

neatness and durability, and perhaps had a lingering prejudice against machines.

Elsewhere Ruth Venn was not often to be seen. She was a quiet, shy girl, and her mother had made her so much of a companion that she had not required close friendship with anybody else. Her home was not a dull one. Job Venn, her father, had travelled in his day—a young crippled master having taken a great fancy to him when he was the gardener, and insisted that as nobody could help him so well as Job, Job must go with him wherever he went. Job had been in Flanders, and to France and Spain. Perhaps his observing powers had been sharpened by trying to get some interest and amusement out of the ways of people whose speech he did not understand. At any rate, Job came home a shrewd, clever fellow, whose wise sayings were worthy of note by deeper minds than those of his admiring little girl. And Mrs. Venn was a lively little woman, one of those whom years seem only to brighten and sharpen.

Ruth was not the only child of the house. There was her brother Harold, two years younger than herself. Harold had got his high-sounding name from his father's invalid master, who at his death had left a sum for the lad's education, which had been well laid out, and by which the boy had heartily profited. A handsome, bright-faced young fellow was Harold Venn, free of speech and popular of manner, quite different from his quiet sister, but not therefore the less dear to her. All his life he had seemed her especial charge, and nobody can tell the awful difference it made to Ruth, nor how all the sunshine of her life seemed to change to grey mist when, through the interest of some of his godfather's connexions, he got a situation in the foreign telegraph service, and was presently drafted off to an office in Canada.

Children cannot guess how much their welfare costs at home. Some parents might have thought that an only boy should be kept there for their own sake; but Job and Mrs. Venn knew that their boy was not fit for hard, manual work, also that, his education having prepared him for something else, it was not fair that he should stand still, filling up the place of another who had not received his advantages. For such as he there was no real chance in life in Medmedham.

"Mothers have got to give way," said little Mrs. Venn, with the tears standing in her eyes. "We should not be where we are to-day if your mother had not let you go out into the world, Job. And she died while you were away too, so I mustn't fret, whatever may happen. Don't think I'm going to harden my heart, though; but fretting isn't sorrow. Jesus wept. Tears in moderation are natural; but you have to twist your face out of shape to grizzle, and then it stiffens so. The only question we have to put ourselves is, 'Is this for Harold's good?' It seems so every way."

"It will find out what mettle is in the lad," put in Job. "You never know what your children are till you stand 'em down alone out of your sight. But it has to be done sooner or later. You don't make cracked china whole by keeping it in cotton wool. If the crack is there its only chance is to go in two, and then get a honest rivet."

Harold had been as well-trained as well-taught, and all his impulses and inclinations were kindly, so that if there were any misgivings in his parents' hearts they were too vague to find form in definite warnings. Perhaps the nearest approach to this was his mother's hint.

"Take care who your first friends are, Harry. Better live lonely for a year than go haunted all your days."

And then the boy was gone. And Mrs.

Venn and Ruth did the women's part in the little tragedy of life: they folded away his old clothes, sorted his school-books, stored his "rubbish" among their treasures, and set their minds to wait for letters and compose answers thereto.

Harold had gone out on a great line steamer, and he had a gay and pleasant voyage, for the ship was full, and the weather delightful. He wrote home that he found most agreeable people among his fellow-passengers. Perhaps there were very few among those with whom he associated who would have noticed how bright and clever he was if they had seen him among the humble surroundings of the old home at Medmedham. Harold Venn was not a snob. He was not ashamed of his fine old father and mother, and he would not wilfully have added a pound to a statement of their income, nor a foot to a description of the size of their house. But people do not ask plain questions about these things, and Harold's innocent allusions to many matters of old-fashioned furniture and strict ways, the school he had attended, and the sort of books he had read, raised a mistaken impression on the minds of his fellow-passengers, too many of whom were of the thriftless and shifting kind who, paying very dear for discomfort and muddle, cannot believe that comfort and order can be got at little cost by those who know how to search for those commodities at the right time and in the right place. They presumed Harold to be the son of some farmer, old-fashioned, perhaps, but wealthy and well-considered, and so treated him with a courtesy and friendliness which they would not have dreamed of extending to the child of a mere working gardener. It is often hard to draw the line between vanity and geniality; perhaps no such line existed in Harold Venn's simple nature. At any rate, he was half-flattered, half-grateful, and wholly pleased.

