

Cats And Dogs

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Being told of the cat-and-dog fight about to occur in your literary club, I cannot resist contributing a few Thomastic yowls and sibilants upon my side of the dispute, though conscious that the word of a venerable ex-member can scarcely have much weight against the brilliancy of such still active adherents as may bark upon the other side. Aware of my ineptitude at argument, a valued correspondent has supplied me with the records of a similar controversy in the New York Tribune, in which Mr. Carl van Doran is on my side and Mr. Albert Payson Terhune on that of the canine tribe. From this I would be glad to plagiarise such data as I need; but my friend, with genuinely Machiavellian subtlety, has furnished me with only a part of the feline section whilst submitting the doggish brief in full. No doubt he imagines that this arrangement, in view of my own emphatic bias, makes for something like ultimate fairness; but for me it is exceedingly inconvenient, since it will force me to be more or less original in several parts of the ensuing remarks.

Between dogs and cats my degree of choice is so great that it would never occur to me to compare the two. I have no active dislike for dogs, any more than I have for monkeys, human beings, tradesmen, cows, sheep, or pterodactyls; but for the cat I have entertained a particular respect and affection ever since the earliest days of my infancy. In its flawless grace and superior self-sufficiency I have seen a symbol of the perfect beauty and bland impersonality of the universe itself, objectively considered, and in its air of silent mystery there resides for me all the wonder and fascination of the unknown. The dog appeals to cheap and facile emotions; the cat to the deepest founts of imagination and cosmic perception in the human mind. It is no accident that the contemplative Egyptians, together with such later poetic spirits as Poe, Gautier, Baudelaire and Swinburne, were all sincere worshippers of the supple grimalkin.

Naturally, one's preference in the matter of cats and dogs depends wholly upon one's temperament and point of view. The dog would appear to me to be the favorite of superficial, sentimental, and emotional people -- people who feel rather than think, who attach importance to mankind and the popular conventional emotions of the simple, and who find their greatest consolation in the fawning and dependent attachments of a gregarious society. Such people live in a limited world of imagination; accepting uncritically the values of common folklore, and always preferring to have their naive beliefs, feelings, and prejudices tickled, rather than to enjoy a purely aesthetic and philosophic pleasure arising from discrimination, contemplation, and the recognition of austere, absolute beauty. This is not to say that the cheaper elements do not also reside in the average cat-lover's love of cats, but merely to point out that in ailurophily there exists a basis of true aestheticism which kynophily does not possess. The real lover of cats is one who demands a clearer adjustment to the universe than ordinary household platitudes provide; one who refuses to swallow the sentimental notion that all good people love dogs, children, and horses

while all bad people dislike and are disliked by such. He is unwilling to set up himself and his cruder feelings as a measure of universal values, or to allow shallow ethical notions to warp his judgment. In a word, he had rather admire and respect than effuse and dote; and does not fall into the fallacy that pointless sociability and friendliness, or slavering devotion and obedience, constitute anything intrinsically admirable or exalted. Dog-lovers base their whole case on these commonplace, servile, and plebeian qualities, and amusingly judge the intelligence of a pet by its degree of conformity to their own wishes. Cat-lovers escape this delusion, repudiate the idea that cringing subservience and sidling companionship to man are supreme merits, and stand free to worship aristocratic independence, self-respect, and individual personality joined to extreme grace and beauty as typified by the cool, lithe, cynical and unconquered lord of the housetops.

Persons of commonplace ideas -- unimaginative worthy burghers who are satisfied with the daily round of things and who subscribe to the popular credo of sentimental values -- will always be dog-lovers. To them nothing will ever be more important than themselves and their own primitive feelings, and they will never cease to esteem and glorify the fellow-animal who best typifies these. Such persons are submerged in the vortex of Oriental idealism and abasement which ruined classic civilisation in the Dark Ages, and live in a bleak world of abstract sentimental values wherein the mawkish illusions of meekness, gentleness, brotherhood, and whining humility are magnified into supreme virtues, and a whole false ethic and philosophy erected on the timid reactions of the flexor system of muscles. This heritage, ironically foisted on us when Roman politics raised the faith of a whipped and broken people to supremacy in the later empire, has naturally kept a strong hold over the weak and sentimentally thoughtless; and perhaps reached its culmination in the insipid nineteenth century, when people were wont to praise dogs "because they are so human" (as if humanity were any valid standard of merit!), and honest Edwin Landseer painted hundreds of smug Fidoes and Carlos and Rovers with all the anthropoid triviality, pettiness, and "cuteness" of eminent Victorians.

