

Letters Regarding Lunatic Cats

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GALTON/2/10/10/2

Wembley Lon

13th April

My dear Uncle Frank

I thank you very
much for sending me
a copy of the Spectator
in which my dear
pussie appears. I am
going to get several
numbers to send
away.

The drains only
allowed us to enter
our house last

Saturday; but they
have been very thorough-
ly done.

I expect George home
tonight or tomorrow.

With love to you
& Aunt Louise

I remain
Your affectionate niece
Mia Butler

8 North Quis

Wimbledon

My dear Uncle Frank -

I grieve much to have to tell you that my poor little kitten Pearl had a very bad fit on Monday morning. She suddenly, without any warning, began to tear round and round the smoke room,

leaping onto the highest
pieces of furniture, and
then dashed through the
door into the garden and
jumped frantically up a
wall, several times, and
finally went up a tree, from
the top of which she fell,
onto her back. All the
rest of the day she was
very quiet, sleeping much, &

not eating any thing, only
taking a little milk. And
she was very wretched and
subdued during the whole
of yesterday. This morning
she has had another fit,
of the same kind, but she
did not get out of the
house. She looks a miserable
little object now. I hardly
know what to do with
her poor little mite. It
would be interesting to

watch what comes of it
all, whether Pearl will
grow out of these strange
surprises or die. But she
frightens the servants and
she looks so very unhappy
poor little dear. She is very
gentle & fears whenever one
touches her.

With love

I remain

Your affectionate niece

Mrs Butler

The Hermitage 28th March ³⁴

West Place

~~S. NORTH VIEW.~~

WIMBLEDON.

The Common

SURREY.

My dear Uncle Frank -

We have been turned out of our house by the drains, and have taken refuge in lodgings. But I hope a week or ten days will see us settled at home again.

I feel very proud that my cats are coming out

35-

in print. I think
that I have been hoping
& breeding insane cats for
years, & never recognised
them as scientific blessings
before! I think I must
get Phyllis & Pearl
photographed now; they
are both staying with
us here. Please use
my name in your article.
It will give me pleasure

to climb into fame at
the end of my dear
Phyllis' tail; immortality
by proxy is better than
none at all! and I prefer
being described simply as
Mrs Butler, hardly any-
one uses my title when
addressing me. Are the
pussies going to have
their names too? Jessy
was short for Testudo.

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We should be so glad to know in what paper the article will appear, as I should wish to read it very much.

George is going North on Monday next for 10 days ~~for~~ or a fortnight.

With love to you and Aunt Louise

I remain
Your affectionate niece
Mica Butler

Dear Uncle Frank

I am distracted by drains
& negotiations with the land-
lord & various ignoble
persons, so please accept
Mia's answer as mine
by proxy. My proxy
is spelt with an x that
has no tail. Hers has one,
by "attraction" as the grammarians

55

would say, to the nature
of the subject discussed.

I am glad both you
& aunt Louisa find
the Eastbourne air so
fresh -

Yours affly
George G Butler

The Pearl coloured kitten.

(32)

It was not mad; at least never violent or excited; but fine quiet & meek. I kept it in my room. When I held my hand pressed gently on its head, it seemed soothed, but when I set it on the floor, it kept quite still, but turned its head forward, nearly upside down & kept its soft little forehead pressed against the floor. It never turned a somersault, but looked in the attitude of being about to do so. Just before it died, it ran round the room, & kept bumping its little head against things, & seemed to be blind. I think it had a dreadful headache. Its forehead swelled a little. See helped its death, as it seemed so unhappy.

J. S. Butler

20th March

8. NORTH VIEW.

WIMBLEDON.

SURREY.

My dear Uncle Frank-

I enclose for you
Mother's account of her
little kitten, the sister of
the one belonging to my
sewing woman, about which
I wrote to you a few days
ago.

I hope both you and
Aunt Louise feel benefited
by your little visit to

(31)

(31)

Hastings.

I wish I could come
& see Aunt Louisa before
you go away again, but
I fear it is impossible.

