

yearning inseparable from Chopin's nature—a yearning such as filled the heart of Faust when he agreed that that moment should be his last which completely satisfied his craving for happiness. To Faust that moment came when he had finished a task ensuring the well-being of thousands of his fellow-men. But he was then an old man. Chopin did not live to be old, and for him the “supreme moment” never arrived. The longing for it filled all his music, for all real music reflects the soul of the composer.

As Chopin played his new Nocturne that day, the description written by George Sand of the approach to Majorca must have recurred to all present. Here it is:—

“The night was warm and dark, illumined only by an extraordinary phosphorescence in the wake of the ship; everybody was asleep on board except the steersman who, in order to keep himself awake, sang all night, but in a voice so soft and so subdued that one might have thought that he feared to awake the men of the watch, or that he himself was half asleep. We did not weary of listening to him, for his singing was of the strangest kind. He observed a rhythm and modulations totally different from those we are accustomed to, and seemed to allow his voice to go at random, like the smoke of the vessel carried away and swayed by the breeze. It was a reverie rather than a song, a kind of careless floating of the voice, with which the mind had little to do, but which kept time with the swaying of the ship, the faint sound of the dead water, and resembled a vague improvisation, restrained nevertheless by sweet and monotonous forms.”

Anyone who plays the G major Nocturne after reading this passage will be struck by the singular likeness that the music bears to the written description of the scene. The swaying of the double notes over the undulating bass accompaniment suggests the gliding motion of the vessel, while the richness of the harmonies carries out the idea

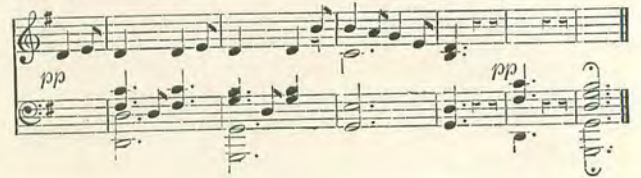
of the brilliancy of the water scintillating with phosphorescent lights.



Then comes the vague song of the steersman—rather a reverie than a song.



The mind has indeed little to do here, but the pulse of the poet throbs through every note. The song dies away, and the boat floats over the sea once more. Then we hear the steersman again. This time he starts on a lower tone, and the melody is worked up chromatically to a truly Chopinesque climax. That done, to quote old Herrick, it sinks down into a silvery strain, and makes us smooth as balm and oil again. One more repetition of the swaying motive, and as the vessel passes out of sight we hear in the dim distance the murmuring song of the steersman across the dark waters.



MEROPS.

BY ELIZA BRIGHTWEN.



FOR some years past a rather weird-looking solitary rook has elected to give us his company in the garden, instead of living with his kith and kin in the neighbouring wood.

It would be interesting to know what has thus severed him from social life. Has he been crossed in love, or has a rook-parliament for some deep-dyed iniquity passed sentence of banishment upon him? Is he possibly a bird of such a misanthropic turn of mind that a solitary life has really been his deliberate choice?

Be these questions answered as they may, Merops is a sort of familiar spirit haunting our garden. He is not always visible, it is true, but let some tempting food be thrown out, and in a few minutes our domestic vulture is sure to be seen swooping down to snatch a share of the feast.

His tendency to keep ever on the watch with a view to earthward things led me to give him the name of the unhappy king of Cos, whose wife was one of the attendants of Diana, by whom for some neglect of duty she was put to death.

I believe the story goes that Merops, in his agony of bereavement, desired to commit suicide so as to rejoice his beloved queen in the world of shades, but Diana placed him amongst the stars under the form of an eagle. Even this fate could not prevent his gaze being ever downward, searching vainly for his dearly-loved wife.

I will draw a veil over the difference of motive between the ancient and modern Merops. I fear in the latter case appetite rules alone, but I can give him a good character for personal amiability, for I have never seen him use his great beak aggressively.

During the past winter and spring we have seen very interesting bird-visitors feeding just outside the window,

attracted there by a constant supply of coarse oatmeal and sopped bread.

A gorgeous cock-pheasant in full plumage, with snowy white ring of neck-feathers and crimson ear-patches, leads his little band of five or six hens many times a day to enjoy the food they like so much. Merops joins them, and so does a tribe of smaller birds. Jackdaws pounce down at intervals and carry away some spoil. They are born marauders, and seem as if they cannot enjoy any gift quietly like other birds, but must snatch it away in thievish fashion.