Many and merry were the earlier letters which he wrote home; whether or not there were any secret misgivings in the parents' hearts, they openly expressed a satisfaction in which it pained Ruth that she could not heartily join. She thought the fault lay in her own heart, and hated herself accordingly. She said to herself that surely she was jealous of these strangers of whom Harold seemed so fond, that surely she was envious of the pleasures and prosperities which seemed crowding round her darling brother. And yet there was something in her pain which she could not beat down, even on her bended knees. In those days Ruth sat in the seat of humiliation and felt herself truly a miserable sinner.

The letters grew fewer and fewer by-and-by; fewer in number and vaguer in tone, with hints of much business and even of failing health. The father and mother were rather proud of the former, and innocently credulous and anxious concerning the latter.

And just about that time other trouble and sorrow entered the little household in Convent-row. To anybody who knew all the secret of those changed letters from abroad it might almost have seemed as if they brought a deadly infection with them which poisoned the poor mother's life blood and palsied the old father's limbs. For that winter, cheery, active Mrs. Venn suddenly dropped and faded; and Job himself, the hale, vigorous man, had a stroke of paralysis which, making his right leg almost useless, laid him aside from all his gardening and carpentering. For a long time Ruth's sweet face was not seen among the farmers' wives at Medmedham market, for care of the two sick people and sole charge of the little house took up all her time. But the tiny savings of happier days soon wasted away. They were but a tiny store, for the bequest for Harold's education had

been sacredly kept to its proper use and expended thereon. And Ruth presently felt, with a sigh, that at any cost, more money must be earned instead of less. She must resign herself to leave her parents lonely, while she went to and fro, and they must all submit to less perfect order and cleanliness, and reconcile themselves to the make-shift meals and irregular hours which must be often borne in homes where the housekeeper is also the breadwinner.

They were all shrewd, sensible people, who could see the bearings of new facts, and did not require to state them to themselves or to each other in words, which make troubles harder to bear, precisely as a heavy weight would be harder to carry if it was wrapped in stinging-nettles. Mrs. Venn said nothing, nor shed a tear, when for the first time in her married life clean curtains were not put up in the sitting-room on Saturday evening. And when Job found that a soft grey comforter was prepared for him, to supply the place of the starched collars which his wife and daughter had hitherto kept so dainty, he actually went and looked at himself in the glass, and said "it was a comfortable fashion for an old man, and hid up his poor, scraggy neck."

(To be continued.)

## OUR MUTUAL FRIEND, PUSS.

By GORDON STABLES, M.D., R.N.,

Author of "Cats," "The Domestic Cat,"  
"Friends in Fur," &c.

No fireside, in my humble opinion, is complete without the harmless, necessary cat. She is the most gentle, docile, and, with the exception of our friend the dog, the most affectionate of all our pets, and yet, for all that, she is very often the worst treated of any animal we own. In my time I have written a great deal both in books and in magazines against the many kinds of cruelty that cats are subjected to, but in these short papers to talk about cruelty would be a waste of words, for I feel sure that no reader of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER would be otherwise than kind to any animal under her charge. And yet, with every intention of being good to pussy, she may often be made to suffer if you do not know something of her real nature, and the proper kind of treatment required to keep her in health and make her happy.

A very common mistake made with regard to cats is the entertaining the idea that, to a great extent, they can shift for themselves in the matter of food, and that there is therefore no necessity for supplying them regularly, day by day, with something to eat and drink. Some people even go farther than this, and tell you that they purposely starve their pussies in order to make them good mousers. But will starving have this desired effect? Certainly not. It may make them arrant thieves, but never good vermin killers. I have proved over and over again that plump, well-fed and carefully-tended cats are the best for killing mice. For the art of mousing requires great patience and that is a virtue in which a starved cat is singularly deficient.

