



PUGNACITY.

Small Dog: "Let me get at him!"

OUR PETS.

RATS, MICE, AND SQUIRRELS: HOW TO KEEP AND TREAT THEM.



I AM going to treat in this paper of cage quadrupeds! And by cage quadrupeds I do not mean you to understand wild beasts, in their iron-girded dens, but animals of farless dangerous propensities. They are harmless, and just as amusing as they are

gentle, and loving, and docile; for in this paper I shall treat only of *rats* and *mice* and *squirrels*.

The best kind of rats to keep for amusement are, in my opinion, the white or the piebald, and I like the white better, though I am inclined to the belief that the piebald are the more clever of the two. However, this may be a mere matter of taste, although very few would for a moment think of taming the great brown or black rat.

Very different from this last in all its ways and habits is my elegant friend and favourite the white rat, but before describing the little animal to you, and showing you how to choose a good pair, let me tell you what kind of a house to provide for him, and how to feed him and bed him, for it is very unfair to invite even so humble a guest as a white rat to your house, without first having prepared his bed and board, and seen to all his little comforts.

He lives in a cage, and this may be of any shape you please, providing it is roomy, and that it should always be. I myself like a large square cage, with

a front tower to it as high again as the little domicile. There should be a wooden pole or spiral staircase running from the bottom to the top of the tower, out through, and projecting upwards like a flagstaff, and you will find that your little rodent, when he gets tame enough, will often want to climb up here and have a look around, just by way of seeing what the world is doing. Inquisitiveness, indeed, is one of the traits of a rat's character. Every portion of the rodential residence which happens to be of wood ought to be protected with sheet tin, for rats can be very busy with their little teeth when they choose. Attached to one end of the cage should be a roomy box, with a hole through it for the rat to enter. The box must have a lid or a doorway for cleaning it out, but be otherwise a dark room. This is the rat's retiring apartment and sleeping berth, and it should be lined with nice soft, dry straw, with which the occupant will form a nest and bury himself quite up when he sleeps.

The dishes he requires are hung in the inside of the cage, near perches, where they can be easily reached but still kept clean. There should be a water-dish, a dish for a drop of nice milk, and one for the food.

There ought to be a drawer in the bottom of the cage, that it may be cleaned out, and kept nice and sweet, the bottom of the cage or drawer should also be lined with dry oat straw, and to facilitate its being changed the cage door ought to be large enough to admit your hand. If you allow the rat to have the additional luxury of a walk on the roof of its domicile, that roof had better be of wood, so

as to give your favourite a fair foothold, and there should be a way of access to it, a little door in the tower for instance.

Pet rats are never particular as to the kind of their diet; they are not gluttons, and sleep a good deal. Remember, however, that, strictly speaking, they ought to be vegetarians to a great extent, for too much animal food keeps them from thriving. Let one dish be kept always about half full of nice bread and sweet milk, or now and then, by way of change, rice or sago pudding; you may give a little meat now and then, or better still, a bone to pick. They also like a crust of bread, or dry grain, and nuts, which must be shelled for them. Fruit they should partake of but sparingly, and the same may be said of green food and garden stuffs. You see, then, they are not epicurean in their tastes, but bear in mind that if you wish to prevent your pets dying off, you must never let their food be stale; they should have clean water every morning, and no kind of animal or vegetable matter should be left to decay or turn sour in the bottom of the cage.

Cleanliness is most essential to their well-being. Clean dry straw every second day, and a thorough clean cage and dishes. After cleaning the cage you may sprinkle a little sanitary powder—a very little does—in the bottom.

Having thus provided for the comfort of the coming guest you may go and bring him home. You will find rats at bird shops, and at those wonderful emporiums of live stock to be found in various parts of London. You need take neither a very long purse nor scrip with you. A cheque upon your banker for the sum of eighteen pennies sterling should procure you as fine a pair of rats as ever were seen, and a little cage to carry them home in will cost you twopence more.

The fur of a well-bred rat should be long and soft as silk, pure white, with just a sable-like shade of delicate yellow. The eyes are like garnets, and large and protruding, whiskers well developed, hands long and lean and pink, with white nails. The body should be long, not stumpy, and—this is an important point—the tail should be very long and tapering.

Now take your pets home, turn them with your own hand into the cage, and if you feed and care for them, I feel sure they will soon be great favourites, and cause you to shed many a tear—from laughing.

By-and-by, perhaps, little ones will come—such dear little funny little frolicsome mites you never saw in your life. It will be unnecessary to destroy these, for if they are well-bred and long-tailed, you will readily be able to find

a market for them by advertising them in some cheap medium, or having seen yours and laughed at the fun, it would be still more funny if you could not manage to make presents of the little ones to your young friends.

I should add that there is no unpleasant smell from well-kept rats, mice, or squirrels.

Fancy mice are of many different colours—pure white, greyish, plum-coloured, or lavender, and variegated. Among the latter we find brown and white, black and white, plum and white, tortoise-shell, and mice of any of these three colours in combination.