But amidst this chaos of intellectual and emotional groveling a few free souls have always stood out for the old civilised realities which mediaevalism eclipsed -- the stern classic loyalty to truth, strength, and beauty given a clear mind and uncowed spirit to the full-living Western Aryan confronted by Nature's majesty, loveliness, and aloofness. This is the virile aesthetic and ethic of the extensor muscles -- the bold, buoyant, assertive beliefs and preferences of proud, dominant, unbroken and unterrified conquerors, hunters, and warriors -- and it has small use for the shams and whimperings of the brotherly, affection-slobbering peacemaker and cringer and sentimentalist. Beauty and sufficiency -- twin qualities of the cosmos itself -- are the gods of this unshackled and pagan type; to the worshipper of such eternal things the supreme virtue will not be found in lowliness, attachment, obedience, and emotional messiness. This sort of worshipper will look for that which best embodies the loveliness of the stars and the worlds and the forests and the seas and the sunsets, and which best acts out the blandness, lordliness, accuracy, self-sufficiency, cruelty, independence, and contemptuous and capricious impersonality of the all governing Nature. Beauty -- coolness -- aloofness -- philosophic repose -- self-sufficiency -- untamed mastery -- where else can we find these things incarnated with even half the perfection and completeness that mark their incarnation in the peerless and softly gliding cat, which performs its mysterious orbit with the relentless and obtrusive certainty of a planet in infinity?

That dogs are dear to the unimaginative peasant-burgher whilst cats appeal to the sensitive poet-aristocrat-philosopher will be clear in a moment when we reflect on the matter of biological association. Practical plebeian folk judge a thing only by its immediate touch, taste, and smell; while more delicate types form their estimates from the linked images and ideas which the object calls up in their minds. Now when dogs and cats are considered, the stolid churl sees only the two animals before him, and bases his favour on their relative capacity to pander to his sloppy, uniformed ideas of ethics and friendship and flattering subservience. On the other hand the gentleman and thinker sees each in all its natural affiliations, and cannot fail to notice that in the great symmetries of organic life dogs fall in with slovenly wolves and foxes and jackals and coyotes and dingoes and painted hyaenas, whilst cats walk proudly with the jungle's lords, and own the haughty lion, the sinuous leopard, the regal tiger, and the shapely panther and jaguar as their kin. Dogs are the hieroglyphs of blind emotion, inferiority, servile attachment, and gregariousness -- the attributes of commonplace, stupidly passionate, and intellectually and imaginatively underdeveloped men. Cats are the runes of beauty, invincibility, wonder, pride, freedom, coldness, self-sufficiency, and dainty individuality -- the qualities of sensitive, enlightened, mentally developed, pagan, cynical, poetic, philosophic, dispassionate, reserved, independent, Nietzschean, unbroken, civilised, master-class men. The dog is a peasant and the cat is a gentleman.