I remain

Your affectionate niece

Mrs Butler

WIGLEY,
BOURNEMOUTH.

was restless and looked somewhat wild & thin, as it apparently did after each of its two subsequent attacks -

The second attack took place about a fortnight after the first, and again came on without any warning. This time the cat began rushing about the kitchen & eventually jumped high up knocking its head with violence against a shelf which is placed over a door leading from the kitchen into a back area & again hid itself until evening, but this time in the scullery.

The third attack took place about ten days later and was of a somewhat similar nature and again the cat disappeared & was only found next day on the kitchen stairs & was even more restless and wild looking & if anything thinner. The servant wrote his report this third attack & we immediately sent instructions to have the cat destroyed, which was done before another attack took place. The cat foamed at the mouth during each attack.

7 Clifton Place
Three Square -

Fresh Cyrcil Walker
March 22/96

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Memorandum

INGLESBY,
BOURNEMOUTH.

The cat came to us when about 6 months old, it was called a founit of a peculiar brown spotted skin and was a female.

When first it came to us towards the end of May 1894 it behaved quite nicely & did not show any signs of peculiarity. However, one day, towards the end of July, in the middle of the day, the servants, who had left the cat sleeping quietly in the kitchen, heard a peculiar sound and found the cat making a great noise scratching along the basement passage; then saw it dash up the stairs & jumping up dash its head against the wall at the head of the stairs; it then rebounded and rushed downstairs, foaming at the mouth, and apparently disappeared. Eventually after a considerable search the servants found the cat in the larder hidden behind the bread pan and next the wall and here it remained all day, being quite exhausted and unable to do anything. Next day it seemed to have recovered but

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7 Clifton Place.

Dear Uncle Frank,

Here is the memorandum
which accurately represents
the information I have
obtained from the servants

If there is any further
information you require
on any particular points
will you let me know and
I will gladly do my best
to obtain it for you.

I am hoping to come
to see you & Aunt Louisa
before you start again
but am very glad your

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visit last week was a
success.

I believe they had another
cat of the same stock at
55 Harrington Gardens
which also went off its
head.

Our united love to
Mr & Mrs Tomlin,

Yrs affly,

Agnes Butler

March 22. / 96

March 17 "

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like other cats - "In all my life
I never saw such a strange
cat!". Apart ^{from} its particular
personality - which, as Lord
Salisbury observed in a speech
about a distinguished person
who passed away not long
ago, is a thing it is difficult
to define, the cat had a few
little idiosyncracies which were
inconvenient or expensive or
mysterious. It had a way of
breaking all eggs that it

son of my father in law

upson.

could get hold of Y if there
were any eggs it would
 contrive to get hold of them
 & although it was of an ascetic
 habit and ^{so} the servant assures
 me, did not appear to eat,
 it wreaked destruction on
 victuals of all kinds, - Y if
 it did not destroy a drop
~~to~~ would hide it.

But the incident which
 fancy led to its transportation

for life to another area or area
 was this, which I learn from
 the Serouah, whose truthfulness
 is quite beyond question & who
 - at least I have no reason to question
 I have no doubt of it
 was present. The cat took into
 its head to walk sideways
 along the wall, with its
 hind paws on the ground &
 its front paws up on the
 wall, which my landlady
 suddenly perceiving, she
 dropped a saucepan
 which she was holding

with a loud scream; so

strange was the cat's way of
going on. ^{or method of progression.} It is as if that what

had previously been a suspicion
in my landlady's mind ripened

on this to a feeling of certainty
that the cat was not a cat of
this world, - not yet of a better

one, and made up her mind that
it was necessary that the cat

should leave or rather be removed
+ I fancy I feared to consult me previously, whether

of fear that I have not narrated the
facts concerning this cat with in a scientific
manner but I have not drawn on my
imagination & have stated them so far as
my information goes, with strict accuracy.