The cock-pheasant clucks the whole time he is eating to encourage his mates, for they are somewhat timid and ready to run swiftly away at the slightest sound.

In connection with Merops I may mention a thrilling incident in the life of my precious little white-throat, Fairy. At six o'clock one morning he was flying about my room as usual and in a moment, unperceived by me, he must have slipped out at the open window. When I discovered, after a weary search, that my little bird had escaped, I went outside the house, and there under the window stood Merops. I thought he had a guilty look, and I will confess that I believed he had appropriated Fairy for his breakfast. All day long I cherished evil surmises against that innocent rook. At intervals throughout that unhappy day I searched and called, but no trace could I find of my lost white-throat, and greatly did I reproach myself for the open window; but, as it had been my habit to leave the sash a few inches raised during all the years I had possessed Fairy, it had not occurred to me as a possible danger. It may have been a call-note from some wild white-throat which suggested to Fairy the new idea of spending a day out of doors.

It is needless to say the hours passed sadly with me, and I had lost all hope of recovering my bird when, at six o'clock in the evening as I was entering the drawing-room, to my utter surprise there was Fairy hopping on the floor, bright and cheery as ever. With a joyous note he flew on to my hand, and seemed in an ecstasy at seeing me again. It will ever remain a mystery how he found his way home, seeing he had never been at liberty outside the house since

the day seven years ago when I picked him up a forlorn little orphan fledgling. How such a mite, lost in a hundred acres of land, escaped all kinds of perils from cats, and such birds as hawks, jackdaws and jays, puzzles me extremely; I only wish he could give an account of his adventures and by what wonderful instinct he found his way home before nightfall.

I humbly apologised to Merops for my groundless suspicions, and gave him a royal feed to commemorate the return of the truant.

The tameness of Merops affords me the opportunity of becoming acquainted with various points in the character of a rook which cannot easily be discovered when the bird is seen some distance off in the fields.

We usually speak of rooks as being black, but in reality the plumage is of a rich violet hue shading into dark blue upon the head. The feathers have a wonderful power of reflecting the sun's rays, sending out flashes of light with every movement of the bird in a way I have never observed to the same extent in any other plumage.

I never see the crow near enough to tell whether its feathers shine, but the jackdaw has very little reflective power, and the blackbird is a real sooty black, with scarcely any brightness on the surface.

I suppose the huge bare beak of the rook is exactly suited to field-work, as it probes the ground for grubs and worms, but it is rather amusing to see it used for picking up grains of oatmeal. I think Merops himself feels it is rather a slow business, for he sometimes lays his beak sideways so as to shovel in a good mouthful and thus economise time and labour.

All through the winter months food is strewn under the tulip tree on the lawn, and the entire rookery may be seen daily visiting their feeding-ground. I like to see the busy, useful birds and to help to keep them alive in hard times; but faithful old Merops abides with us both summer and winter, and we value his friendship accordingly, although why he bestows it upon us will always remain somewhat of a mystery.

MARGARET HETHERTON.

CHAPTER X.



IT was Monday afternoon, and Dr. Milworth was nearing his journey's end. As the train proceeded in a leisurely fashion towards Sandenstein, he tried to picture the meeting and its possible consequences. Would Margaret meet him with that provoking child-like candour, or had she perhaps grown a little older during these few months? Might he perhaps venture to say a word or two, to show her that although he was her father's friend, he did not at all aspire to be looked upon in a paternal light by her? He dared not hope that she had begun to love him during her

absence from home, but what if during these few days he should be so fortunate as to awaken that feeling in her which had been his daily companion for a year now? His heart beat at the thought. "My little love! My Margaret!" he whispered to himself; and then pictured her return to the quiet ivy-covered house as his wife. How different life would be to him then, how Margaret would brighten the house by her presence and how happy he would make her—if only she could learn to

love him! "Sandenstein!" The train stopped. Dr. Milworth alighted, made his way through the crowd of passengers, consigned his valise to a porter, and walked over the square to the Luisenhof, where he intended to put up for the few days of his stay. Half-an-hour later he found himself in the drawing-room of Frau von Kowitz's house, while a servant went to inform Margaret, who had spent the afternoon in a fever of expectation, of his arrival.