We may, indeed, judge the tone and bias of a civilisation by its relative attitude toward dogs and cats. The proud Egypt wherein Pharaoh was Pharaoh and pyramids rose in beauty at the wish of him who dreamed them bowed down to the cat, and temples were built to its goddess at Bubastis. In imperial Rome the graceful leopard adorned most homes of quality, lounging in insolent beauty in the atrium with golden collar and chain; while after the age of the Antonines the actual cat was imported from Egypt and cherished as a rare and costly luxury. So much for the dominant and enlightened peoples. When, however, we come to the groveling Middle Ages with their superstitions and ecstasies and monasticisms and maunderings over saints and their relics, we find the cool and impersonal loveliness of the felidae in very low esteem; and behold a sorry spectacle of hatred and cruelty shown toward the beautiful little creature whose mousing virtues alone gained it sufferance amongst the ignorant churls who resented its self-respecting coolness and feared its cryptical and elusive independence as something akin to the dark powers of witchcraft. These boorish slaves of eastern darkness could not tolerate what did not serve their own cheap emotions and flimsy purposes. They wished a dog to fawn and hunt and fetch and carry, and had no use for the cat's gift of eternal disinterested beauty to feed the spirit. One can imagine how they must have resented Pussy's magnificent reposefulness, unhurriedness, relaxation, and scorn for trivial human aims and concerns. Throw a stick, and the servile dog wheezes and pants and stumbles to bring it to you. Do the same before a cat, and he will eye you with coolly polite and somewhat bored amusement. And just as inferior people prefer the inferior animal which scampers excitedly because someone else wants something, so do superior people respect the superior animal which lives its own life and knows that the puerile stick-throwings of alien bipeds are none of its business and beneath its notice. The dog barks and begs and tumbles to amuse you when you crack the whip. That pleases a meekness-loving peasant who relishes a stimulus to his self importance. The cat, on the other hand, charms you into playing for its benefit when it wishes to be amused; making you rush about the room with a paper on a string when it feels like exercise, but refusing all your attempts to make it play when it is not in the humour. That is personality and individuality and self-respect -- the calm mastery of a being whose life is its own and not yours -- and the superior person recognises and appreciates this because he too is a free

soul whose position is assured, and whose only law is his own heritage and aesthetic sense. Altogether, we may see that the dog appeals to those primitive emotional souls whose chief demands on the universe are for meaningless affection, aimless companionship, and flattering attention and subservience; whilst the cat reigns among those more contemplative and imaginative spirits who ask of the universe only the objective sight of poignant, ethereal beauty and the animate symbolisation of Nature's bland, relentless, reposeful, unhurried and impersonal order and sufficiency. The dog gives, but the cat is.

Simple folk always overstress the ethical element in life, and it is quite natural that they should extend it to the realm of their pets. Accordingly, we hear many inane dicta in favour of dogs on the ground that they are faithful, whilst cats are treacherous. Now just what does this really mean? Where are the points of reference? Certainly, the dog has so little imagination and individuality that it knows no motives but its master's; but what sophisticated mind can descry a positive virtue in this stupid abnegation of its birthright? Discrimination must surely award the palm to the superior cat, which has too much natural dignity to accept any scheme of things but its own, and which consequently cares not one whit what any clumsy human thinks or wishes or expects of it. It is not treacherous, because it has never acknowledged any allegiance to anything outside its own leisurely wishes; and treachery basically implies a departure from some covenant explicitly recognised. The cat is a realist, and no hypocrite. He takes what pleases him when he wants it, and gives no promises. He never leads you to expect more from him than he gives, and if you choose to be stupidly Victorian enough to mistake his purrs and rubbings of self-satisfaction for marks of transient affection toward you, that is no fault of his. He would not for a moment have you believe that he wants more of you than food and warmth and shelter and amusement -- and he is certainly justified in criticising your aesthetic and imaginative development if you fail to find his grace, beauty, and cheerful decorative influence an aboundingly sufficient repayment for all you give him. The cat-lover need not be amazed at another's love for dogs -- indeed, he may also possess this quality himself; for dogs are often very comely, and as lovable in a condescending way as a faithful old servant or tenant in the eyes of a master -- but he cannot help feeling astonished at those who do not share his love for cats. The cat is such a perfect symbol of beauty and superiority that it seems scarcely possible for any true aesthete and civilised cynic to do other than worship it. We call ourselves a dog's "master" -- but who ever dared call himself the "master" of a cat? We own a dog -- he is with us as a slave and inferior because we wish him to be. But we entertain a cat -- he adorns our hearth as a guest, fellow-lodger, and equal because he wishes to be there. It is no compliment to be the stupidly idolised master of a dog whose instinct it is to idolise, but it is a very distinct tribute to be chosen as the friend and confidant of a philosophic cat who is wholly his own master and could easily choose another companion if he found such a one more agreeable and interesting. A trace, I think, of this great truth regarding the higher dignity of the cat has crept into folklore in the use of the names "cat" and "dog" as terms of opprobrium. Whilst "cat" has never been applied to any sort of offender more than the mildly spiteful and innocuously sly female gossip and commentator, the words "dog" and "cur" have always been linked with vileness, dishonor, and degradation of the gravest type. In the crystallisation of this nomenclature there has undoubtedly been present in the popular mind some dim, half-unconscious realisation that there are depths of slinking, whining, fawning, and servile ignobility which no kith of the lion and the leopard could ever attain. The cat may fall low, but he is always unbroken. He is, like the Nordic among men, one of those who govern their own lives or die.