Perhaps I may be permitted to ~~once~~ ask you one
day how far this cat was a true chip of the "block".
Believe me with kind remembrance to every body
yours very truly Reg. Wynne Su

because she was ashamed to confess her treachery or apprehended

I find I had
omitted one little
peculiarity which
had not been
told it was found of putting
its head in the milk.

Athenaeum

March 17th 96

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Dear Mr. Galton

I have made enquiry
in regard to the cat that
you ask me about; I was unaware
that it came of a family of
any particular individuality,
but on enquiry I find that
like the other members you
speak of it exhibited strange

peculiarities". I had little
opportunity of personal observation
for it was a cat that was not
quick to recognize its friends,
and its instinct was not sufficiently
acute to enable it to divine that I
had saved it from a watery
grave. Consequently, ^{when, having} as I found
that I saw little of it, & having
requested that it might be
brought up at breakfast [uncooked]
it was brought in with the tray,
it fled in terror from the room

as soon as it was placed upon the ²¹
floor. Very shortly afterwards on
my making further enquiry my
landlady informed me that she
had taken it for a walk & lost
it on purpose, which of course
means that she carried it to
Trevor Square (I live at ^{or rather keep} 2
Park Row, Albert Gate) &
placed it in another area than
ours. I was exceedingly angry
but had no explanation beyond
my landlady's saying that she
cat was a "horror" that she
"could not abide it". She had

on a previous occasion said to me
 "Sir! Do you not think that
 your cat is the ugliest cat that
 you ever saw?" to which I had
 answered - "yes."

My landlady in reply to
 enquiries that I made of her
 yesterday informed me that
 she had a kind of feeling that
 "the devil" (I regret to have to repeat
 that the cat made so bad an impression
 as this, but am compelled to do so for
 the sake of scientific precision) - that
 "the devil" was about when the cat
 was in the vicinity, - that it was not

16th March 1896

8, NORTH VIEW,
WIMBLEDON.

My dear Uncle Frank -
I have just been asking
my sewing woman about
the kitten she had from
me. It is a good while
since she had it, but she
remembers pretty distinctly
what it did. It was a
little more than a month
old when she took it
away from here, & for two
or three weeks it behaved

WIMBLEDON
S. NORTH VIEW

like other kittens. Then it was suddenly seized with a mad fit. It tore round & round the room at a lightning pace, trying to run up the wall, & now & then jumping up till its head knocked the ceiling. It uttered no sound or cry, & Mrs Marshall says it did not rush at any one, but rather appeared to be trying to get away from everything.

This went on for ten or ¹³
fifteen minutes, then it
became quite quiet & appeared
much exhausted. It would
not take any thing to eat
and only a very little milk
to drink. It was quiet
for three days, and then
commenced again on its
wild career. It was at the
time when the wind mill
was being repaired & painted,
& two of the work men
engaged in working on
it, lodged with Mrs
Marshall. One of these was

very fond of the kitten;
and after about its 4th
attack (with a day or two's
interval between each) when
Mrs Marshall said she could
not keep it any longer, he
begged to have it, & to keep
it in one of the rooms in
the Mill, where they had
a fire & kept tools etc,
during their days work.

The kitten had grown very
thin by this time, but it
seemed to like the change
to the Mill, & it caught
a mouse, but it did not

March 16/96

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8, NORTH VIEW,
WIMBLEDON.

play about much, & lay
as close to the fire as
it could get. Next day
it had an extra wild
attack, & quite terrific
its good natured owner; and
after that it was killed.
Mrs Marshall suggests
teething as an explanation.
It was the sister, ^{or brother} to
her bitten that Mother
had. The one that Cyril
had belonged to another

WIMBLEDON,
S. NORTH VIEW.

brood of the same mother,
tho' not perhaps the same
father.

Mrs Marshall tells me
that years ago she had
a kitten, which, when it
had grown fairly large,
but was not full grown,
had a fit of a similar
nature. She was living in
a kind of work man's flat
in London, at the very top

of the house. During the
attack, the symptoms were
just the same, and the
cat ended by flying at
visible speed all the way
down stairs. After long
~~and~~ search, Mrs Marshall
found it lying, quite sub-
dued & very much worn
out, in a dark corner of
a basement room, used
by a carpenter for the
storage of boards etc.