Margaret ran at full speed, as was her wont, down the stairs and into the drawing-room. Dr. Milworth, who was standing near the window, turned as he heard the door open, and his face brightened as he saw the girl with her innocent, happy face hurry forward with both hands held out.

"Oh, Dr. Milworth, I am so glad to see you," she cried, "it is so good of you to come!"

Dr. Milworth took the two little hands in his, with difficulty repressing his longing to draw the girl's head to his breast and kiss her sweet lips. He patted her rosy cheeks and asked—

"And how are you, Margaret? Are you happy here? You look so blooming and so radiant!"

"To-day I am more particularly happy because you have come," Margaret answered brightly, "but, indeed, I am really happy here, although I am homesick at times. But please sit down and let us talk; I have so much to say!"

Lizzie seldom trusted her to cook anything; when she did so the poor lady invariably emerged from the kitchen with her hands burnt in several places, sparks in her eyes, the front width of her dress scorched, her hair singed, and her poor frail body so utterly exhausted, the family would insist upon her instant retirement to bed.

Nobody knew what the woman's life had been, where had gone the vigour, the energy, the graces that should still have been hers, for her years were barely thirty-five.

A crushing sorrow, disappointment on the heel of disappointment, loneliness, or perhaps only a grey life full of petty cares passed in a scorching, withering climate—one or all of these things had dried the sap out of her, and left of what might have been a gracious creature, radiating pleasure and comfort, only the rags and bones of womanhood.

The Camerons suffered her patiently for three long months; then the father gathered his courage up in both hands, closed his ears to the pity that clamoured at his heart, and told her gently enough that she must go.

She threw up her fluttering hands and sank on the sofa—in her eyes the piteous look of amaze and grief, that your fireside dog would wear if you took a sudden knife to him. So kind had the family been, so patient, the poor creature had told herself exultingly that they were satisfied, even pleased with her, and had hugged

the novel, delicious thought to sleep with her for the last two months.

She asked shakingly what she had done.

"Nothing, nothing at all," Cameron reassured her eagerly, "it is merely, merely I can see you are not strong enough for such a hard place as mine."

"A hard place! Dear sir!" she cried, and looked at him dazed. "Why, there are only five of you, and Lizzie to do all the rough work! I've been where there were ten, and done the washing and everything. I've been where there were nine, and had to chop the wood and draw the water myself. I've been mother's help and had to carry twin babies miles in the sun. I've been where the children pinched and scratched me. I've been at places where I rose at half-past four, and found my way to bed at eleven. And in none have I ever given notice myself. A hard place! Dear, dear!"

"My dear Miss Browne," Cameron said, and such was the fluent nature of the man that his eyes were filled, and he had no idea that he lied, "it was solely for the sake of your health I spoke. You look so delicate. If you think the duties are not too heavy, why, I shall be most heartily obliged to you if you will stay with us indefinitely."

Then he went away to seek his children, to tell them the tale of her and beg their tenderest patience.

(To be continued.)