In order, then, to keep your cat in perfect health, and in beautiful coat, feed her with as much regularity as possible, twice a day at least. Her breakfast ought probably to be her principal meal, for she is always hungry in the morning. She ought to have a dish for herself, which should always be kept most scrupulously clean, and when she has finished eating, the saucer should be sent away to be washed, and no remaining portion of one meal ought to form part of the next. I do not like to see a spoiled cat; she may be allowed to



beg just a little in a quiet kind of way; while you are eating, but not to jump up either on your shoulders or lap. It is better far to teach her to wait patiently and demurely, until you have finished, and to feed her immediately afterwards.

Do not forget that change of diet is quite as necessary to the perfect health of a cat as it is to a dog, or to a human being for the matter of that. Oatmeal porridge with sweet milk makes an excellent breakfast for puss; this may be given one day, and bread steeped in warm milk the next. To this latter a little sugar should be added. Always buy animal food for your pussy, and I know of nothing better than well-boiled sheep's lights, with now and then a tiny bit of raw liver. I do not myself approve of horse-flesh for cats, unless, indeed, it is extra sweet and tender. With pussy's dinner always mix a little well mashed vegetables. She will eat potatoes with a relish, and, as a rule, will not object to cabbage or greens. You know how very fond a cat is of fish. I have known many instances of cats catching trout and fish of other kinds, and of becoming quite expert at the piscatorial art. Let your puss, therefore, have an allowance of this delicacy as often as you can; she will thrive on it, and assuredly she will not forget your kindness.

Milk must be given to cats every day of their lives; this is no news, I am fully aware of that, but my next sentence conveys a truth which is not half well enough known. I therefore, for pussy's sake, beg our printer to put it in italics. *Cats should have a daily supply of clean fresh water.* There is a kind of double dish sold by many earthenwaremen, which every one who owns and loves a cat should possess themselves of. It resembles two saucers joined in one, or one saucer divided into two, if you like that way of putting it better. Now some people think that one side of this dish is for food, and the other for milk. No, kind reader, one side is for milk, and the other for pure water, and you should be careful to have it well rinsed out every morning.

I find that giving a cat a small bit of sweet butter, about as big as a bean, occasionally, enables her to clean her fur more easily.

Cats are very cleanly in their habits and natures. They are soon taught to behave themselves well indoors, but gentleness and firmness should be used towards them, and in no case do they deserve beating, nor even chasing out; treatment of this kind is certain to demoralise them, and cause them to hate instead of loving you.

If your pussy has been absent from home all night, you should kindly welcome her return in the morning, and show your forgiveness by presenting her with a nice dish of warm milk sweetened with sugar. Some cats are fond of tea; if yours is, let her have it by all means; you cannot be too kind to a cat, and I do not think there is much fear of the tea injuring her nervous system.

I will now say a word or two about "mousing." If your cat really wants to go out on any particular night you had better let her go. But on no account turn her out against her will, and do not make a practice of sending or letting her out at nights. If you do so she will get into all kinds of mischief, will turn dirty and disreputable, and take up with bad company in the shape of prowling houseless cats, the cats that tear up flower-beds, rob rabbit-hutches, plunder dove-cotes, and regard thieving in general as one of the fine arts. Therefore I say to you, teach your pussy to stay indoors by night. Some people have a pretty basket with a cushion in it for their cat to sleep in; this is a good plan, and far preferable to taking pussy to your own room every evening.

Cats are somewhat nomadic in their tendencies, and like to have perfect freedom.

They never, however, abuse the liberty granted them, if they are well fed and cared for when at home.