We have but to glance analytically at the two animals to see the points pile up in favour of the cat. Beauty, which is probably the only thing of any basic significance in all the cosmos, ought to be our chief criterion; and here the cat excels so brilliantly that all comparisons collapse. Some dogs, it is true, have beauty in a very ample degree; but even the highest level of canine beauty falls far below the feline average. The cat is classic whilst the dog is Gothic -- nowhere in the animal world can we discover such really Hellenic perfection of form, with anatomy adapted to function, as in the felidae. Puss is a Doric temple -- an Ionic colonnade -- in the utter classicism of its structural and decorative harmonies. And this is just as true kinetically as statically, for art has no parallel for the bewitching grace of the cat's slightest motion. The sheer, perfect aestheticism of kitty's lazy stretchings, industrious face-washings, playful rollings, and little involuntary shiftings in sleep is something as keen and vital as the best pastoral poetry or genre painting; whilst the unerring accuracy of his leaping and springing, running and hunting, has an art-value just as high in a more spirited way but it is his capacity for leisure and repose which makes the cat preeminent. Mr. Carl Van Vechten, in "Peter Whiffle," holds up the timeless restfulness of the cat as a model for life's philosophy, and Prof. William Lyon Phelps has very effectively captured the secret of felinity when he says that the cat does not merely lie down, but "pours his body out on the floor like a glass of water". What other creature has thus merged the aestheticism of mechanics and hydraulics? Contrast this with the inept panting, wheezing, fumbling, drooling, scratching, and general clumsiness of the average dog with his false and wasted motions. And in the details of neatness the fastidious cat is of course immeasurably ahead. We always love to touch a cat, but only the insensitive can uniformly welcome the frantic and humid nuzzlings and pawings of a dusty and perhaps not inodorous canine which leaps and fusses and writhes about in awkward feverishness for no particular reason save that blind nerve-centres have been spurred by certain meaningless stimuli. There is a wearying excess of bad manners in all this doggish fury -- well-bred people don't paw and maul one, and surely enough we invariably find the cat gentle and reserved in his advances, and delicate even when he glides gracefully into your lap with cultivated purrs, or leaps whimsical on the table where you are writing to play with your pen in modulated, seriocomic pats. I do not wonder that Mahomet, that sheik of perfect manners, loved cats for their urbanity and disliked dogs for their boorishness; or that cats are the favorites in the polite Latin countries whilst dogs take the lead in heavy, practical, and beer-drinking Central Europe. Watch a cat eat, and then watch a dog. The one is held in check by an inherent and inescapable daintiness, and lends a kind of grace to one of the most ungraceful of all processes. The dog, on the other hand, is wholly repulsive in his bestial and insatiate greediness; living up to his forest kinship of "wolfing" most openly and unashamedly. Returning to beauty of line -- is it not significant that while many normal breeds of dogs are conspicuously and admittedly ugly, no healthy and well-developed feline of any species whatsoever is other than beautiful? There are, of course, many ugly cats; but these are always individual cases of mongrelism, malnutrition, deformity, or injury. No breed of cats in its proper condition can by any stretch of the imagination be thought of as even slightly ungraceful -- a record against which must be pitted the depressing spectacle of impossibly flattened bulldogs, grotesquely elongated dachshunds, hideously shapeless and shaggy Airedales, and the like. Of course, it may be said that no aesthetic standard is other than relative -- but we always work with such standards as we empirically have, and in comparing cats and dogs under the Western European aesthetic we cannot be unfair to either. If any undiscovered tribe in Tibet finds Airedales beautiful and Persian cats ugly, we will not dispute them on their own territory -- but just now we are dealing with ourselves and our territory, and here the verdict would not admit of much doubt even from the most ardent kynophile. Such an one usually passes the

problem off in an epigrammatic paradox, and says that "Snookums is so homely, he's pretty!" This is the childish penchant for the grotesque and tawdrily "cute" which we see likewise embodied in popular cartoons, freak dolls, and all the malformed decorative trumpery of the "Billikin" or "Krazy Kat" order found in the "dens" and "cosy corners" of the would-be-sophisticated yokelry.