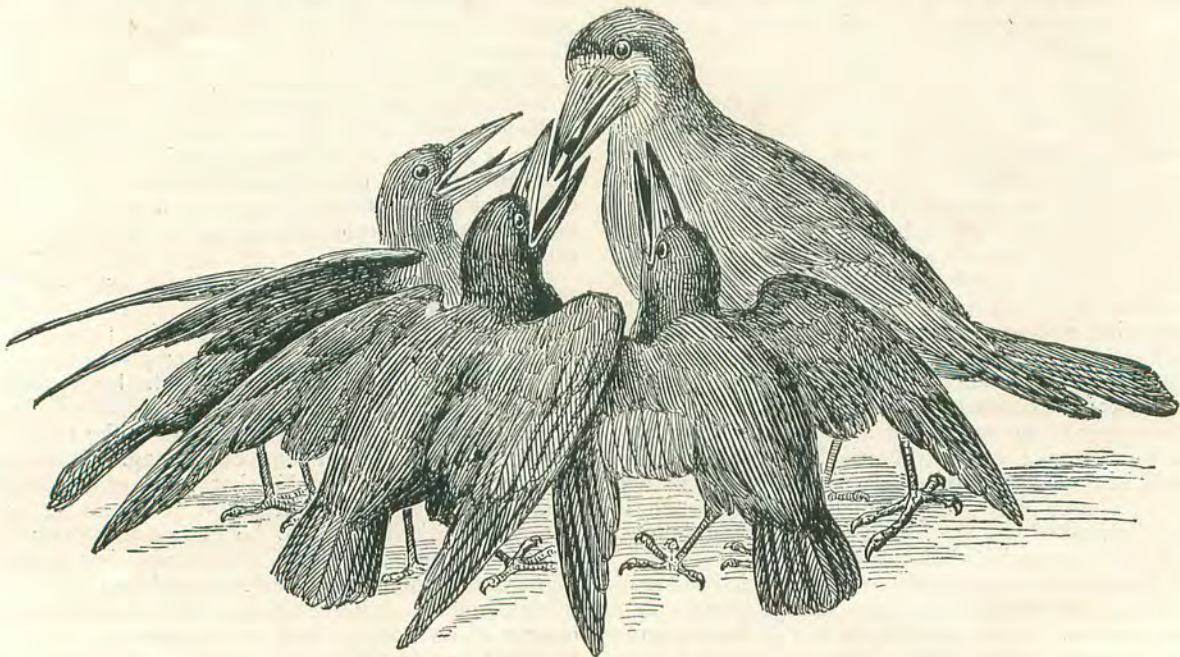
MEROPS MARRIED.

OUR tame rook Merops has, at last, wooed and won a mate! All through last summer he afforded us so much amusement that I think those readers who may remember a short sketch of him which appeared last year may like to hear a little more about his domestic life.

Early in March we noticed that Merops now and then carried away some of his dainties to a retired spot behind a rhododendron bush, where we caught a glimpse of another

rook timidly awaiting his arrival. Later on it was quite clear that he was flirting and paying very decided attention to the shy bird who, although she could not be persuaded to approach the house, gratefully opened her huge beak and accepted the gifts of her devoted lover.

Thus we came to know that Merops was no longer a bachelor, and we looked forward to many an interesting glimpse into the domestic life of our sable friends.



MEROPS AND FAMILY.

We could never find out where Mr. and Mrs. Merops built their nest, whether in the rookery amongst their neighbours, or in a place of their own choosing.

Time passed on, and we saw but one rook at the daily feeding-place, and we therefore concluded that the other was sitting. We speculated as to whether we should one day see Merops as a proud father with his children clustering around him. One fine May morning about six o'clock I heard a loud cawing and chirping going on beneath my window, and cautiously looking through the blind I was able to watch the very thing I had longed to see. Merops, as he is shown in the drawing, was surrounded by his clamorous brood, all with open beaks asking for food, flapping their wings and giving their parent no peace or respite, since as fast as he fed one another squawked and pressed forward, to be again displaced by a third greedy youngster who would take no denial. Poor Merops did his best, but at last he became fairly dazed and flew away, perhaps to ask his wife to help him with his overpowering family. This was my first glimpse of the young people; but we soon saw them on the lawn with their parents, and in time they learned to come without fear up to the windows to be fed.

Long after they appeared to be fully grown and fledged they still entreated their parents to feed them in baby-fashion, and their good-natured father seemed quite unable

to resist the touching appeal of a gaping beak and a wheedling squawk. In consequence of painters being at work upon the house for a month in the autumn, we lost sight of many of our pet birds, partly because they *could* not endure the presence of the workmen, and also because at that season they could find abundant food elsewhere, and were thus independent of our bounty.

When the frosty weather began, the faithful old rook appeared as usual, and, curiously enough, his mate stayed with him through the winter. The two might constantly be seen sitting side by side on the lawn or in the sun. If one of them moved a step or two away, the other would follow, so that in fact they seemed quite inseparable. When a deep snow covered the lawn it was amusing to watch the young rooks taking snow-baths; it was evidently a new experience to them, and, like children at play, they flapped their wings and sent up showers of snow over each other's backs, cawing with ecstasy, taking in large mouthfuls of snow and behaving altogether in a most riotous manner. Not so the old rooks; they had often seen snow before, and were far too busy picking up grain to waste a moment upon idle play.

Now the pairing time has passed, Merops and his mate are probably on domestic cares intent, and we shall in due time no doubt be introduced to another generation of the respected house of Merops. ELIZA BRIGHTWEN.