Some people will tell you that all cats are dishonest, and that they are far more attached to the places where they live than they are to those who own them. But all genuine lovers of the domestic cat know better than to believe any such statement. If a cat is merely kept as an animated mousing machine and badly treated, then it is very likely she will steal whenever she can get the chance, for she must support life somehow; and if she be badly treated by her owner, it is hardly reasonable to expect her to show very much affection for him or her. I myself owned a beautiful tabby, who for five or six years travelled in my company, by sea and land, fully twenty thousand miles. She was perfectly familiar with hotel life in all its phases; even on the first night of my arrival in a strange city or place I did not hesitate to let her out for a run if she wished to go, and she always came home with the milk in the morning. A more loving and gentle pet I never yet possessed, and as to her moral qualities I can tell you this, I oftentimes wished that some of the lodging-house keepers with whom I dwelt had been only half as honest as my poor pussy.

But people who rail against cats, and who say they hate them, are only those who know very, very little about them, for really the more one studies the ways and the manners and the general character of our sagacious wee fireside favourite, the more one loves and admires her. The affection of a cat for its own offspring is perhaps nearly equalled by the fondness and love she exhibits for young children. I have known cats of a somewhat sulky and surly temper, who would not permit themselves to be even caressed by a grown-up person, but who would nevertheless allow themselves to be teased in all manner of ways, and even pulled about by the tail by a little child.

Cats are, as a rule, on the very best of terms with any animal which happens to be domiciled with them in the same house, and the most wonderful friendships are often cemented betwixt them and animals altogether different in their nature and habits. The travelling cat I have already mentioned lived on the best of terms not only with my favourite dog but with my starling, a bird, by the way, who was never kept in a cage, but allowed to roam about wherever he listed.

Cats can be taught many pretty and engaging tricks, but if you want to train pussy properly, her education must commence when she is very young, quite a kitten in fact. Before, however, you attempt to teach a young cat to do anything, you must teach her to love you and trust you implicitly. If she does she will learn her lessons quickly, and do all she can to please you. By means of a hare's or rabbit's foot, attached to a string at the end of a rod, you can teach pussy to jump in quite a wonderful way; you will soon be surprised at the heights to which you will find her able to spring. This gymnastic exercise will be best gone through out of doors, and it will be as good for your own health as it will be for pussy's. After she has done anything well and willingly, treat her to a morsel of fish, and when the exercise is over present her with milk and water; she will generally prefer the latter.

You can next teach her to jump backwards and forwards over your arms, the hands being joined. Hold your arms at the side and not in front of you, and, gradually increasing the height, you will soon find she can jump through as well when you hold them over your head. Then commence her with hoop exercise. If you give her half an hour of this regularly every day, she will soon come to take a great delight in

it. The hoop should be about eighteen inches wide, made of cane or wood, and with a handle to it, and you may if you please have one in each hand. Puss will give you plenty of fun, I can assure you, and make everyone around you laugh as well as yourself. A cat may be taught to beg like a dog, to give a paw right or left, to lie down "dead," to stand in a corner on its hind legs, to embrace you, to retrieve like a dog, and even to move rhythmically to music.

I sincerely hope that if you have a favourite cat, and are yourself in the habit of going to the seaside or somewhere else, for a summer holiday, that you do not leave her at home, either alone by herself or to the tender mercies of servants. To do so is exceedingly cruel and thoughtless.

I have told you how to treat our mutual friend in health. I will next have a few words to say about some of the ailments that feline flesh is often afflicted with, as well as a word or two on the different kinds of cats.

(To be concluded.)



## THAT AGGRAVATING SCHOOL GIRL.

By the Author of "Wild Kathleen."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"FOR THE SAKE OF ROSIE."



LEAR decks for action! Land-lubbers, below hatches! Rose Bell and Clara Boswell, that means under the chairs. Be quick with you. Clear decks, I say! Now, one—two—three—hurrah! Three cheers for one, and cat-o'-nine-tails for two."

The above commands had been delivered by a clear, ringing voice from one end of the large classroom of Crofton House, and between the utterance of the "one, two, three," and the "hurrah!" the owner of the voice, a certain slim, bright-eyed, curly-haired young damsel, had taken a rush down the room, and a flying leap over the poker, laid across the backs of two chairs.

"Now, Rose," exclaimed Milly Wilmot, "make haste; it's your turn now. You know monkeys copy their masters."

"Ah, to be sure," said the heroine of the jump. "So that is why you try to copy me."