In the matter of intelligence we find the caninities making amusing claims -- amusing because they so naively measure what they conceive to be an animal's intelligence by its degree of subservience to the human will. A dog will retrieve, a cat will not; therefore (sic!) the dog is the more intelligent. Dogs can be more elaborately trained for the circus and vaudeville acts than cats, therefore (O Zeus, O Royal Mount!) they are cerebrally superior. Now of course this is all the sheerest nonsense. We would not call a weak-spirited man more intelligent than an independent citizen because we can make him vote as we wish whereas we can't influence the independent citizen, yet countless persons apply an exactly parallel argument in appraising the grey matter of dogs and cats. Competition in servility is something to which no self-respecting Thomas or Tabitha ever stooped, and it is plain that any really effective estimate of canine and feline intelligence must proceed from a careful observation of dogs and cats in a detached state -- uninfluenced by human beings -- as they formulate certain objectives of their own and use their own mental equipment in achieving them. When we do this, we arrive at a very wholesome respect for our purring hearthside friend who makes so little display about his wishes and business methods; for in every conception and calculation he shows a steel-cold and deliberate union of intellect, will, and sense of proportion which puts utterly to shame the emotional sloppings-over and docilely acquired artificial tricks of the "clever" and "faithful" pointer or sheep-dog. Watch a cat decide to move through a door, and see how patiently he waits for his opportunity, never losing sight of his purpose even when he finds it expedient to feign other interests in the interim. Watch him in the thick of the chase, and compare his calculating patience and quiet study of his terrain with the noisy floundering and pawing of his canine rival. It is not often that he returns empty-handed. He knows what he wants, and means to get it in the most effective way, even at the sacrifice of time -- which he philosophically recognises as unimportant in the aimless cosmos. There is no turning him aside or distracting his attention -- and we know that among humans this is the quality of mental tenacity, this ability to carry a single thread through complex distractions, is considered a pretty good sign of intellectual vigour and maturity. Children, old crones, peasants, and dogs ramble, cats and philosophers stick to their point. In resourcefulness, too, the cat attests his superiority. Dogs can be well trained to do a single thing, but psychologists tell us that these responses to an automatic memory instilled from outside are of little worth as indices of real intelligence. To judge the abstract development of a brain, confront it with new and unfamiliar conditions and see how well its own strength enables it to achieve its object by sheer reasoning without blazed trails. Here the cats can silently devise a dozen mysterious and successful alternatives whilst poor Fido is barking in bewilderment and wondering what it is all about. Granted that Rover the retriever may make a greater bid for popular sentimental regard by going into the burning house and saving the baby in traditional cinema fashion, it remains a fact that whiskered and purring Nig is a higher-grade biological organism -- something physiologically and psychologically nearer a man because of his very freedom from man's orders, and as such entitled to a higher respect from those who judge by purely philosophic and aesthetic standards. We can respect a cat as we cannot respect a dog, no matter which personally appeals the more to our mere doting fancy; and if we be aesthetes and analysts rather than commonplace-lovers and emotionalists, the scales must inevitably turn completely in kitty's favour.

