

Even Snakes Are Among the Prized Pets in Houston

BY ROYAL DIXON.

When Solomon brought apes and peacocks to his gardens it was doubtless because he was a great lover of pets.

I am sure that if Noah were making a collection for his ark he would need go no further than Houston; for here may be found a wide variety of pets.

Chester Snowden and I started out with the avowed intention of finding out about Houston pets. We had noticed that quite a few pets were to be seen even from the streets; but the number we have discovered has been a revelation to us.

We stood the other day outside a pet shop window, where we could see a Persian cat with three lovely kittens. An interesting crowd had gathered to watch the kittens tumble about, rawn, scratch at each other in play, while their aristocratic mother gazed unconcernedly at the human spectators with a sphinx-like stare, saying plainer than words, "You do not understand me!"

We did not. But we did understand that the spectators were filled with curiosity, sympathy, friendliness. At least these were the feelings that were uppermost in their minds for they were typical "pet-lovers."

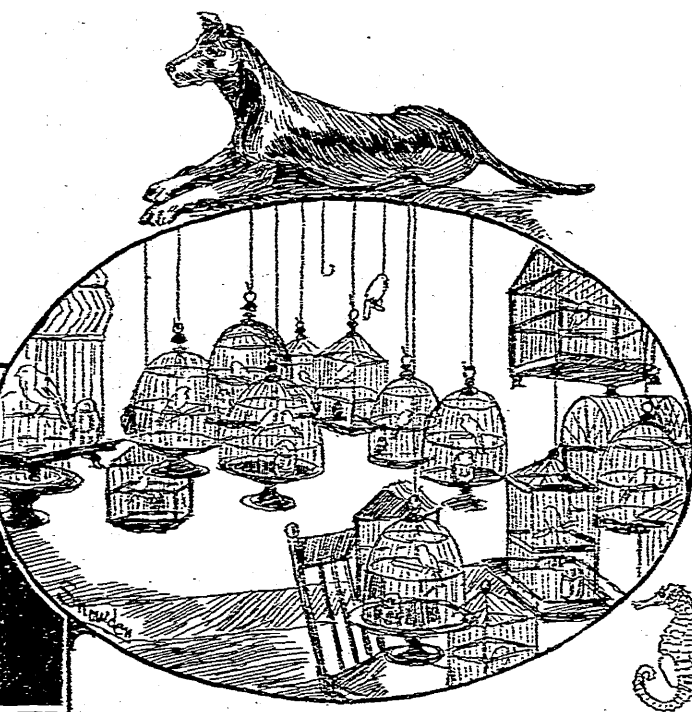
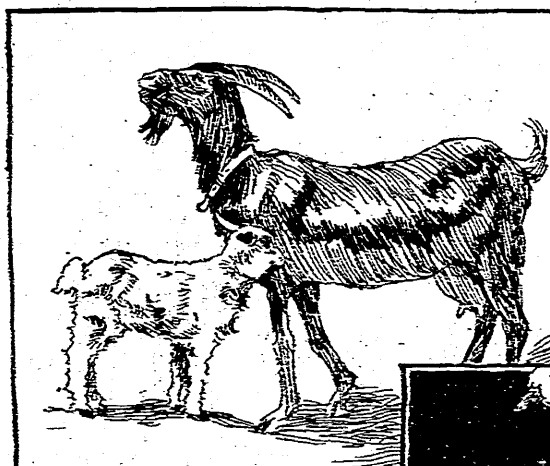
A limousine stopped just opposite the store and a fashionably dressed elderly woman entered to speak with the clerk. "I'll take two of the kittens," she said. And a moment later the clerk placed them in a basket, closed the little door, and soon we saw the chauffeur drive away with them.

Everybody Wants a Pet.

Surely there must be only a few, if any, people in America who do not want a pet! There is a yearning in the human heart for the companionship of animals that is almost universal.

She is right. At least every boy wants a pet, be it rabbit, goat, pony, kitten, pigeon or dog. Mr. Snowden and I came up Railroad Street the other morning, and lo! there were three white ducks being driven down the street by a little Mexican girl.

Alice K. Sturgis Has a Family of Marmosets; W. H. Lighthouse Delights in Birds and Fish; Mrs. E. S. Barlow Conducts a Bird Hospital; J. Alston Clapp Is Interested in Reptiles and Harry G. Wood's Aviary Is Bossed by a Mockingbird



Down near the Southern Pacific Station was a little Italian boy guarding a small goat with her baby. "I gotta get this goat home quick," he told us.

I asked the boy where he got his pet goat and he replied: "My father buy her when she was mighty young. She is mine and she gives much nice milk." And down the railroad the interesting trio went.

Later we called upon our good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Sisk, on Arlington. They are fond of cats and have a beautiful yellow Persian, with two young kittens.