The absurdity of roly-poly Milly being accused of copying Miss Nelly in looks, manners, or gymnastics was too great for even Sybil Pinckney's well-bred



## OUR MUTUAL FRIEND, PUSS.

By GORDON STABLES, M.D., R.N.,

Author of "Cats," "Friends in Fur," "The Domestic Cat," &amp;c.



ANYONE who had never seen a more highly-bred cat than the honest and faithful but common grey grimalkin, that lies on the cottage hearthrug, singing duets with the teakettle, or the half-wild mouse-catcher of the barn-door, would be greatly surprised if he happened to go to a large show of our favourites, at the wealth of feline loveliness and grace displayed upon the benches.

"Why," I have heard some people exclaim, "I couldn't have believed there were such beautiful cats in the world."

And I have made reply, "What you see is simply the result of care and kindness, proper feeding and housing, and attention to the pelage or coats of the animals."

Cats, especially the long-haired breeds, it will do my readers no harm to know, are becoming more fashionable every day as domestic pets, and people who care to keep good ones, and to rear them well and show them, get very large prices for them. I am acquainted with ladies who sell their kittens even for two and three guineas each, and who would not take twenty for many of their full-grown pussies.

Let us imagine now that we are taking a walk around the great cat show at the Crystal Palace, and that I am mentor. I feel sure I can tell you many things about the inmates of the pens that you do not know.

Well, then, first on the list of short hairs is a tortoiseshell male cat, a very rare animal; here are several tortoiseshell female pussies, not big, and very dark in their markings, with no white. In their nature they are brave and bold, good workers, loving, gentle, and jealous, and always faithful to mistress or master. Next come the tortoiseshell and white, the colours being yellow, red, black, and white, artistically arranged in those who have won prizes. They are bigger cats than the former, and not so decided in their likes and dislikes.

Then we have the brown tabbies—splendid fellows everyone of them, some of enormous size. There is one yonder, blinking half asleep on his scarlet velvet cushion, who weighs twenty-two pounds, but is so very lissom withal that he can jump on to the top of any door in his master's house. Tabbies are *par excellence* the Englishman's cat. They are good-natured, brave and noble, fond of children, and very fond of their offspring. They ought to be long bodied and graceful; though massive, somewhat short in the forelegs, with large round heads, small ears, and gentle, happy-looking eyes. The stripes should be black on a brown ground, and very well defined, and there should be no white on them, else they would be classed as brown-tabby-with-white. There should also be one or two semi-circular bars across the chest. Eyes hazel preferably.

The silver tabby has somewhat longer ears,

and a less blunt face with green eyes. Colour like Aberdeen granite, striped with deeply dark markings. They are very lovely and valuable. The red tabbies come next. They are splendid fellows, with green or yellow eyes, reddish in colour, marked with deeper red, and no white. Look at this one; he has been passed over by the judge because his colouring is neither deep enough nor distinct enough. This breed is very clever, and they make capital hunters, but are apt to wander a long way from home; however, unless they fall victims to the vile traps or the too ready guns of cowardly keepers, they never fail to come back again.

The red and white tabby is a gay and gallant fellow, and full of life and fun. In that pen is a spotted tabby. This cat may be any colour, only covered with stripes, composed of spots. I hope that is not an Irish bull. That gentlemanly-looking fellow there is a black and white cat. His coat is of jet, he wears white socks and gloves, and a front as spotless as the snow. He is as good and as aristocratic in his ways as he looks; indeed, he would hardly deign to catch a mouse, but he likes a good dinner, and when he is outside and wants to get in, he does not mew like a common mouser; no, he jumps up and lifts the knocker.

