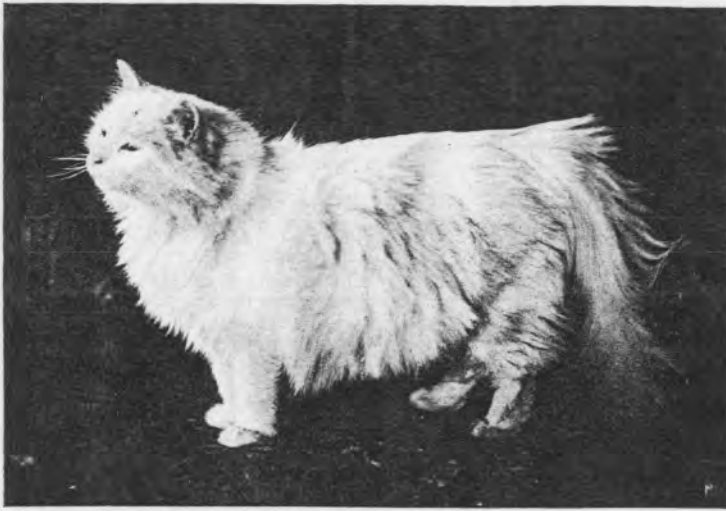


CHAPTER X.

WHITE PERSIANS.

A GREAT change has taken place of late years in the quantity and quality of these beautiful cats, for whereas formerly blue eyes were considered quite a rarity, now it is seldom we see any yellow-eyed white cats exhibited at our principal shows. The most perfect type of a white Persian is assuredly

with human beings, they are extremely fiery with their fellows. There are two points peculiar to white cats—they are frequently stone deaf, and they very often have odd-coloured eyes. Certainly the deafness is a drawback, and in selecting a white cat care should be taken to ascertain if the



"JUNGFRAU," SIRE AND GRANDSIRE OF MANY AMERICAN WINNERS.

(Photo: W. F. Arnold, Oak Park, Ill.)

to be found amongst the imported cats; there is a certain beauty of form and silkiness of fur which is not possessed by the specimens bred in this country. They are also generally distinguished by unusually long coats, round heads, tiny ears, and wonderful toe tufts.

One of the most lovely white imported cats was exhibited by Lady Marcus Beresford at the Westminster Cat Club Show in 1900. The best judges declared that there was not a fault to find with "Nourmahal," but her career was a short one. These imported cats are often of a rather savage disposition, and, although they can be sweet-tempered enough

specimen is possessed of sound hearing. Needless to say, there are many ways of arriving at the solution of what is really a mysterious dispensation of Providence, for why should one particular breed of the feline race be so constantly minus this useful sense? Then, again, as regards the quaint arrangement of different-coloured eyes. One might not be so surprised if the eyes of white cats were sometimes pink, for their noses are pink, and the cushions of their feet, and, as in human beings, we might expect to have albinos amongst cats, namely white with pink eyes; but Harrison Weir states he has never seen pink-

eyed whites, although it has been asserted that they exist. This peculiarity, however, of odd eyes seems only to be found in white cats, the two colours being blue and yellow. Occasionally white cats have wonderful sea-green eyes; and, although these are decidedly very uncommon, no colour is so completely in accord with the purity of the coat as eyes of heavenly blue. The tone should be not so much of a sapphire as of the deep forget-me-not blue. One of the drawbacks to white Persians is the difficulty of keeping them in spotlessly clean condition. This is absolutely impossible if they are living in or near a town, and certainly a white cat soiled is a white cat spoiled.

As regards the mating of blue-eyed white cats, I have been told by experienced breeders of this variety that kittens with blue eyes are just as frequently bred from odd-eyed parents, or, at least, when one of the parents has different-coloured eyes. It is easy to tell whether the baby blue eyes are likely to retain their colour or turn yellow. If at about three weeks or a month old the blue becomes tinted with green, then surely but sadly may we make up our minds that these kittens have not a distinguished career before them, for they will see and be seen with yellow eyes. It is a pity to try mating white cats with any other variety, as broken-coloured cats will probably be the result. It frequently happens that white kittens, when quite young, have smudges of grey on their heads; these gradually disappear. In America white cats seem prime favourites, and the demand exceeds the supply for importation of white Persians with blue eyes. At the last Beresford Cat Club Show the entries in the white classes were very large. The classification included and provided for golden- and blue-eyed whites, and these were subdivided according to sex, and all the classes were well filled. Mrs. Clinton Locke's "Lord Gwynne" is a noted white stud cat on the other side of the water, as is also Mrs. Colbourn's "Paris."