It seems that the world is divided into just two kinds of people: Those who love cats and those who do not. I love them. But I must admit I do not understand them.

In attempting to understand the cat, it might help us to recall the story of the village idiot, who, when asked how he had found a stray horse for which a reward of \$20 had been offered, replied, "I only imagined what I would do and where I would go if I were a horse; and there I went and found him."

How to Understand a Cat.

And if we will only try to interpret the cat from the cat's point of view, we will more nearly approach the correct attitude. We are too prone to consider a cat an enemy because it will not become man's complete slave.

Cats can be taught many interesting and amusing tricks. I remember seeing, years ago, the five "bell-ringing" or "musical cats," five feline vaudevillians that were trained to pull ribbons to which were attached sweet-toned bells. They

worked with such harmony and grace that I must believe they rather enjoyed their own act.

The new and increasing interest in the protection of birds leads to a new re-estimation of the cat's mischief. A proper solution of the cat-and-bird problem will come about only when those who wish to do the right thing will see to it that their cats are tagged and that no stray cat is allowed to run at large.

It is natural for a cat to hunt, but a well-fed cat is less apt to hunt birds than a hungry one. If every cat owner in Houston would see to it that his cat is well fed and well cared for, the problem of protecting the birds would be solved.

Extraordinary Pets.

Someone told us of a family of extraordinary pets which belonged to Alice K. Sturgis.

"We want to know about those pets," I said to her. "Chico and Joe," she said, "are a wonderful couple. They are White Tops (marmosets), and no pets could be more wonderful or human. My first interest in pets was after I had been ill for 15 years and was much alone. I kept a friend's marmoset and learned how attractive they were."

"Are they sufficiently old-fashioned to love each other?" I interrupted. "Indeed they are!" Mrs. Sturgis assured me. "I have never seen such devotion in



Sketches by Chester Snowden

any family, and the father has the right idea of taking care of the babies. He cares for them at all times, except when they are nursing. They ride around on his back, holding on with their tiny tails to his tail, and he seems very proud to have such fine boys. . . . I believe they understand many of the things I say to them. But you would have to see this beautiful family to understand why I speak of them as I do. . . ."

When we were introduced to Chico, Joe and the two boys, Joe was in front of a tiny mirror, looking at himself. Chico was busy washing her face. Reuben and Joe, Jr., were still sleeping under the edge of his pink blanket. "See, it's the male before the mirror!" Mrs. Sturgis reminded me.

"Shows his pride!" I reported. "They are much pleasure to me when I get home of evenings," Mrs. Sturgis continued. "If all families in the human world would show such love and consideration among themselves as I find among my pets, this would be a wonderful world! They never quarrel, and I have never seen such devotion. As to the care of the children — there's much that they might teach me. Once, little Reuben was ill with the rickets. I immediately began to feed him with cod-liver oil, raw eggs and orange juice. Now, see him! Isn't he lovely? . . . These White Tops are so highly intelligent, they are almost like little people. They certainly were."

Bricks, Birds and Fish.

Our next visit was out to the establishment of W. H. Lighthouse. Paradoxical it seems to find this business man, who finds time to keep scores of fine birds for pets. His offices are literally filled with birds

with the splendor of the rainbow stamped upon their delicate bodies, and wearing moons, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, in a way that could not be eclipsed. Who would not enjoy such pets? "And why do you keep so many kinds?" I asked. "Father must have his pets. He started out with cows, then

dogs, then canaries, which he has never outgrown; then fish, and he is very fond of them. And so are we. . . . mother and I have learned to care for them almost as much as father. They are so interesting, and each variety has ways all its own. Just see this gorgeous Japanese fantail! It floated through the water like the

queen of Sheba on parade with all the colors of Jacob's coat. "Those are very expensive and require special care. But fish for us!" our interesting hostess told us. "No pets could be more fascinating and beautiful."

We tried to reach Bud Randolph of the city health department, who has the reputation of being quite an authority on local fish, and who keeps many fish as pets at his aquarium in his home near Cleveland Park. Another famous nature lover is the weather man, L. H. Daingerfield, who comes of a long line of outdoor people dating back to the famous horsemen of Kentucky, by his name. He has numbered among his pets mallard ducks, a flying squirrel and white rabbits.

Jack Pullen is a young nature photographer, who delights in making all birds feel as if they were his personal pets. To this end he has a number of interesting bird-houses, with every house usually occupied during the spring and summer. Even screech owls have reared their families in his bird apartments. During the fall and winter, Mr. Pullen keeps a feeding tray outside his dining room, where it is not uncommon to see red-birds, finches, woodpeckers and sparrows, all breakfasting together. Some of his nature-photographs are remarkably well done, which shows his keen sense of truthness to nature.

Joe Heiser claims that every living creature should be considered under the word pets. "All my pets are loose," he told me; "out in the world where they belong. I want freedom for all things. But I enjoy see-

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