he was about as proud and happy as they make 'em. The first thing I saw when I went into his front hall was a cat sleeping on the hall table, with an electric light on her back. You see, Carter had completed his circuit by fastening the end of the cat's tail in the upper part of the lamp, and running two wires from the lower part of the lamp to the cat's ears. At least, this was the way that he explained the thing to me, though I don't profess to understand it. The lamp didn't give out very much light, but, as Carter explained, that was because the cat was asleep. 'You just wait,' said he, 'till she begins to exercise her muscles, and then you'll see that I didn't make an over-estimate when I said a cat could keep a ten candle-power light going.'

"Carter's dining-room was lit up as brilliant as the saloon of thisyer steamer. He had six cats scattered round the room, and he had a small puppy-dog, who stirred up the electrical action of the cats, and kept their lamps burning, as the hymn says. There's no denying that the cats looked mighty



"CARTER EXPLAINED."



unhappy, except when they were swearing at the puppy; and they had a way of creeping under the table and concealing their lights by squeezing between the furniture and the



CARTER'S "READING-CAT."

wall, that reminded me of the woman in Scripture who hid her light behind a bushel. On the other hand, it was clear enough that one or two cats lighted up the room better than half-a-dozen gas-jets would have done, and accordingly I congratulated Carter on the success of his invention.

"Here's my reading-cat," says he, picking up a mighty limp and dispirited-looking cat, and setting her on the table. "You see, when I want to read, I just put this cat on the table where the light falls over my left shoulder, and I take a book and sit down and read, as comfortable as you please."

"So Carter sat down with an open book in his hand, and made believe to read, and the cat sat quiet until she judged the right moment had come, and then she made a jump and lit on Carter's head, and started in to scalp him. But that's just the way with cats: you can't ever trust 'em any farther than you can see 'em.

"Carter tore the cat off his head, losing considerable hair in the process, and then went on discoursing of the merits of his invention.

"Now," said he, "suppose you want to go down cellar. Instead of carrying a lamp or

a candle, and setting the house on fire, you just start an incandescent cat down the cellar stairs ahead of you, and she lights up the whole place till you're ready to come up again. Or suppose you want to go out into your back yard at night, where you can't carry a light on account of the wind. If you've got an incandescent cat, all you have to do is to let her out of the back-door, and there you have the whole yard illuminated."

"Do you calculate to go to bed by cat-light?" says I.

"Of course I do," says Carter; "that is, provided I can get Mrs. Carter to see the advantages of it. It's going to take considerable talking, however, before she can be got to allow a cat in her room. She is everlastingly prejudiced against science.

"Now," continued Carter, "we'll come into the parlour, and I'll bring in the dining-room cats, and you'll see what a brilliant effect a dozen incandescent cats will make."

"There were six cats in the parlour already, and when Carter had routed them out from under the sofa and from behind the chairs, and had brought in his six dining-room cats and the puppy, there is no doubt that the room was, as you might say, a blaze of light. But while Carter was lecturing on the cheapness of the new light, which cost absolutely nothing to run it except what the cats might eat, one of the brightest of the cats had a fit, and took to running round the room at about fifty miles an hour, and producing the effect of a big Catherine-wheel that had broke loose and was celebrating the Fourth of July on its own hook—I mean to say, celebrating the Fourth in a highly individualised and lawless manner. Then the other cats joined in the circus, and what with the upsetting of furniture, and the smashing of Mrs. Carter's china images, and the barking of the puppy, and the yelling and swearing of the cats, Carter's parlour was almost as lively a place as a man could wish to see.

"The circus lasted till the original cat who had started the thing with a fit fell down exhausted, and two other cats, who had engaged in a rough and tumble fight, had filled the air with black and grey fur. Then things sort of quieted down, and most of the cats got together under the sofa, and freed their minds in language that I wouldn't like to repeat. Only two of the lamps were broken, but the rest of them either went entirely out or burned mighty dim; and Carter, when he reflected on what his wife would probably say when she should come to see the state of her parlour, was a little down in the mouth—I should say, a prey to the devouring element of grief.



"However, he braced up after a little while, and said that the only discouraging feature of the affair was the fact that a cat's electricity seemed to give out after too much excitement. He maintained that the cats could be trained to behave as incandescent cats ought to behave, but that it would probably take time and patience to train them.

"Thinking it over,' said he, 'I'm not a bit discouraged. I've demonstrated that cats can be used for lighting purposes, and that is all I set out to do. The invention is all right, and just as soon as the cats are trained properly, they will supersede all other means of lighting houses. I've got a week before Mrs. Carter comes home, and by that time I'll have those cats in a first-class state of discipline.'