BETTER THINGS.

By ELLA C. KNIGHT (*Une de Vos Filles*).

“I will do better unto you than at your beginnings.”—Ezek. xxxvi. 11.

“BETTER than at your beginnings!”

Lord, to us this word fulfil.
In the past how great Thy goodness!
Yet we look for greater still.
For we know that boundless mercy
Thou for us hast kept in store,
And Thy former loving kindness
Only bids us long for more.

We have tasted Thou art gracious—
Grant us, Lord, to feast on Thee.
Satisfy our soul's sore hunger
With Thy love, so rich and free.
Gladdened thus in growing measure,
May Thy deepening joy impart
Fuller strength henceforth to serve Thee
With a more devoted heart.

Thou hast but begun to show us
Glimpses of Thy mighty power;
Scattered drops of blessing tell us
Thou wilt send the promised shower.
Light has dawned upon our darkness,
Chasing doubt and fear away—
Earnest of increasing brightness
Till the coming “perfect day.”

Then, when faith is changed to vision,
And we see Thee face to face,
Everlasting joy our portion,
Glory crowning all Thy grace,
This shall be our glad confession,
While before Thy throne we bow—
“Though Thy gifts on earth were precious,
Thou hast kept the best till now!”



RICH AND POOR RELATIONS.

A PERSON who desires to be nameless supplies the following as a poor relation's favourite proverbs: Poor folk fare best; Poor folk are glad of pottage; Poor folk must say Thankye for a little; Poor men's tables are soon spread; Poor men have no souls.

Those proverbs are none of them pleasant at first hearing, and by the process of much iteration become, one and all of them, so exceedingly unpleasant that there is many a rich

person living who, if money could procure their erasure from the tables of human speech, would willingly lay out a large sum. A short temper is the usual accompaniment of a long purse, and it is as taxing their patience rather than as taxing their munificence that the poor relation is peculiarly afflictive to rich relations of the average type.

This being so, the principal charge usually urged against poor relations, that they are borrowers, is a charge to which

am always happy to render you any service. Your father has been at the cemetery as you thought," he added in a lower tone. "I met him coming back."

Margaret looked at him with startled eyes; but he went on in a dry, business-like manner, glancing at her father, not at her—"I should recommend you to give your father something to eat and a warm drink. Persuade him to go to bed as soon as possible. Should he appear at all indisposed in the morning, send for me." Had he been speaking to a perfect stranger his tone could not have been more coolly indifferent. "Good night, Miss Hetherton," he went on.

"Good night, Dr. Milworth," she answered with equal coldness.

He bade her father a friendly good night, and was gone. Margaret stood an instant like one in a dream. Then she went quietly to the kitchen and prepared some supper for her father. When all was ready, she carried it to the parlour on a tray.

"Come, father dear," she said gently—"come and eat something; see what a nice supper I have made ready for you."

There was no answer. Margaret went to him and took his hand.

"I am not hungry, Margaret."

"Take a drink of tea first, then you will feel better."

She brought the cup to him, but he motioned her away. Margaret put the cup down.

"Oh, father, how cruel you are!" she sighed. She sat down on the hearth-rug beside him and laid her head on his knee, crying softly. Her burden seemed at this moment of mental and physical exhaustion more than she could bear.

Presently her father passed his hand caressingly over her face; her tears wetted his fingers.

"Margaret," he said in a tone of distress, "you are crying—why?"

Hitherto she had never given way to tears before him.

"You are unkind, father. You are not being good to us. What do you think mother would say to you? You will neither eat, nor sleep, nor rest. Do you want to die and leave us all alone? It's not worthy of you, father," she went on bitterly. "Death is such an easy solution to one's difficulties—it's like copying the answer to a problem without taking the trouble to work it. Oh, you wicked father," she wound up half-playfully, wiping her wet eyes on his cheek, "why can't you be good and kind as you used to be?"

Mr. Hetherton looked at his daughter wonderingly, rather as though he had just waked up from a dream. Then he rose to his feet, walked once or twice up and down the room, Margaret watching him. Presently he sat down at the table and ate. Margaret sat beside him, but he never spoke to her.

"I am going to bed now, Margaret," he said when he had finished.