The devotees of the white cat in our own country are not many in number. I may

mention Mrs. Finnie Young and Miss Hunt, who are perhaps the most successful breeders of whites in Scotland; and in the south we have Mrs. Pettit, whose tribe of blue-eyed whites I had recently the pleasure of seeing. No more lovely specimens could be imagined, and I counted more than a dozen long-coated, full-grown, bonnie blue-eyed beauties, walking about in the woods surrounding Mrs. Pettit's dwelling-place near St. Leonards-on-Sea. The illustration shows Mrs. Pettit surrounded by eight of her pretty white pussies. Mrs. Westlake, Mrs. Nott, Miss White Atkins, and Miss Kerswill are all successful and enthusiastic breeders of white Persians.

Several well-known fanciers keep one white cat amongst their flock. I may mention the Hon. Mrs. McLaren Morrison, the owner of "Musafer," a famous imported puss, and Lady Decies, the former possessor of "Powder Puff," who has recently been presented to H.H. Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein. There is always a keen demand for white kittens, either as pretty pets or, if with correct-coloured eyes, for breeding purposes, and, doubtless, when more encouragement is given to this beautiful variety, there will be an increase of fanciers of the white cat, whose praises have been sung in fairy tales, nursery rhymes,



MRS. MCLAREN'S WHITE PERSIAN "LADYSMITH."

(Photo: C. Reid Wishaw.)



MRS. PETTIT WITH HER WHITE PERSIANS.
(Photo: Cassell & Company, Limited.)

and by novelists who have a weakness for describing interiors with a beautiful white Persian cat reclining on the hearthrug.

I am indebted for the following notes on white Persians to Miss M. Hunt, whose beautiful white cat "Crystal" appeared on an earlier page, and by an unfortunate mistake was stated to be the property of Mrs. Finnie Young:—

"The blue-eyed white Persian is, I consider, one of the most interesting to breed, and, in my experience, no more delicate or difficult to rear than any other Persian.

"I have had them now for nearly four years, and, I think I may say, with a good deal of success. I bought 'Crystal' in 1898, when four months old, and she certainly has been a good investment. Out of the sixteen white kittens she has had, ten of them have been blue-eyed.

"The very best kitten I owned was never exhibited; he went to Mrs. Champion, who considered him the best and healthiest kitten for his age she had ever seen. Unfortunately, he died suddenly shortly after she had him. He was by Champion 'White Friar' *ex* 'Crystal,' and was one of the same litter as 'Jovial Menk,' which did so much winning for Miss Ward, who purchased him from me at the Crystal Palace, where he took first. 'Crystal' herself has only once been beaten by a white cat, and that had not even blue eyes; but she was in splendid coat, and 'Crystal' was quite out of coat. Most judges are agreed, I think, that 'Crystal' is the best blue-eyed white female in the country.

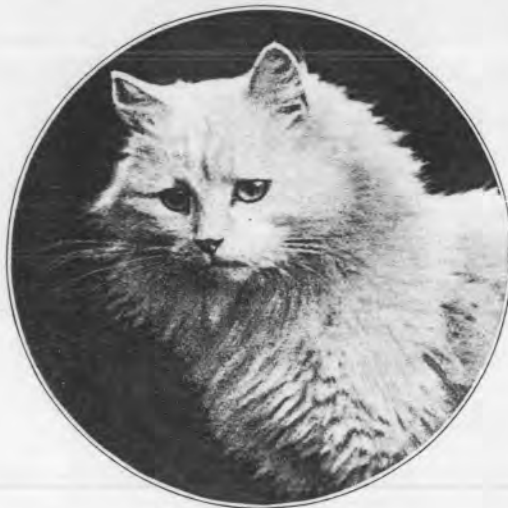
"The colour of the eyes of white kits can be told much earlier than in any other colour; some I can tell as soon as they are open, others I am not quite sure of till they are about a fortnight old. The eyes are generally bright blue from the beginning, without a shade of kitten grey in them. I do not think that both parents having blue eyes makes much difference to the number of blue-eyed kits in the litter. If one parent is blue-eyed and the other odd-eyed the result is often just as good. I know of a green-eyed queen which had a

litter of three by Champion 'White Friar'—all were blue-eyed.

"As to deafness, I cannot account for it at all, as it often appears, though both parents have perfect hearing.

"Since Mrs. Finnie Young and I purchased 'White Friar' in 1900, whites have become much more plentiful in Scotland, and the competition is now very keen indeed up North. 'White Friar' has had a very successful career since he came into our hands, both as sire and on the show bench, and can still hold his own against all comers. He has won sixteen first prizes since 1900, besides championships and numerous specials."