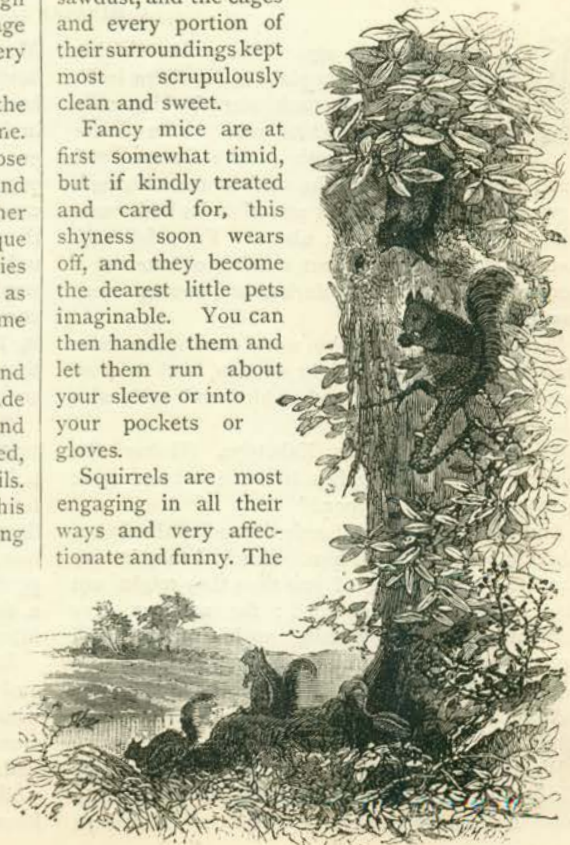
You will get cages for these pets at the shops, and I think I do well to advise you not to get a too large or roomy domicile, for mice are apt to catch cold. Each cage must, of course, have its retiring or breeding room.

In addition to bread-and-milk, mice should have now and then canary seed (not hemp), millet, oatmeal, &c., but no fattening seeds of any description, and no strong meats or vegetables should be given them.

The bottoms of the cages should be covered with sawdust, and the cages and every portion of their surroundings kept most scrupulously clean and sweet.

Fancy mice are at first somewhat timid, but if kindly treated and cared for, this shyness soon wears off, and they become the dearest little pets imaginable. You can then handle them and let them run about your sleeve or into your pockets or gloves.

Squirrels are most engaging in all their ways and very affectionate and funny. The



ordinary cage is rather small, otherwise it is complete enough, but it ought to have a branch of a tree in it fantastically arranged for the little inmates to caper about on.

The food of squirrels should be principally nuts, any kind, and often changed. Give them beech-nuts, walnuts, hazel-nuts, acorns, and almonds, in addition to their ordinary food—bread-and-milk. They also enjoy every kind of ripe fruit you can give them. They too, like rats and mice, should be kept very clean.

When speaking of rats and mice, I omitted to mention that they ought to have a good supply of cotton-wool in the breeding season to line their nests withal, and a portion of nice dry moss will likewise be considered a treat at the same time. I did not mention the rotatory cages so commonly used. I mention them now, only to condemn them; they are very cruel.

Treat your caged quadrupeds, then, with care and kindness, and without being timid with them, never be rough or harsh. *Amor vincit omnia.*



THE EMPEROR AND THE CHILD.

A HINDOO STORY.

MANY years ago, the sun was shining over the great plain of Northern India when a tall, dark, stern-looking man in a long white robe came slowly along the bank of the Ganges, and stood looking down into the dark water with such a grave, earnest face that it was plain he had something very serious to think about. For a full half-hour he stood there without moving or uttering a word, while his face grew darker and sterner every moment.

Two or three men who were coming up from drawing water caught sight of him, and as they passed one of them pointed at him, and said, with a laugh—

“See, there’s Gohur Kshetriya (Gohur the soldier) waiting for the fish to come out and cook themselves for his supper!”

And then they all laughed and walked on, thinking no more about him. But had they known what he was thinking of just then they might not have laughed quite so loud; for at that very moment Gohur was making up his mind to kill a man, and that man was the Emperor Baber, who reigned over the whole of that country.

And what harm had the Emperor Baber ever done to *him*? you will ask.

Well, in the first place, Baber was not a native Hindoo at all, but had come with a great army from a country away beyond the Himalaya

Mountains, and had conquered India. Then, having conquered it, he made very strict laws to keep it in order, punishing severely any one who broke them; so that, although he was really a very good man, and a very kind one, there were many people who hated him bitterly, and thought him cruel and unjust. So Gohur made up his mind that as the emperor seemed to be making the people unhappy the emperor ought to die, and that *he* would be the man to kill him. He knew well enough that he would be killed himself for doing it, but that did not frighten him a bit; for he thought he was doing right, although, as we shall see presently, he found himself mistaken there.

Now, to meet with the emperor was no difficult matter, for instead of shutting himself up in his palace, like most other kings of that day, he was fond of going about into all parts of the town, dressed in rough clothes like a workman, to see how his orders were obeyed, and whether his people were well or ill-treated. So Gohur hid a short sword under his robe, and away he went into the city.

But when he got there he found such an uproar and confusion as he had never seen in his life. The whole air was filled with flying dust, amid which a crowd of men, women, and children were running and screaming as if frightened out of their wits, while every now and then came a crash, as if a house had fallen or a great tree been torn up by