"That's right, father dear, good night. Are you vexed with me?" she asked as she kissed him. He took her face between his hands and looked into her eyes. Then he returned the kiss gently.

"You are a good girl, Margaret," he answered absently. "Good night, dear."

When he had closed the door behind him, Margaret sat down by the fire and wept bitterly.

(To be continued.)



"TIMMA."

BY FREDERICK J. CROWEST.

THIS is the picture of a cat—a most respectable member of the society in which it moves. It is by no means a terror by night and a thief by day, as, it will not be denied, some feline characters are; on the contrary, its virtues are many, and its faults few; indeed, in the eyes of its admiring owner it is faultless. The writer first made its acquaintance at the studio of her owner, a charming flower-painter; but, not being very enthusiastic about that particular region of natural history, to which it may, without irreverence, I hope, be said to belong, our first impressions were, possibly, somewhat mutually indifferent. Yet this particular beauty does stand out among its order. I am assured it does—not so much physically as intellectually. Thus, for instance, it has accomplished great things, and it is of these deeds, heroic and otherwise, that I shall narrate.

An attentive hall porter, or "receptionist," is not to be lightly regarded in this age of quite unnecessary brusqueness

and, sometimes, downright discourtesy. No sooner does one get on to the landing and "rat-tat" the studio knocker than this understanding creature is there. It does not actually open the door, though I very nearly believe that if locksmiths placed latches a few inches lower down, dilatory servants might be dispensed with, to this extent, at any rate. The quality that has impressed me more than any other in this cat is its perceptive faculty. It knows. It is perfectly conscious of the extraordinary labyrinth of circuitous routes adorning its kind owner's flat, and its whole mind is evidently set upon relieving each new visitor, as far as possible, of the task of trending his or her way along these many winding paths. This it does to perfection, eventually landing one in the presence of its busy mistress at her ease. Here then, obviously, is the "whole matter" of its wonderful promptness in "answering the door," as we are accustomed, stupidly, to say.

"'Timmer' was brought to me," her mistress tells me,

"seven years ago—a tiny, all black kitten, wearing a red ribbon. Accompanying the pretty bundle was the following message, 'If I did not think her beautiful enough to love, she was to be returned.' Her long coat, with not a white hair, her ruff, all other points perfect save one—the disgrace of a white palate to her mouth—I felt she was just the kitten I wanted. Now, after seven years of close friendship, she is an honoured inmate of our studio-flat.

"She early displayed a love of society, and accompanied me on my shopping excursions to Oxford Street and Regent Street, by 'underground' rail or omnibus with perfect *sang-froid*. Tucking her paws in on my arm, she would watch the people and traffic with evident interest. It was when we began our purchases that an aspect of her temperament used to create a little but quite needless alarm. When the tying-up of the parcel commenced, the salesman was occasionally startled by a sudden spring and the landing upon him of 'Timma,' making wild endeavours to get inside the brown-paper parcel.

