

may be. We are born into the world not to find the easiest way of slipping through it, but to live for others, to help others to have better times. After all, the actual question simplifies into a very plain concrete fact, "Where does my duty lie? Can I best serve God and humanity in the country? Then there is my place. But if the town, with its teeming population and busy life appeals to me with all the force of a Divine command, then let me dwell in the midst of my people, to help, and guide, and bless them."

I could not now live in the country, whatever I might choose when the frosty touch of life's winter lays its snow on my head. I love the town, for its needs, its woes, its sin and suffering cry out to me. Oh, the good women are doing, and can do in the city's populous streets! Truly many are ministering angels in the sad homes of want and disease, and we want more.

"You will have no society there," remarked a friend to me when I decided to live "down by the river."

"No, I suppose not. But we are within

half an hour of Central London, and I can find some friends," I replied.

He was so far right. I admit that we are destitute of what is called "Society" with a big S. The clergy, the local doctors and one or two church-workers comprise our select little coterie. But we have some delightful hours together, and enjoy our informal social gatherings very much. It is friendship worthy of the name; and although, seeing we are all young people, circumstances of worldly fortune may improve with years, I think we shall then look back with a sigh to those days when all were so merry and genuinely sympathetic. Happiness is so coy a nymph that she is found when not pursued. Make up your mind with a steadfast purpose to be helpful and you are sure to be happy. A pound a week is not a large amount wherewith to make ends meet; but our life testifies that it can be made enough, and go farther if properly expended than twice the sum thoughtlessly or ignorantly spent, while I know we enjoy our lives and do not find them narrow or dull. The work brings one into

contact with two very different classes. One the "masses" with their needs and, scarcely articulate as yet, aspirations; the other, the noble men and women who are loyally endeavouring to raise and educate these aspirings to proper ideals, uplifting the labouring classes to a richer life. This society is the best earth can give, whether found in town or country.

As I write these closing sentences my eyes rove over to the distant line of the Docks, and gleaming their soft clear light in ordered ranks I see the electric lamps, guarding like watchful sentinels the ships behind. It is night, and all is still beneath the starry sky; but in our ears comes a low muffled sound like the roll of surf on a western beach. It is the voice of London, or the beating of its heart if you like better the simile. And as I listen, looking at the calm above and hearing the tokens of vague unrest below, my heart sends up a fervent petition to the throne of—

"Him who keeps  
The vast and helpless city while it sleeps."

LLOYD LESTER.

## MUNGO—A STUDY.

By Mrs. BRIGHTWEN.



MUNGO the ichneumon, whose early life was chronicled in "More about Wild Nature," has now been a household pet for about six years, and must be nearly eight years old. I do not know how long these animals generally

live, but as yet Mungo shows no signs of age or infirmity. He is as full of fun, and as inquisitive as ever, but not so bent upon mischief as in his youthful days. He now has the range of house and garden, and goes wherever he likes without even a collar to remind him of captivity. The chief trouble is in connection with my visitors, those at least who have a strong objection to "wild animals" about the house. Nothing can possibly be less "wild" than Mungo, for he is just like a tame cat. He does not dream of biting or scratching, and is never so happy as when curled up in the lap of some indulgent friend, yet as he unfortunately looks like a ferret, many people find it very hard to believe that he can be perfectly harmless.

Mungo delights to spend his mornings basking in the sun, on the window-sill of my bed-room, where he is sufficiently elevated to watch all that goes on in the garden. He is scarcely ever really asleep; as Mr. Rudyard Kipling says so truly, in the delightful account he gives of an Indian mongoose in his *Jungle Book*, "He is eaten up from nose to tail with curiosity," and whilst seeming to slumber, the active little cinnamon-coloured nose is ever on the work sniffing out the varied movements of the household.

As summer comes on we naturally let the fires die out, and Mungo strongly disapproves of this custom, for he dearly loves to bask on a little wool mat before a hot fire; now, however, he adopts another plan; when he finds the fire is out he quietly climbs over the wire guard, goes under the grate and there lies down amongst the warm ashes; he has even done this whilst there remained some fire in the grate, and I much fear he may make an *auto-da-fé* of himself some day by setting his long hair alight, which would be a terrible fate indeed for our cherished pet.

