

Cat Farming in California

BY KATE A. HALL

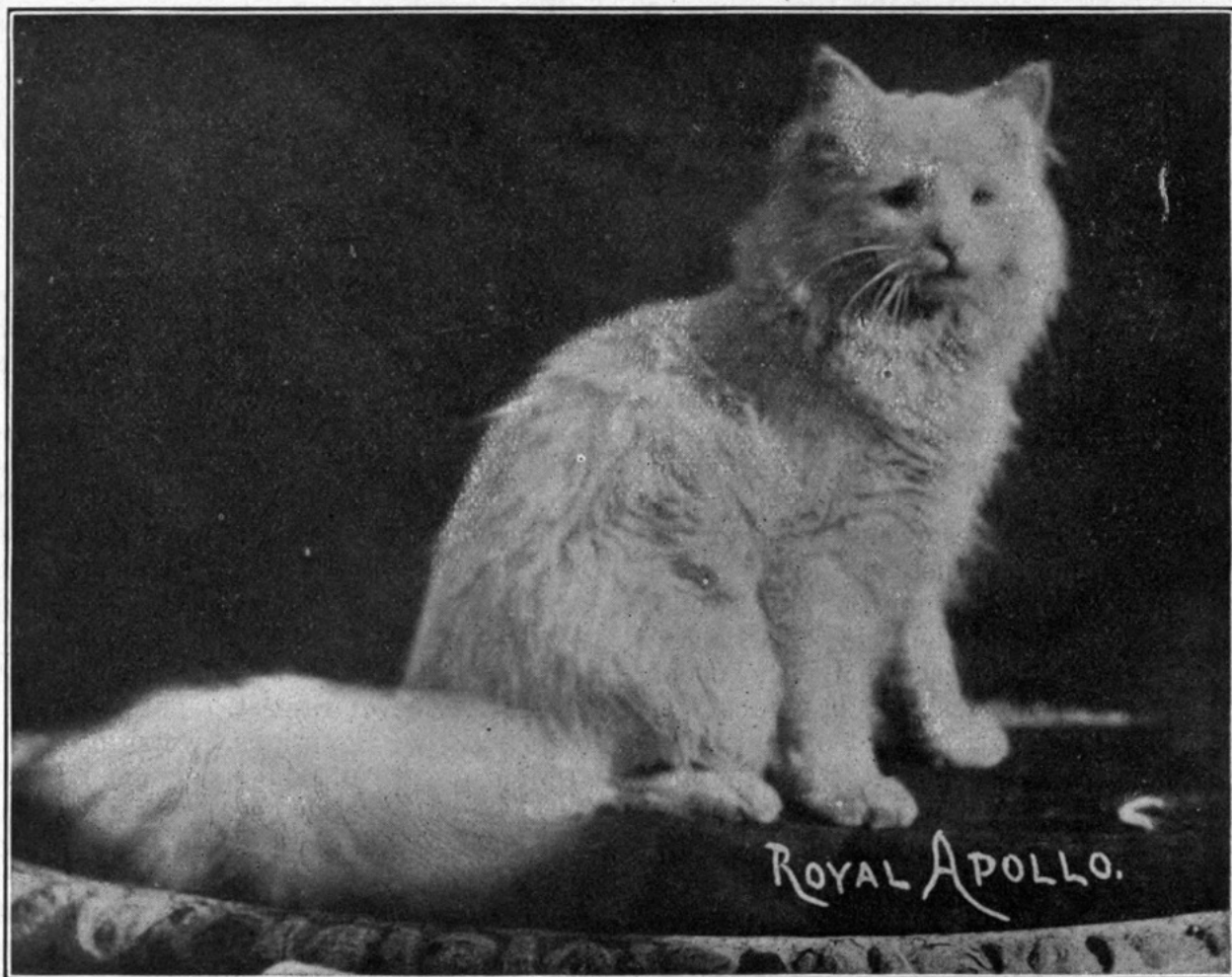
TO borrow a commandment from the witty Charles Dudley Warner: "Let us respect the cat!" for that gentle, insinuating, soft-coated creature has, within the memory of the present generation from the servile condition of a back-alley feline sustaining his nine lives on ancient bones or subsisting on the charity of quiet spinsters, to the proud rank of a zealously guarded pet whose value is reckoned at the price of a modest home. From being regarded as a hoodoo and kicked off the rear porch, the cat has come to be the cherished pet of kings, one of whom, the sovereign of Great Britain, recently purchased a prize beauty for the modest sum of three thousand five hundred dollars. Royal Norton, whose fame reaches to the bounds of the world, has a recognized value of two thousand dollars, and many Californians, in whose State the cat farm is now proving worthy of

mention among leading industries, have paid the sum of one hundred dollars for a fine Angora or Persian puss within the last year.