In the next cage is a cat you can scarcely see, so intensely ravenly black is he all over. But he can see you and me, and he is glaring at us with his green, green eyes, evidently in no very amiable temper. What he wants to know is, what has he been imprisoned here for, instead of roving wild and free in forest or field? But we must not judge him too harshly, for although he flew at the adjudicator of prizes this morning with tooth and nail, at home he is not naturally quarrelsome. These cats should be very large, with coats of glossiest black; even the whiskers must be black, and the eyes should be hazel if possible, but green is beautiful. Here we have a small but graceful puss, all one colour, namely, dark slate, not a light hair in her, not even in her whiskerets. These cats are rare, and seldom fail to win prizes in a mixed class. They are called Maltese cats. Pure white cats are no favourites of mine. They are usually dull and apathetic, and often as deaf as a post. I should never expect a white cat to do anything *very* clever.

There are many other strange, short hair cats, Manx, Abyssinian, &c., but we now pass on to the Long Hairs, only pausing for a moment at the cages filled with daft-looking kittens, brimful of folly and mischief and fun.

Now there are all kinds or colours of Long Hairs, but your real Persian is most graceful and elegant, especially in shape of head, which is somewhat sharp or peaked with shortish ears poised downwards, and an aural tuft in each. The expression of their eyes is singularly beautiful, and there is a certain languor of looks and manner about them that tells us their real home is not here, but in a far, far sunnier clime.

They do very well on the whole in England, however; but they ought not to be allowed to roam much, else they will assuredly be stolen, and their coats ought to be combed and brushed almost daily.

"What is the difference," you ask me, "between a Persian cat and an Angora?"

Well, I have been asked that question before, and the reply is that there is no appreciable difference in the size of the cats nor in the length of their coats, only the fur of the Angora is finer and flossier and woollier than that of the Persian, and probably the Angora cat is not so sharp in expression of features.

May I give you a word of advice as to showing a cat? If you have one good enough there is no reason why you should not let it have a chance of distinguishing itself and

winning a prize. Do not be afraid that it will not get every attention, as far as can be given at a show. Nevertheless, do not fail to go with your favourite yourself, if possible. Take with you some raw meat, and the sweetest of milk in a bottle, and attend to pussy's wants yourself.

And now a few lines about the ailments that cats are subject to. Veterinary surgeons, I fear, know little about them, and care less.

When a cat seems ailing and sick, and moping and sleepy-looking, and if at the same time she refuses all food, you had better give an emetic—half a teaspoonful of salt in a little warm water. Follow this up in an hour or two with a teaspoonful of castor oil.

Grass should be grown in a flower-pot in towns, where cats have not much fresh air and freedom. This flower-pot should be placed where she can easily see it and get at it. Or when you are walking in the country, you may cull some nice fresh green grass and place it in the corner of the kitchen, the ends being kept tight between two bricks. It is an excellent blood purifier. A kind of chronic inflammation of the stomach is common among cats, especially those who are not properly dieted, and are glad to pick up and eat anything they can find. The cat refuses food, gets thin and wretched-looking, and has frequent attacks of vomiting. Medicine—A grain and a half of the trisnitrate of bismuth, put on the tongue twice a day, and a dose of castor oil once a week. Food—Sweet milk or cream, and fish. If much wasting, raw beef, chopped fine, twice a day.

To give a cat medicine two people are required. Pussy is rolled in a rug and placed on some one's lap, while you pour the medicine very gradually down her throat. If it is a pill or bolus, dip it in oil, and put it well back against the roof of the mouth; but mind your fingers. You can hold the mouth open with one hand whilst you manipulate with the other. Bronchitis is often fatal to cats; it attacks badly fed and badly housed pussies very often. There is a rough, dry coat, perhaps fits of shivering at first, with cough. The cough is dry the first day or two, but soon becomes moist, and there is a distressing difficulty of breathing, whilst the tongue is often protruded. Give a little oil at first, and feed on arrowroot, beef-tea, milk, &c., little and often. Then give this cough pill. Extract of conium and compound squill pill, of each twenty grains: make into a bolus with bread crumb, and divide into twenty pills; dose, one every night. Keep up her strength, and give a small teaspoonful of cod-liver oil twice a day.

For laxity of the system, a little common chalk mixture should be given three or four times a day, with one drop of the solution of muriate of morphia in each dose. Or put two grains of trisnitrate of bismuth on the tongue three times a day. Food: only milk, or milk with arrowroot, and a little egg may be allowed, but no meat.