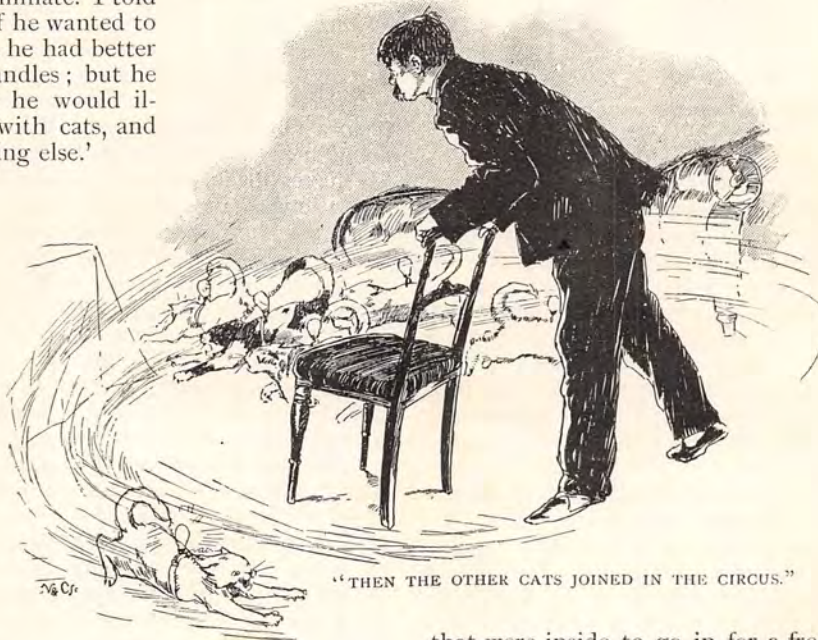
"With that he gets a broom, and starts the cats out from under the sofa, and turns off their electricity, so as not to waste it: and then I said 'Good-night,' and left him to carry his cats down cellar, one by one, and put them to bed for the night.

"About two days later there was to be a great Democratic torchlight procession in the evening, it being pretty near election time. Now Carter was a Democrat, and when he heard that the procession was going to pass his house, he said he would illuminate. I told him that if he wanted to illuminate he had better stick to candles; but he said 'No; he would illuminate with cats, and with nothing else.'

around the neck, so that they couldn't jump down and interfere with the illumination.

"Just before the procession reached the house he turned on his cats, and they made a first-class illumination, which laid over anything in the line of illumination that any of the neighbours had done. The cats seemed on the whole satisfied to sit in the windows, and I complimented Carter on the progress he had made in training them.

"By-and-by the procession came along and turned into our street, with about a dozen brass bands playing—all playing different tunes at the same time. It was more than the cats could stand; and I don't blame the beasts, and you wouldn't either, if you had ever heard the bands of a political procession. The cats sort of unanimously, as you might say, agreed to withdraw from the scene; but, of course, the strings held them so that they couldn't get off the shelves. Then they set up the most tremendous caterwauling that you ever dreamed of, and began jumping like mad. Two or three of them—I can't exactly remember how many—broke through the window-glass and hung outside by the string round their necks, kicking and screaming at the top of their lungs. That inspirited those



"THEN THE OTHER CATS JOINED IN THE CIRCUS."

"So he set to work and fitted shelves in the inside of his two parlour windows and the two windows of the front room upstairs; and when night came he had six cats seated on the shelf in each window and tied by a string

that were inside to go in for a free fight, and every cat clutched the next cat, and the fur began to fly.

"Now most of the members of that procession were Irishmen, and when they saw the state of things in Carter's windows, they seemed to be considerably amused, until one man sang





"THE PROCESSION HALTED WHILE CARTER'S HOUSE WAS BEING CLEANED OUT."

out that Carter was insulting Ireland by getting up a show of Kilkenny cats. That was enough. The crowd took up with the idea at once, and the procession halted while Carter's house was being cleaned out. There wasn't a pane of glass left in the windows, and every stick of furniture in the house was smashed and thrown out of doors. Carter tried to remonstrate; but after he had been rolled in the mud, and his ribs pretty near kicked in, he thought it best to maintain a dignified silence.

"When the procession moved on again, you would have thought that there had been a fire in Carter's house, followed by a cyclone and an earthquake. Of course, I wasn't so foolish as to mix myself up in the matter, for one man can't do much in arguing with a thousand excited Irishmen. So I waited till things were quiet, and then I went out and brought him into my own house, and lent him some clothes and brown paper.

"If you'll believe it, what troubled the man most was not the wrecking of his house, or the

treatment he had received from the mob, but the fact that his two dozen trained cats had bolted. Nobody ever saw a tail of any of them after that night.

"Carter didn't have the heart to try to train a new lot, especially as Mrs. Carter was about due at the remains of the family mansion. He never made another attempt to put his invention of incandescent cats to practical use; but he always maintained that cats would some day supersede dynamos for the production of electricity, and you couldn't argue him out of that belief. I don't know what took place when Mrs. Carter came home; but according to my idea, Carter didn't have a very cheerful time—anyway, nobody saw him for about a week, and then he came out on the street wearing a wig.

"The last I heard of Carter he was turning his attention to illuminating paints, and I shouldn't be a bit surprised if his next invention should be a plan for lighting houses by means of dogs painted with illuminating paint. That's an idea that might be made to work; for a dog can be made to take an interest in science, while a cat never takes any interest in anything, unless it is either wicked or good to eat. They tell me that Frenchmen are pretty much the same way; but as this ship isn't going to France, I shan't be able to make any investigations there."