It may be added, moreover, that even the aloof and sufficient cat is by no means devoid of sentimental appeal. Once we get rid of the uncivilised ethical bias -- the "treacherous" and "horrid bird-catcher" prejudice -- we find in the "harmless cat" the very apex of happy domestic symbolism; whilst small kittens become objects to adore, idealise, and celebrate in the most rhapsodic of dactyls and anapaests, iambics and trochaics. I, in my own senescent mellowness, confess to an inordinate and wholly unphilosophic predilection for tiny coal-black kittens with large yellow eyes, and could no more pass one without petting him than Dr. Johnson could pass a sidewalk post without striking it. There is, likewise, in many cats quite analogous to the reciprocal fondness so loudly extolled in dogs, human beings, horses, and the like. Cats come to associate certain persons with acts continuously contributing to their pleasure, and acquire for them a recognition and attachment which manifests itself in pleasant excitement at their approach -- whether or not bearing food and drink -- and a certain pensiveness at their protracted absence. A cat with whom I was on intimate terms reached the point of accepting food from no hand but one, and would actually go hungry rather than touch the least morsel from a kindly neighbour source. He also had distinct affections amongst the other cats of that idyllic household; voluntarily offering food to one of his whiskered friends, whilst disputing most savagely the least glance which his coal-black rival "Snowball" would bestow upon his plate. If it be argued that these feline fondnesses are essentially "selfish" and "practical" in their ultimate composition, let us inquire in return how many human fondnesses, apart from those springing directly upon primitive brute instinct, have any other basis. After the returning board has brought in the grand total of zero we shall be better able to refrain from ingenuous censure of the "selfish" cat.

The superior imaginative inner life of the cat, resulting in superior self-possession, is well known. A dog is a pitiful thing, depending wholly on companionship, and utterly lost except in packs or by the side of his master. Leave him alone and he does not know what to do except bark and howl and trot about till sheer exhaustion forces him to sleep. A cat, however, is never without the potentialities of contentment. Like a superior man, he knows how to be alone and happy. Once he looks about and finds no one to amuse him, he settles down to the task of amusing himself; and no one really knows cats without having occasionally peeked stealthily at some lively and well-balanced kitten which believes itself to be alone. Only after such a glimpse of unaffected tail-chasing grace and unstudied purring can one fully understand the charm of those lines which Coleridge wrote with reference to the human rather than the feline young --

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".... a limber elf,
Singing, dancing to itself."

But whole volumes could be written on the playing of cats, since the varieties and aesthetic aspects of such sportiveness are infinite. Be it sufficient to say that in such pastimes cats have exhibited traits and actions which psychologists authentically declare to be motivated by genuine humour and whimsicality in its purest sense; so that the task of "making a cat laugh" may not be so impossible a thing even outside the borders of Cheshire. In short, a dog is an incomplete thing. Like an inferior man, he needs emotional stimuli from outside, and must set something artificial up as a god and motive. The cat, however, is perfect in himself. Like the human philosopher, he is a self-sufficient entity and microcosm. He is a real

and integrated being because he thinks and feels himself to be such, whereas the dog can conceive of himself only in relation to something else. Whip a dog and he licks your hand - frauth! The beast has no idea of himself except as an inferior part of an organism whereof you are the superior part -- he would no more think of striking back at you than you would think of pounding your own head when it punishes you with a headache. But whip a cat and watch it glare and move backward hissing in outraged dignity and self-respect! One more blow, and it strikes you in return; for it is a gentleman and your equal, and will accept no infringement on its personality and body of privileges. It is only in your house anyway because it wishes to be, or perhaps even as a condescending favour to yourself. It is the house, not you, it likes; for philosophers realise that human beings are at best only minor adjuncts to scenery. Go one step too far, and it leaves you altogether. You have mistaken your relationship to it and imagined you are its master, and no real cat can tolerate that breach of good manners. Henceforward it will seek companions of greater discrimination and clearer perspective. Let anaemic persons who believe in "turning the other cheek" console themselves with cringing dogs -- for the robust pagan with the blood of Nordic twilights in his veins there is no beast like the cat; intrepid steed of Freya, who can boldly look even Thor and Odin full in the face and stare with great round eyes of undimmed yellow or green.

In these observations I believe I have outlined with some fullness the diverse reasons why, in my opinion and in the smartly timed title-phrase of Mr. Van Doren, "gentlemen prefer cats." The reply of Mr. Terhune in a subsequent issue of the Tribune appears to me beside the point; insomuch as it is less a refutation of facts than a mere personal affirmation of the author's membership in that conventional "very human" majority who take affection and companionship seriously, enjoy being important to something alive, hate a "parasite" on mere ethical ground without consulting the right of beauty to exist for its own sake, and therefore love man's noblest and most faithful friend, the perennial dog. I suppose Mr. Terhune loves horses and babies also, for the three go conventionally together in the great hundred-per-center's credo as highly essential likings for every good and lovable he-man of the Arrow Collar and Harold Bell Wright hero school, even though the automobile and Margaret Sanger have done much to reduce the last two items.