Lung disease, or consumption, is known by the general appearance of the poor cat. There is bad coat, emaciation, capricious appetite, and loss of all liveliness. Raw meat, careful housing, and cod-liver oil are needed. When the cough is troublesome I order the following prescription:—Tinct. opii camph., 1 drachm; syr. scille, 1 drachm; sol. mur. morphiæ, 15 minims; aquæ, 2 oz.; mix. Label: a teaspoonful whenever required.

Fits are these are common in cats, and are almost too well known to require much description. The puss must be caught and bled. With a lancet make a small incision at the lower part of the ear, and make the blood flow by sponging with hot water. Or slit the ear with a fine pair of scissors.

If the cat is subject to fits, order the following at a respectable chemist's:—Bromid.



potass, 10 grains; iod. potass., 5 grains; zinci sulph., 5 grains; mix. Make twenty pills with bread crumb, and give one night and morning.

If pussy is thin, give cod-liver oil. If the reverse, lower the diet, and give a little boiled sheep's liver twice a week.

For skin complaints use carbohc lotion; pure carbohc acid one part, water forty. Well shake before using it, and apply once a day, but not all over. As internal medicine, give a teaspoonful twice a day in milk of liquor arsenicalis, ten drops in one ounce of distilled water.

For eye inflammations, bathe frequently in warm milk and water, and use a lotion of three grains of sulphate of zinc to an ounce of water.

Never deprive a cat of all her kittens at once. Never keep kittens that you are not sure of getting a good home for.

Never let anyone persuade you that pussy is not one of the gentlest and most faithful pets we possess.

WAITING IN VAIN.

A GENTLEMAN on the point of marriage left his intended bride for a short time. He usually travelled in the stage-coach to the place of her abode. The last journey he took from her was the last of his life.

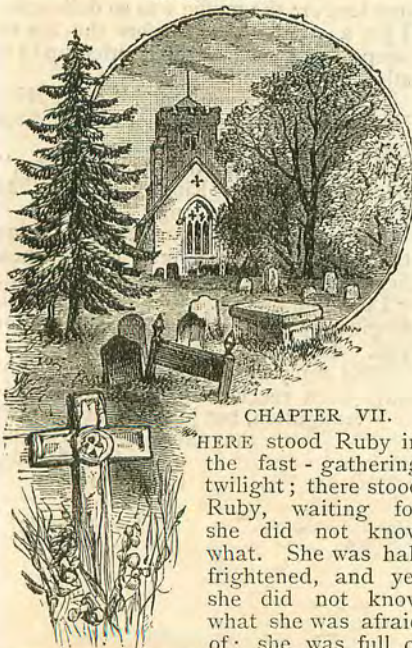
Anxiously expecting his return, she went to meet the vehicle. An old friend announced to her the death of her lover. She uttered an involuntary scream and a piteous exclamation, "He is dead!"

From that fatal moment, for *fifty* years, did that unfortunate woman daily, in all seasons, traverse the distance of many miles to the spot where she expected her future husband to alight from the coach, uttering in a plaintive tone, "He is not come yet—I will return to-morrow!"

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH.

A STORY OF TWO ENGLISH GIRLS.

BY ALICE KING.



CHAPTER VII.

HERE stood Ruby in the fast-gathering twilight; there stood Ruby, waiting for she did not know what. She was half-frightened, and yet she did not know what she was afraid of; she was full of wonder at Mr. Lindhurst entering so suddenly that house, and her most lively

conjectures could not form any probable guess about what he was doing there. Then that strange cry was still ringing in her ears; what could it all mean? A brook not far off murmured, and the wind talked to the branches of the trees above her head. Such were the only answers which Ruby got to her question.