It was in 1871 that the cat, after centuries of dishonor, came again into his own, for it was in that year that the first exhibition of domestic cats was held in the Crystal Palace in London. Not since the ancient Egyptians deified the cat along with the crocodile, the bull and the asp, had the *felis vulgaris* been accorded so great a degree of respect. The Persians, following the Egyptians, worshiped the purring creatures, and tradition has it that a persian army once went to battle against the Egyptians with cats before them in place of shields, whereupon the enemy became so struck with terror that there was a precipitate retreat. But the Greeks and the Romans had little respect for cats, and the nations that flourished



Corner in parlors of Mrs. Leland Morton's Chicago home.



Royal Apollo.

after the barbaric hordes descended upon decaying Rome did not elevate them in general respect.

The introduction of the long-haired cats from Persia and Angora is responsible for the first great impetus in cat culture, while the insistent law of evolution has improved the original stock brought across the water to a degree that has rapidly increased their value. Growing appreciation of the foreigner's superior points has stimulated the market to an appreciable extent, and the advantages for cat farming offered by the equable temperature and abundant sunshine of California has made the cat-raising industry particularly attractive in this State.

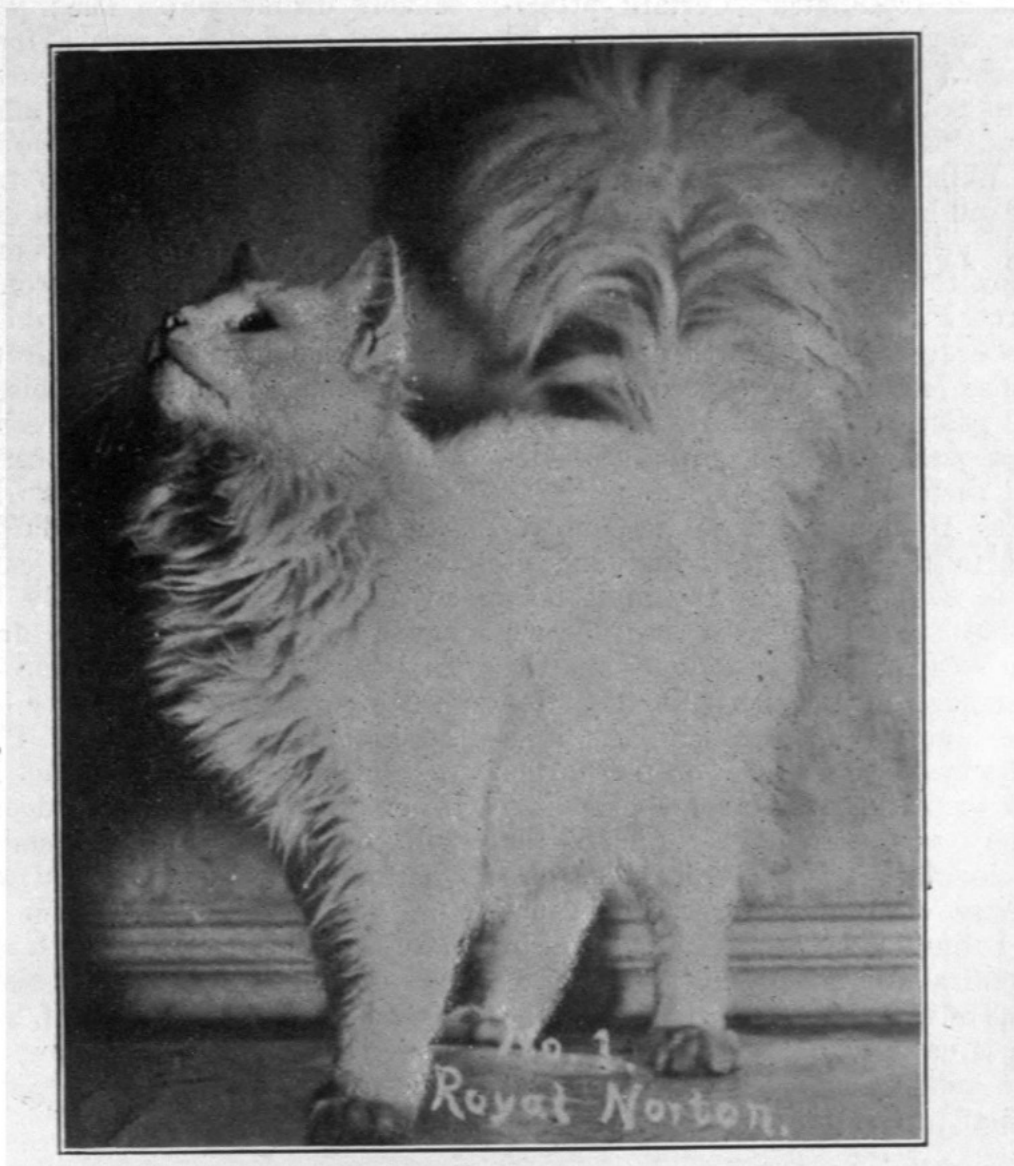
America's interest in the marketable cat originated in Chicago, where Mrs. Leland Norton, owner of the famous Royal Norton, the prize-winner of the world, established kennels adjoining her fashionable Drexel Boulevard home not many years ago. Mrs. Norton secured two fine imported animals as household pets some

years ago, and several years later decided to give some attention to cat-raising as an industry. The long-haired cat was then so rare in America that he was a curiosity, and distinguished personages from every profession, captains of industry and politicians, found a visit to the Drexel Kennels well worth their while. In time, the cat fanciers of the Lake City planned a cat show, which was quite as fashionable at that time as the horse show is today. The avenue turned out to view the fluffy pets, and the alley spared some of its circus money for the same purpose. The aristocracy of cats had been established. *Felis vulgaris*, in the parlance of the society editor, was no longer a "climber." He had "arrived."