Dogs, then, are peasants and the pets of peasants, cats are gentlemen and the pets of gentlemen. The dog is for him who places crude feeling and outgrown ethic and humanocentricity above austere and disinterested beauty; who just loves "folks and folksiness" and doesn't mind sloppy clumsiness if only something will truly care for him. (Tableau of dog across master's grave -- cf. Lanseer, "The Old Shepherd's Chief Mourner.") The guy who isn't much for highbrow stuff, but is always on the square and don't (sic) often find the Saddy post or the N.Y. World too deep for him; who hadn't much use for Valentino, but thinks Doug Fairbanks is just about right for an evening's entertainment. Wholesome -- constructive -- non-morbid -- civic-minded -- domestic -- (I forgot to mention the radio) normal -- that's the sort of go-getter that ought to go in for dogs.

The cat is for the aristocrat -- whether by birth or inclinations or both - who admires his fellow-aristocrats. He is for the man who appreciates beauty as the one living force in a blind and purposeless universe, and who worships that beauty in all its forms without regard for the sentimental and ethical illusions of the moment. For the man who knows the hollowness of feeling and the emptiness of human objects and aspirations, and who therefore clings solely to what is real -- as beauty is real because it pretends to a

significance beyond the emotion which it excites and is. For the man who feels sufficient in the cosmos, and asks no scruples of conventional prejudice, but loves repose and strength and freedom and luxury and sufficiency and contemplation; who as a strong fearless soul wishes something to respect instead of something to lick his face and accept his alternate blows and strokings; who seeks a proud and beautiful equal in the peerage of individualism rather than a cowed and cringing satellite in the hierarchy of fear, subservience, and devolution. The cat is not for the brisk, self-important little worker with a mission, but for the enlightened dreaming poet who knows that the world contains nothing really worth doing. The dilettante -- the connoisseur -- the decadent, if you will, though in a healthier age than this there were things for such men to do, so that they were the planners and leader of those glorious pagan times. The cat is for him who does things not for empty duty but for power, pleasure, splendour, romance, and glamour -- for the harpist who sings alone in the night of old battles, or the warrior who goes out to fight such battles for beauty, glory, fame and the splendour of a land athwart which no shadow of weakness falls. For him who will be lulled by no sops of prose and usefulness, but demands for his comfort the ease and beauty and ascendancy and cultivation which make effort worth while. For the man who knows that play, not work, and leisure, not bustle, are the great things of life; and that the round of striving merely in order to strive some more is a bitter irony of which the civilised soul accepts as little as it can.

Beauty, sufficiency, ease, and good manners -- what more can civilisation require? We have them all in the divine monarch who lounges gloriously on his silken cushion before the hearth. Loveliness and joy for their own sake -- pride and harmony and coordination -- spirit, restfulness and completeness -- all here are present, and need but a sympathetic disillusionment for worship in full measure. What fully civilised soul but would eagerly serve as high priest of Bast? The star of the cat, I think, is just now in the ascendant, as we emerge little by little from the dreams of ethics and conformity which clouded the nineteenth century and raised the grubbing and unlovely dog to the pinnacle of sentimental regard. Whether a renaissance of power and beauty will restore our Western civilisation, or whether the forces of disintegration are already too powerful for any hand to check, none may yet say, but in the present moment of cynical world-unmasking between the pretence of the eighteen-hundreds and the ominous mystery of the decades ahead we have at least a flash of the old pagan perspective and the old pagan clearness and honesty.

And one idol lit up by that flash, seen fair and lovely on a dream-throne of silk and gold under a chryselephantine dome, is a shape of deathless grace not always given its due among groping mortals -- the haughty, the unconquered, the mysterious, the luxurious, the Babylonian, the impersonal, the eternal companion of superiority and art -- the type of perfect beauty and the brother of poetry -- the bland, grave, compliant, and patrician cat.