Still Ruby waited and listened, while the minutes seemed longer minutes than any minutes she had ever known in her young life. Yes, she listened, but no sound reached her from the house, only, ceaselessly, the tones of the stream and the winter breeze. By-and-bye these monotonous strains were broken by the lowing of a cow hard by, and afterwards by the rumble of a cart; but these did not answer Ruby any better than the wind and the water; her whole situation, standing outside that house, where the old man still remained hidden from her sight, was as complete a mystery to her as ever. It seemed to her as if she had somehow got into a part of a story of some one else's life, and as if the Ruby who led the commonplace life at the farm a few months ago was miles upon miles away.

At length the door of the villa opened, and Mr. Lindhurst appeared.

"Oh! what is it?" cried Ruby, running to meet him, the words coming involuntarily to her lips.

He did not speak for some moments; he was looking calmer than when he went into the house. At last he said—

"Ruby, we can go home now."

He spoke in a low, absent voice, and had evidently not taken in the meaning of her eager words. In her state of excitement and curiosity Ruby's first feeling at his manner, as was natural enough in a person of her quick temper, was great irritation; she broke through the fence of shy respect with which Mr. Lindhurst was generally surrounded in her eyes, and cried indignantly,—

"Mr. Lindhurst, it is a shame to treat me in this way; you leave me at the door as if I was a walking-stick, and when you come out again you treat me as if I had no more sense and understanding than one."

Her words, and the vehemence with which they were spoken, roused him at length, and he half-smiled as he took in their import. Then his face grew grave, but gentle, as he said,—

"Ruby, child, forgive me if I have frightened and surprised you. I was alarmed myself when I went into that house, but I am more easy in my mind now. That is all I can tell you."

She was very full still of wondering curiosity, but his manner softened her.

"Had your going into this house anything to do with what you were telling me about before we came out?" she asked.

"Yes, it had," he answered: and then added, after a few moments of thought, "Ruby, I think, since you know so much, I ought to tell you that all this which has lately seemed so strange and unaccountable to you is nearly connected with yourself."

"With me!" she repeated, with a start,

and then cried eagerly, "but if that is so, have I not a right to know more?"

"Listen to me Ruby," said the old man, pausing and laying his hand on her shoulder. "It so happens that a certain mystery, which circumstances prevent being explained to you, must, for a while, surround your young life; signs of it may sometimes suddenly appear in your path, but you will not learn any more from them than I have told you. There is nothing, believe me, in this mystery which is in any way wrong or which can lead you or any one else into misdoing. Now that I have told you this, Ruby, will you trust me, and ask no further questions?"

"Yes," she answered, for there was something in his eyes which made her say so at once.

"Thank you, my child, for such confidence," he said, warmly; "I fancy that you are made of different stuff from most girls, and that when you say yes, like that, you mean it entirely, and that you will not go on worrying your mind with vain conjectures on this subject, but will resolutely keep off any such morbid habit."

"I will try to be all you expect me to be," she replied, simply.

"And Ruby" began the old man again, in a low impressive tone, "I may tell you one thing more. Perhaps, some day you will be in a position which will make you able to do a great deal for God; try in your life to prepare yourself for it, if such should be your appointed lot."

More and more wonders were pouring in upon little Ruby. She, the neglected orphan, would one day have it in her power to do a great deal for God! She gazed up into the old man's face, her brown eyes full of an incredulous, child-like astonishment, too deep for words.

"Yes, it is quite true, Ruby," he said, reading her looks aright, "strange as it may seem to you."

"I cannot understand it, I cannot understand it," she murmured two or three times to herself; then she clasped her little hands in prayer for light and strength, for all that she had lately heard had made her feel as if she were walking with a dizzy brain through a mist; and gradually, as her words went up to God, she began to grow calmer, and a certain clearness dawned within her. She had just been told that, in future, something might happen to her which would make her able to do much good in the world, and yet she was told she must not ask anything further on this subject; it was still all very dim and incomprehensible, but her young soul leant on the consciousness that her eternal Friend was near her, and she felt that if in all things she strove to tread step by step in the path He bade her follow, it would be well with her, come what might. She did not, however, put anything of what was going on in her heart and mind into words; she probably could not have expressed half the stir and tumult which had been whirling about within her, even had she tried; she only said, very quietly,—

"I will do my best everywhere and in