Mrs Marshall put food
beside it, also milk, and
water. Cats often prefer

water when they are ill.
The cat remained where it
was for three days, and
during that time would
not eat or drink. Then, very
weak & low, it dragged
itself up to its owner's room
at the top of the house,
& gradually recovered. It
never had another attack.

I hope I have not made
this letter too long.

Please thank Aunt Louise
for her note & give her
my love.

I remain

Ever your affectionate niece
Mie Butler

March
14

Reginald W. Simpson Esq
Athenaeum Club.

88B

8. NORTH VIEW.

WIMBLEDON.

SURREY.

Mr. Simpson's christian
name is Reginald, I
fancy. But his cat
was lost, I know.

I hope Hastings will
take your cough away
altogether. Please give
my love to Aunt
Louise, and believe me
ever your affectionate niece
Miss Butler

14th March ⁵
1896

8. NORTH VIEW.

WIMBLEDON.

SURREY.

Dear Uncle Frank-

I feel quite proud
of my insane cats now
that they cause you
so much interest. But
unfortunately Jessy is
no more; I got rid of
her because all her
kittens went mad, and
I got a bad name.

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among my friends as
a cat provider. Phyllis's
kittens never go off their
heads, but they all
inherit their mother's
temper and are charming
little furis in their
youth. They settle
down afterwards into
sedate & excellent cats
& are all good mousers.
We have one now, a
lovely little thing, less

than a month old, and
it claws & spits & swears
like an old cat. Mother
could tell you about
her little kitten, she
thought it had water
on the brain, from the
way it behaved; but
I did not see it after
she had it. It was
one of Tissy's. Afterwards
she had one of Phyllis's,
but it developed no
insanity whatever. My
sewing woman is coming

8 here next Monday or
Tuesday. Would you
like me to ask her
particularly what her
kitten did in its mad
fits? it was absolutely
dangerous, I fancy.

Phyllis has kittens once
a quarter, so the breed
is in no danger of dying
out.

I am afraid to scoot
is pure slang. It implies
to retire with great
rapidity, & in a somewhat
smacking manner.

March 11th 1896

8. NORTH VIEW.

WIMBLEDON.

SURREY.

Dear Uncle Frank
The cats Mia has or
had are Phyllis, the
grandmother, now alive,
Jessie, her daughter,
and children of
both of these, making
3 generations in all.
Phyllis, though a sen-
sible & estimable cat,
in the days of her youth
used to get wild
fits. "She tore round
and round, swearing
horribly, & would

P.S. All Phyllis' kittens are splendid moussers.

fight, scratch & bite
any one who tried
to pick her up. Her
temper is vile to this
day. She is not ^{at} all
particular about her
language."

Jessie, her daughter,
would never make
friends with Alia,
nor let her pet her,
"but was ill-conditioned
& unfriendly altogether;
just scooted if you
wanted to caress her.
Mary the servant said
Jessie was always
"very nervous". Mary
was the only person

with any hold over her.³
of Jessie's kittens
one, presented to Cyril
& May is reported by
them to have gone
mad, & they can best
describe its symptoms:
one was a tendency
to jump up and knock
its head against the
ceiling. Another pre-
sented to Mr. Marshall,
Mia's sewing woman,
who lives at the wind-
mill on Wimbledon
Common, "raced round
the room & jumped up
to the ceiling: hit its head.
Mr. Marshall was

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so terrified that she
had "it killed". A
kitten that my mother
had was either Phyllis's
or Jessie's, Mia is nearly
sure the latter. It stood
on its head & purred
till it died. But it
didn't get wild at
all.

Phyllis helped to
bring up these creatures.
She often had kittens
at the same time as
Jessie, & Mia allowed
only one between them, generally
Jessie's; & they both
suckled it. Young Mr.
Simpson, Athenaeum Club,
had one of Phyllis' kittens. He
can give its character.
Yours affly G. G. Butler