Mrs. Champion, whose name is well known in "catty" circles, and who has now left these shores for America, did a great deal to establish a thoroughly good strain of white blue-eyed Persians. Her celebrated "White Friar" (now in the possession of Mrs. Finnie Young and Miss Hunt) is justly considered the finest male specimen in the fancy. Certainly he could only have been beaten by his son "White Tsar," bred by Mrs. Champion from her "White Witch." This cat, which assuredly would have had a notable career, was sold by Mrs. Champion for £20 to Mrs. Colbourn, in America. He arrived in poor condition and died shortly afterwards. I remember seeing an absolutely perfect white Persian kitten at Mrs. Champion's. It was by "White Friar" *ex* "Crystal." He had startling deep blue eyes, tiny ears, and broad, round head, and at nine weeks old his coat measured nearly three inches across. Alas! though healthy and strong, this proved too perfect a specimen for this world, and "Crystal Friar" succumbed to the epidemic of gastritis then raging amongst our feline pets. Referring back to celebrated white Persian cats of the past, I well recollect the marvellous size and splendid coat of Mrs. Lee's "Masher," who took the cat world by storm when exhibited at the Crystal Palace in 1890. This enthusiastic fancier paid £21 for "Masher," whose show career was shortened by an accident. This cat was remarkable in those days, if only for his grand blue eyes.



"CRYSTAL."
THE PROPERTY OF MISS M. HUNT
(Photo: C. Reid, *Wishaw*.)

The well-known breeder and judge Mr. A. A. Clarke, whose name is more closely connected with blue Persians, once owned a famous female called "Miss Whitey." I remember that this really remarkable cat was exhibited in 1887 at the Crystal Palace, and again in the following year, when at four years old she took first prize and silver medal in a strong class of nine females. It seems to me that these cats, as I recollect them, appeared half as large again as the present-day champion winning whites; but whether this was in consequence of more profuse coat or a generally bigger build of animal I cannot at this distance of time pretend to determine.

Amongst the well-known prize-winners and stud white Persian cats of the present day I may mention Miss White Atkin's massive-limbed "White Knight," whose broad skull is especially remarkable in a show-pen, and commends itself to the notice of the judge. Miss Harper's "Blue-eyed Wanderer" has great quality and lovely texture of coat. He was in truth a wanderer in the streets of a London suburb, and, although labelled "breeder and pedigree unknown," he has almost always held his own in the white classes at our largest

shows. Mrs. Westlake, Mrs. Pettit, Mrs. Finnie, and Miss Hunt are all possessed of imported white cats, which have proved worthy ancestors of many prize-winning kittens. There have not been any very notable female white cats exhibited since the appearance of Lady Marcus Beresford's "Nourmahal," with the exception of Miss M. Hunt's "Crystal" and Mrs. Pettit's most lovely "Piquante Pearl," bred by her from her stud cat "King of the Pearls" and "Beautiful Pearl." This cat is as near perfection as possible, and has carried off highest honours whenever exhibited. Mrs. Pettit began breeding white Persians in 1896, and has kept faithful to this breed ever since. This enthusiastic breeder always accompanies her exhibits, and her precious Pearls are never seen at the smaller mixed shows. I have always heard that white kittens are difficult to rear, and Mrs. Pettit, who should be well qualified to give her testimony on this point, says: "Without a doubt blue-eyed white Persians are the most delicate cats in existence." A well-known authority on cats, writing to one of the cat papers, says: "What a change has taken place in our white classes, long- and short-haired! A few years ago white cats with green or yellow eyes frequently were prize-winners, and a blue-eyed white was looked upon as a rarity. Now blue eyes have it all their own way, and judges are becoming more and more exacting as to the depth of tone and quality of the blue tint. If we could obtain a white Persian with the glorious eye of the Siamese, it would be a treasure indeed."

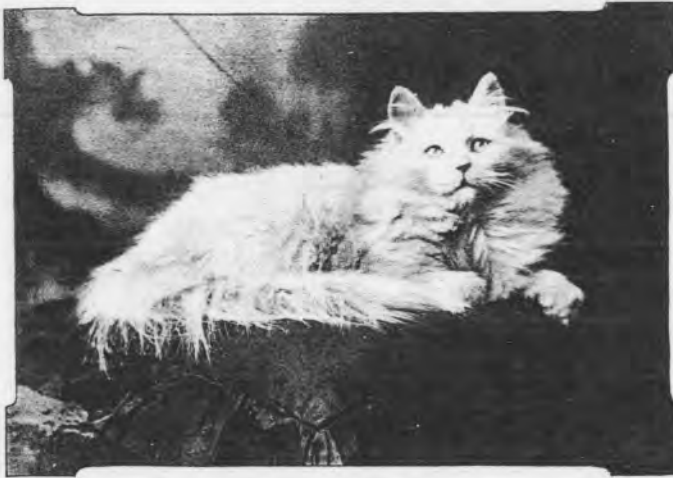
A gentleman who has lived for ten years in Assam says that he never saw in that part of India any long-haired cats except blue-eyed whites. He also gives an amusing account of the usual way of obtaining a cat of this variety for a pet. It is as follows:—"You give instructions to a native, who offers to procure you one at a certain price, but gives you no idea where or how he means to procure it. In about a week's time he appears with the cat and claims the money. Things progress favourably with your new possession for a time, but suddenly and unaccountably your puss

disappears. You are calling on some friend or acquaintance, and, to your surprise and astonishment, there on the armchair lies, curled up, your cat! "Thus it will be seen that the wily native makes a small income out of one cat, by stealing or enticing it away from the original purchaser and calmly re-selling it to one of the neighbours."