Mrs. Norton was naturally chosen the first president of the Chicago Cat Club, mother of the hundreds of cat clubs which now flourish in America, and she remained its president for several seasons. Upon removing to California a few winters ago, she brought Royal Norton and a small family of pedigreed cats, and the

California cat farm was brought to the attention of the wide world. All over the Golden State there are now maintained interesting, curious and profitable cat farms, and the California pussy is shipped from the Coast to the Far East, and even across the ocean. The cat show has become commoner than the time-honored chicken show of the county fair, and the long-haired Angora or Persian, with high

It was at first regretted by catterers that the long-haired cat had attained a popularity greater than his brother, for the latter is rather delicate, and quite often is defective in sight or hearing. It was thought, therefore, that the purchasers of cats would be chary of paying fancy prices for stock that might live but a short time unless given the most watchful care. But such was not the case. The



Royal Norton, the most famous cat in two continents, valued at \$2,000.

ruff and a tail often sixteen inches across is king. At the annual cat show may be found, besides the usual Persians and Angoras, the odd Manx or tailless cat, cross-eyed cats, odd-eyed cats, civet cats, tamed wild cats, Mexican cats, Japanese cats, and Siamese cats, the last-named having a short coat and a tail which has a striking black tip.

cat market improved steadily, and a man with well-filled pockets hesitates no longer about paying the price of a fine Angora than he does about taking a little flyer in stocks or putting his pocket money on the favorite horse. A Los Angeles woman purchased a fine white Persian cat a short time ago for eighty dollars. The day after the cat arrived, it reached out its paw for

forbidden things, whereupon the owner boxed its ears in mild reproof. But Master Cat was high-spirited and resented the insult. He made a precipitate exit by way of the open front door, and has not been seen since in that neighborhood.

Probably the most celebrated cat in history was Miss Frances Willard's "Toots." "Toots" was not his name in the beginning, for he was early christened "Gladstone." But that was before the great Englishman repudiated "Certain principles dear to the heart of the great temperance leader." When the "grand old man" fell from grace in the eyes of the white-ribboners, "Gladstone Willard" became "Toots Willard," and a veil was drawn over the sad history of his change of name. "Toots" picture was sold all over the world for the benefit of the temperance cause, and it hangs in the humble cottager's abode even as far north as Iceland, and it also hangs beside storied canvasses in ducal palaces. "Toots" was white, and he had a passion for the perfume of violets and carnations.

Charles Dudley Warner's pet cat responded to the name "Calvin," and of Calvin he said: "He has the most irreproachable morals I ever saw thrown away on a cat." He further adds that he "understands pretty much everything except the binomial theorem and the time down the cycloidal arc." Continuing, he says: "I wish I knew as much about natural history as Calvin does, for he is the closest observer I ever saw, and there are few species of animals he has not analyzed. I think he has, to use a euphemism very applicable to him, got outside of every one of them except the toad. To the toad he is entirely indifferent, but I presume he knows the toad is the most useful animal in the garden. His habits of

observation have given him a trained mind and made him philosophical."

Agnes Repelier once consented to be interviewed on a subject which led her to make the following observations on the character of the cat:

"One has to live up to esteem of one's cats—the creatures are so discriminating. A master can always win a dog's affections, but cats are different. You may own a cat and it may frankly and unmistakably dislike you. The person who feeds it cannot win regard for kind offices, for feeding makes no earthly difference to a cat. Cats have affection, but they discriminate in its bestowal. I think it needs a Frenchwoman to fully appreciate the airs and graces of a cat's nature. The idea that cats like places and not people is responsible for a lot of cruelty to numberless pussies. Cats do not mind leaving their own domains, providing they are not made to encounter noise and rudeness. Cats are extremely sensitive and dislike loud voices and bustling ways. They love repose, calmness and grace. One feels so immensely flattered when chosen by a discriminating cat, for it is an affection which can only be won by merit, and never bought. A dog will love any wreck of humanity who chances to own him, but one needs to be self-respecting to earn the love of a cat. Pussies show their regard in such dignified little ways. When you open the hall door your cat will come half way down stairs to meet you, and will then turn and walk up before you with tail erect, and you feel as heartily welcome as though a dog had jumped all over you and knocked your hat off in the exuberance of his greeting. You notice cats never follow, never even walk by your side—they precede by a sort of divine right."

