

Draft of "Three Generations of Lunatic Cats"

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GALTON | 2/10/10 | 1

The alternations of temper in household cats, ^{are often} ~~are~~ sudden and violent. Their spitfire ways are doubtless due in part to imperfect domestication, for no other domestic animal inherits from a more ferocious ancestry ~~than they~~, in so far as they are descended from the British wild breed. It is not strange that ~~signs~~ the ancient and normal characteristics of their race should now and then show themselves. Not a few children have fits of uncontrolled fury like those of their savage forefathers, and not a few kittens have still more furious fits of rage like those of a wild cat. But besides ~~that~~ all this, our domestic cats seem ^{attached to} ~~subject to~~ true mental disorder, usually accompanied, as in men, with uncertain temper and outbreaks of fury. Therefore though some of the ^{about to be mentioned} ~~seven cases~~ and especially the first of them would have no claim ^{individually} to be ~~considered~~ ^{reckoned} as clear cases of ~~insanity~~ ^{insanity}, ~~but~~ when they are ^{viewed together as a} ~~considered together as a~~ ^{family disease} ~~characteristics of a particular family group~~, they concur in supporting that view, and justify the title given to these remarks.

Three generations of lunatic cats

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The changes ^{of mood} in cats are sudden & extreme. So far as our own breeds ^{of them} are descended from wild cats, no other domestic animal ^{can claim a more} ferocious ancestry and it is not therefore strange ^{that the ancient} should now & then break out. Not a few children ^{have fits of uncontrolled fury} worthy of a savage, and not a few killers had their fits worthy of a wild cat. They seem ^{to be} subject to brain attacks as well. Therefore the instances about to be mentioned are not ~~not~~ very exceptional when considered individually, but when taken together ^{as characterising a family group,} they are highly ^{interesting} both in respect to feline psychology and as instances of heredity.

The founder of the mad family is Phyllis; her ^{offspring} Tessie, ~~and~~ and (3, off) the offspring of Tessie are (5), (6), (7). ^{Tessie is destroyed}; Phyllis still lives and produces a litter quarterly. The male parents are of course unknown. As a rule, only one kitten of a litter has ever been kept.

(1) Phyllis belongs to - ^(here leave blank & two lines)
When a kitten she had wild fits, tearing round & round the room, 'swearing' horribly and fighting with feet & claws any one who tried to pick her up. Her temper is now very ^{unusually} ^{and often} ⁱⁿ ^{her} offspring are (2) (3) (4)

(2) Tessie ^{was} always ill conditioned and unfriendly; only one person ^{had} any hold over her. She was pronounced 'very nervous'. Her kittens went mad so often that she was ~~destroyed~~ her owner got a bad name among her friends as a cat provider, so she was destroyed.

(3) ^(an admirably official) son a daughter of Phyllis, was given to a bachelor ~~as~~ as a pet. After a while the landlady ^{declared} it to be 'a horror'. She had a feeling ^{it was so strange in its ways} that she felt 'that the devil was about when the cat was near her'. It plunged its head in the milk, it broke every egg it could get at out of pure mischief for it eat very little; ^{it destroyed} all ^{fruitless chops, etc.} ^{or laid them.} the second describes the climax ^{when} ^{she} ^{was} ^{very} ^{skilled} ⁱⁿ ^{getting} ^{at} ^{them} ^{fully} that the cat took it into its head to walk sideways, with its feet on the ground and fore feet up on the wall, in so uncausing a way that the landlady ^{performed} a saucer she ^{was} ^{holding} ⁱⁿ ^{her} ^{hand} and screamed with fright. She ^{continued} to ^{tease} ^{it} ^{and} ^{it} ^{was} ^{at} ^{last} ^{it} ^{was} ^{killed}.

(4) It now a kitten left then a month old, but it claws and spits like an old cat. Under this ^{is} I will quote a generalised description ^{of} Phyllis's other kittens, "they all inherit their mother's temper and are charming little furies in their youth; they settle down afterwards and are all good mousetrappers"

We now come to the offspring of Tessie (2)

(5) was given to C a his wife, when ~~she~~ about 6 months old, 7 months later the family ^{was} ^{then} ^{abroad}, received ^{curious} news from their servants of ^{the} ^{strange} ^{ways} of the cat. ^{It} ^{had} ^{just} ^{been} ^{left} ^{quietly} ^{sleeping} ⁱⁿ ^{the} ^{kitchen}, ^{when} ^{they} ^{heard} ^a ^{peculiar} ^{sound} ^a ^{form} ^{of} the cat ^{making} ^a ^{great} ^{noise} ^{scratching} ^{along} ^{the} ^{basement} ^{passage}; ^{then} ^{it} ^{was} ^{seen} ^{up} the stairs ^{striking} ^{its} ^{head} ^{against} the wall at the head of the stairs, it rebounded and rushed downstairs ^{foaming} ^{at} ^{the} ^{mouth}, and disappeared. After long search they found it in the ^{larder} ^{hidden}.

hidden behind the bread pan, ^{crouched} against ~~a~~ the wall, and there it remained all day quite expanded. The next attack took place a fortnight later, again without any warning. The cat began by moping about the kitchen & eventually jumped up, knocking its head with violence against a ^{high} shelf, ~~near~~ ^{at} the mouth ^{at this} had ^{scattered} the scallions. The third attack was ten days later & of a similar kind with framing at the mouth & ^{was} wider than before. Instructions were ^{accepted} sent to destroy the cat.

(6) Was given as a kitten of one month old to Mrs. M. ^{and} it behaved so small for 3 weeks. Then it was seized with a mad fit & tore ^{it} around the room, trying to run up the wall & knocked its head against the ceiling, uttering no sound. It did not rush at any one but appeared to be trying to get away from every thing. This went on for 10 minutes, and then it ^{became} quiet & much exhausted. After 3 days another similar fit came on. A workman who was temporarily hired, in the house took a fancy to the kitten & ^{was} kept it. ^{in his room where it seemed happy.} When Mrs. M. would keep it longer, begged to have it. ^{It} had a still wider attack than ^{before} & quite terrified its new owner, so it was killed.

(7) Was given to Mrs. J. who was very fond of it. It ^{was} ^{said} ^{to} ^{be} ^{very} ^{weak} & ^{was} ^{never} ^{seen} ^{because} ^{it} ^{was} ^{kept} ⁱⁿ ^{the} ^{ground}. It bent its head downwards ^{and} pressed against the ground, in such a position ^{and} that it seemed about to take a hammer-sault. Just before it died it ran round the room, & banging its head against things as though it were blind. ^{It} ^{was} ^{then} ^{killed} "He helped its death as it seemed so unhappy." The current story among members of Mrs. J.'s family ^{was} ^{that} ^{the} ^{kitten} ^{"stood} ^{on} ^{its} ^{head} ^{and} ^{pudded} ^{till} ^{it} ^{died}".

Francis Galton (specularly not wholly incorrect)