

Animal Actualities.

NOTE.—These articles consist of a series of perfectly authentic anecdotes of animal life, illustrated by Mr. J. A. Shepherd, an artist long a favourite with readers of THE STRAND MAGAZINE. We shall be glad to receive similar anecdotes, fully authenticated by names of witnesses, for use in future numbers. While the stories themselves will be matters of fact, it must be understood that the artist will treat the subject with freedom and fancy, more with a view to an amusing commentary than to a mere representation of the occurrence.

IX.



THIS is a tale of true love that no social distinctions could hinder; of a love that persisted in spite of misfortune, disfigurement, and poverty; of a love that ruled not merely the camp, the court, and the grove, but the back garden also: of a love that (as Mr. Seaman sings) "was strong love, strong as a

big barn-door"; of a love that, no doubt, would have laughed at locksmiths had the cachinnation been necessary; that, in short, was the only genuine article, with the proper trade-mark on the label.

"Pussy" was the name of a magnificent Persian cat—a princess among cats, greatly sought by the feline nobility of the neigh-



MANY SUITORS.

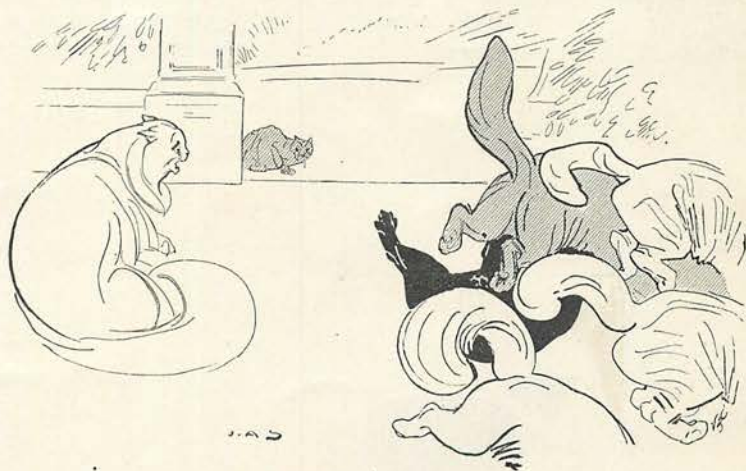


BOWING THEIR RESPECTS.

bourhood. She was the sort of cat that no merely individual name would be good enough for; her magnificence soared above all such smallnesses, and, as she was *the* ideal cat, combining all the glories and all the beauties of cat-hood in herself, she was called, simply and comprehensively, "Pussy." She condescended to reside at the house, and at the expense, of Mr. Thomas C. Johnson, of The Firs, Alford, Lincolnshire, and all the most aristocratic Toms of the vicinity were suitors for the paw of this princess. Blue Persians, buff Persians, Manx cats, Angora cats—all were her devoted slaves, and it was generally expected that she would make a brilliant match. She had a house (or palace) of her own at the back of Mr. Johnson's. Here were her bed, her larder—an elegant shelf supporting her wire meat safe, and her special knife and fork—for her meat must be cut up for her—and her plate and saucer. And here, by the door, many suitors waited to bow their respects as she came forth to take the air. But Pussy, who trod the earth as though the planet were far too common for her use,

turned up her nose at the noble throng, and dismissed them with effective and sudden language, conjectured to be a very vigorous dialect of Persian.

Then came, meekly crawling and limping to her door, one Lamech, a cat of low degree and no particular breed. His only claim to distinction of any sort was that he



VERY VIGOROUS PERSIAN.

had lost a leg—perhaps in a weasel-trap. He was ill-fed, bony, and altogether disreputable; his ears were sore, and his coat unkempt. He came not as a suitor, but as a beggar, craving any odd scraps that the princess might have no use for. So low was he esteemed, indeed, that nobody called him Lamech, his proper name, and he was

familiarly and contemptuously known as "Three-legged Tommy." When the princess's human friends saw Three-legged Tommy hanging about, they regarded him as a

his regalement. There was intense commotion among the scorned feline nobility. Three-legged Tommy was actually admitted into that sacred palace, from the portals of

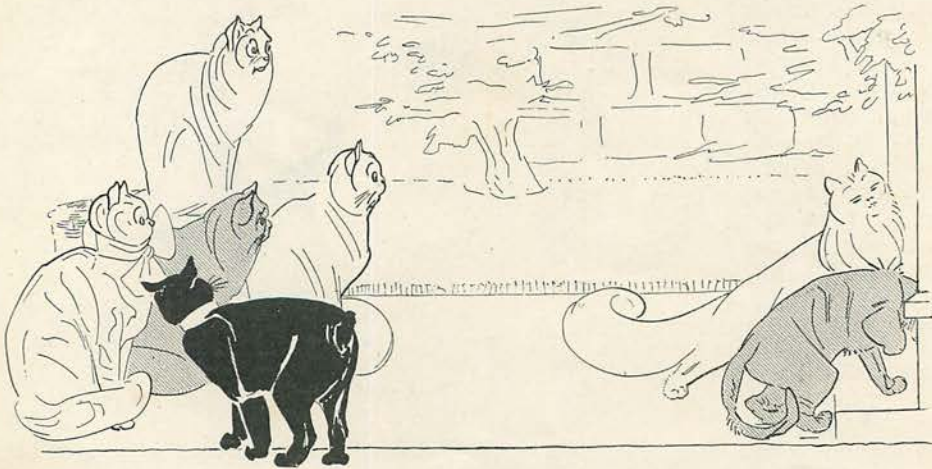


COMMOTION AMONG THE NOBILITY.

nuisance and a probable offence in the sight of the princess. Wherefore they chased him mercilessly, tempering their severities, however, by flinging him scraps of food, as far out into the road as possible.

which the most distinguished cats in Alford had been driven away!

As for Three-legged Tommy himself, he grew not only more confident, but more knowing. He came regularly at meal times.



PASSING THE SACRED PORTAL.

But presently a surprising thing was observed. Pussy actually encouraged Three-legged Tommy! More, she fed him, and her last drop of new milk and her last and tenderest morsel of meat were reserved for

More, he grew fatter, and less ragged. The princess enjoyed her self-sacrifice for a time, but presently she set herself to get a double ration. Sharing her provisions was all very loving and all very well, but she began to

feel that there were advantages in a full meal ; and Three-legged Tommy, now grown much more respectable, though a hopeless plebeian still, distinctly gave her to understand that he could do with a bit more.

powerless to resist her, he would rise and follow.

Meat it was, of course. And when it was cut she would attack it with every appearance of ravenous hunger—till the master's



"THE FEAST IS SPREAD FOR THEE!"

Three-legged Tommy was the princess's first and only love, but next in her affections ranked Mr. Johnson. It was her habit to follow him about the house and garden, and to confide her troubles to him, sitting on his knee. But now she tried stratagem. Five or six times a day she would assail him with piteous mews, entreating caresses, beseeching eyes, and the most irresistibly captivating manners she could assume. "What can she want?" he would say. "She has not long been fed. Is it meat, old girl?" And,

back was turned. Then—"Come, my love, the feast is spread for thee!"

Out would limp Lamech from behind some near shrub, and Pussy would sit with supreme satisfaction and watch her spouse's enjoyment of the meal she had cajoled for him. And so Three-legged Tommy waxed fat and prospered, and the Beautiful Princess was faithful to him always. Miss Mary Johnson, who was so kind as to send us the story, calls Pussy "a devoted helpmeet." We trust she meant no pun.