Mungo's love of warmth leads to another undesirable habit. He will steal into the bedrooms and hide himself under the *duvets*, and

low be it spoken, he has been found cosily rolled up in a night-dress. It may naturally be asked, "Why is he not kept in a suitable wired-in place where he can do no harm?" Simply because he makes himself perfectly miserable in confinement. He tears at the wirework till his paws are bleeding, and foams at the mouth with misery and rage. No one could keep an amiable little animal in such purgatory; it would be kinder to end its life at once, and such a fate cannot be even thought of. Mungo is a diplomatist; liberty he has schemed to obtain, and after years of astute planning, and almost reasoning, he has reached his end and we must acknowledge ourselves beaten, for to all intents and purposes he is now master of the situation and may do pretty much what he pleases.

There is however still a crumpled rose-leaf in his lot; the softest bed and the sunniest nook to bask in will not satisfy Mungo without human society, and as we cannot give up all other occupations in order to sit with him, he is often to be seen wandering about like an unquiet spirit, until he finds some friendly lap where he can curl himself up and enjoy all those conditions of warmth, ease, and society which form his idea of perfect bliss. I am sure Mungo is a staunch Conservative as to his political views; he hates changes of any kind, since they interfere with his personal comfort and methodical habits. He likes to have a morning sleep on a sunny spot, and then his profound interest in a certain rhododendron bed where rabbit-holes and mole tracks are to be found, leads him to steal across the lawn and disappear amongst the bushes. I rather fancy he has grand times there, for if I attempt to coax him to come with me, his pert little nose will appear amidst the leaves, and with a frisk and a leap of absolute disobedience and fun he will return to his playground, and remain there till it pleases him to come indoors again. His next desire is to enjoy a quiet afternoon under a warm *duvet*, and as he behaves with absolute propriety and only covets warmth and quietness, I am indulgent enough to allow him the luxury of being in my room until evening, when he is fed, wrapped up in a wool mat and piece of baize, and placed safely in his cage for the night. It has been an interest

to me to make a study of the character of my mongoose, for a wild creature rendered perfectly tame by unvarying kind treatment gives one an excellent opportunity of observing the real nature of the animal. I fear I must own that Mungo is absolutely selfish, his one idea is to enjoy perfect liberty and have his own way in everything.

After six years' petting he knows me well as his friend and purveyor, but he has not an atom of affection; he has apparently no mode of manifesting regard; the expression of his face never alters, he does not try to lick my hand or make any greeting sound. He likes to jump into my lap simply because it is a comfortable place, and as he is very timid at any unwonted sound, he will run to me for protection, but I am afraid he views me as a means of attaining comfort, food and warmth, and nothing more. All this does not prevent my liking the curious little animal, but one cannot but be struck by the immense difference between its nature and that of the faithful dog, whose devotion to his master will lead him to refuse his food, to take long toilsome journeys, to wait patiently for weary hours in cold wind and biting frost when bidden to guard his owner's flock, aye, and even to yield up his life if necessary to do his master service. All this shows, what I have often remarked before, that to those who are observant of the fact, there is as much difference between the characters of various animals, and even between those of individuals of the same species as may be found in human beings. Possibly Mungo is a selfish specimen of his race; there may exist brilliant exceptions abounding in affection and other noble qualities. I can only describe him as he is, and judging by his small cranium and its peculiar flattened formation, I should imagine he is formed to be, not a pattern of all the virtues, but a creature of one idea, and that, snake-killing. To be proficient in that art all the characteristics I have noted in this animal are specially needed, such as lynx-like watchfulness, undaunted courage, persistent curiosity and determination to care for himself under all circumstances.

We must therefore wink at his failure in moral goodness, and admire the way in which he carries out the purpose for which he was made. He worthily adorns his own special niche in creation.