Mrs. Clinton Locke, the president of the Beresford Cat Club, has owned some beautiful white Persians which she has imported from time to time. This lady writes thus to *Our*

Mrs. Westlake, writing from Camden Town, says:—

"My acquaintance with white Persian cats began some years ago, when I imported a white female as a pet. I was so delighted with her that, although for a London resident white cats would seem the least desirable, I decided to import two blue-eyed whites for breeding purposes. It was a litter from these two cats that tempted me to take up exhibiting. This litter consisted of *all* blue-eyed kittens, the tone of the blue being exceptionally



"WHITE BUTTERFLY."
THE PROPERTY OF MISS WHITE ATKINS.
(Photo: E. E. Lippitt, Leamington.)

Cats:—"The first white Persian I ever owned was brought to me many years ago from Persia by a distinguished traveller, and its eyes were amber, showing that the white cats brought from their native land have not always blue eyes. The descendants of this cat, mated to both amber and blue eyed cats, have thrown blue eyes. Two odd-eyed cats have also given blue-eyed kittens; but a pair of blue-eyed cats has by no means always thrown blue eyes with every kitten in the litter."

One of our most persistent and consistent breeders and fanciers of white Persians is Mrs. Westlake, and therefore I am glad to be able to put forward a few of her experiences as to the peculiarities of the breed.

deep. Since then I have, of course, often had a different tale to tell, and odd-eyed kittens have sometimes predominated. This curious freak of nature connected with white cats seems unaccountable. The two colours are generally yellow and blue, but I have seen green and blue. I have also remarked on the very brilliant tone of the one blue eye.

"There is a popular belief that almost all blue-eyed cats are deaf. All I can say is that I have never had a blue-eyed white that was deaf. I have, however, often come across those that were stone deaf, and others with defective hearing. Again an unaccountable freak.

"White Persian cats have been declared

to be the most difficult to breed and delicate to rear. My opinion is that the delicacy is much more in their coats than their constitutions; that is, of course, in comparison with other foreign varieties, none of which are as hardy as the British.

"A few remarks as to the cleansing of white cats may be useful. As a dweller in London, I need scarcely say that unless I occasionally gave personal attention to my pussies they would not always be in the show condition that I would desire. Some fanciers



IMPORTED BLUE-EYED TOM, "MUSAFAER."
(Photo: V. R. Clarke, Thirsk.)

wash their white Persians, but I have come to the conclusion that this treatment tends to coarsen the soft silkiness of the fur; and therefore, for this reason, and also because there is a risk of cats catching cold, especially in winter, I advocate dry cleaning, and suggest the use of Pears' white precipitated fuller's earth. One plan is to place the cat on a large sheet or towel, mix a little ammonia in warm water, dip your hands in this, and pass them over and over the fur, letting it become thoroughly moistened but not wet. Then well sprinkle the coat with the powder, and by keeping the animal in front of the fire the fur will soon become quite dry. Then rub

with a soft towel, and finally brush thoroughly with a clean and not too hard brush. Your efforts will be rewarded with success, and though puss may be considerably bored during the process, she will not resent it so much as a tubbing. I find that white females are far more diligent as regards their toilet than the males, who seem always to have more of the Eastern languor and indolence in their nature. I have remarked—and no doubt it is more noticeable in the white breed—that as soon as young kittens are beyond their mother's control they exhibit a marked antipathy to keeping their coats in anything like decent condition. Sometimes they will make a feeble attempt at washing themselves; but something will excite their attention, and off they will go, or perhaps in sheer fatigue will fall asleep during the toilet. Thus white kittens will very soon present a most unkempt appearance, and the poor mother gazes sadly at them as though the cares of a family were too much for her, and she no longer wishes to own what was once her pride and joy—a spotless litter!

It has been stated that white cats are wanting in expression, probably because of the lack of markings to give character to the face; but breeders of whites will nevertheless agree with me that they have even greater force of expression, not being assisted by any markings. I have found white cats to be most affectionate, and very conservative in their tastes. I have owned some white Persians with light sea-green eyes, and although these are not correct, yet I must say they were strikingly beautiful and very uncommon. I have been offered high prices by Americans and others for my imported white female, but my 'blue-eyed darling' will, I think, end her days with her devoted mistress in dear, dirty, old London."