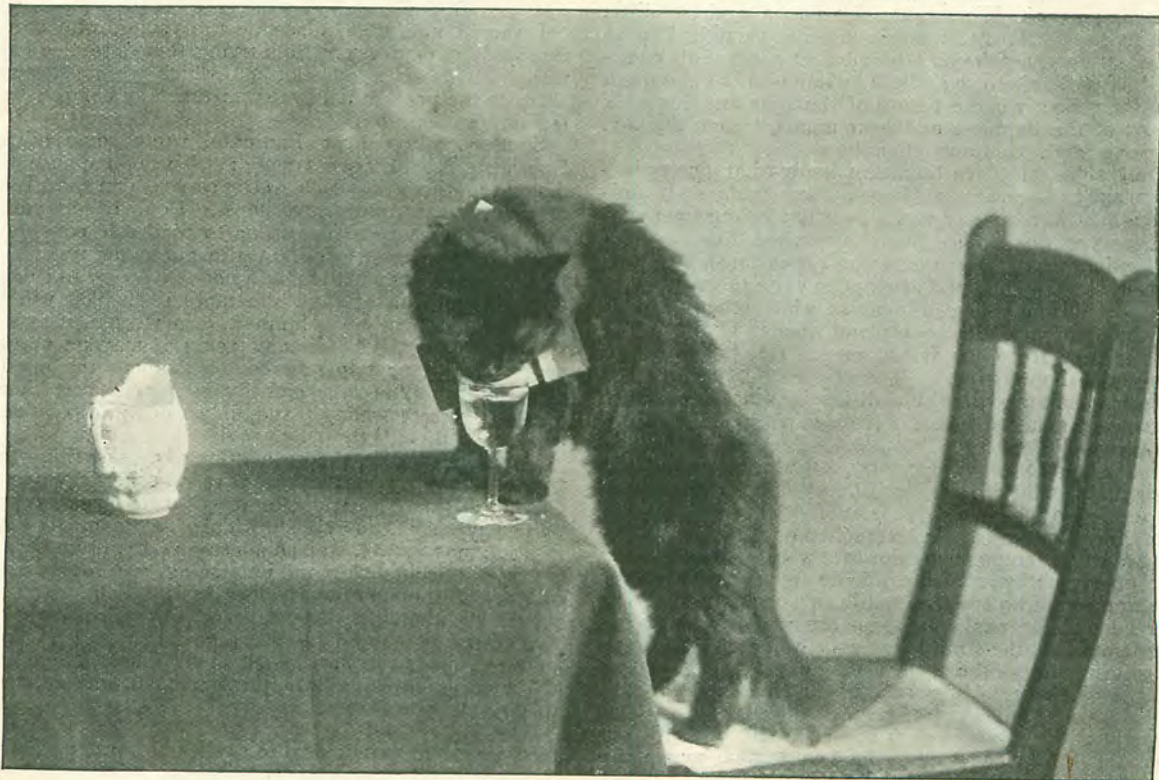
"'Timma' rarely ever leaves me. She accompanied me on my sketching days once at Weybridge, where she was the admiration of young and old alike. In those happy days for cats when the Muzzling Order was in force, she used to follow me with bounding jumps across the common to my favourite garden, where she spent the day, returning with me at night to my rooms on foot, quite half a mile. 'Timma's' education has been carefully attended to. She politely shakes hands, lifting her paw high according to the fashion of her time. She has her own stool at the dinner-table, her neat wine-glass and saucer. Perfectly well aware as she is of the hours of our meals, it is pretty, indeed, to see her just before these times running from room to room heralding the approach of dinner or luncheon. Begging on her part has been strictly tabooed. She must not do that, and never does, but waits her turn to be helped. Between her courses she tucks her front paws in on the ledge of the dinner-table, and if her glass is not filled, she will touch the handle of the glass water-jug gently to remind us of her want. One Christmas Day she dined out

at Clifton, and behaved herself as admirably as every pretty *débutante* of seven should. She went through all the courses, from soup to pineapple; but seeing the butler solemnly proceed to change her plate, protestation became necessary.

"'Timma' has served her Queen and country. During the war-time recently, she collected for the 'A. M. B.' Fund the sum of ten shillings—sitting at the door of our flat in Pembridge Crescent with a tiny box round her neck. The tradespeople, and all who went in and out, gave to 'Timma,' who would come upstairs when the weight of coppers was more than she could bear. When the cares of motherhood came on her, she lost her taste for society; but she remains the faithful friend of her mistress, following her from room to room, and watching for her when out.

"It was imperative that she should be photographed, and she enjoyed the experience immensely, taking quite an interest in the photographer's studio. But, dear friend, I could never exhaust all her good qualities and cleverness. Young people particularly cannot know too well how much pleasure can be derived from pets if they treat them with consideration. Cats above all are responsive to a gentle hand, and will repay by great devotion."

Here this little biography was to have ended; but, alas! "Timma" has got into trouble. The serious illness of a relative called its kind owner and her husband to Dublin. "Timma" was left at the studio in good hands, yet would not be comforted. At every opportunity she flew to the window, marvelling greatly in her loneliness. Unhappily she made one excursion too many, and came to grief. "What will you say," Mrs. Miller writes me, "when you hear that 'Timma,' my pet, in search of me, jumped out of the window—some fifty feet. We are nursing her back to life, but she is very much hurt." Yes—with one leg in splints, and little more than a parcel of skin and bones, she is verily a wreck of her former self. Albeit, she should recover and once more sit upright at dinner-table; for loving attention and the best surgical skill are such wondrous factors in restoring health and strength, even if the patient be merely a poor black cat.



TIMMA—A STUDY.

[Photo by Miss Edmonds.]