

REFLECTIONS ON KITTENS

When Prince Potemkin wanted to send a gift to Catherine the Great that would distinguish him from all other suitors, he passed over such obvious possibilities as jewels, perfumes or rich fabrics, and presented her with a kitten. The success of his gift is reflected in history, but it is only one instance of the everlasting appeal of kittens and cats through the ages.

Ben Jonson's favorite excursions were to the fishmonger's to get oysters for his fastidious pet; Sir Walter Scott took delight in encouraging his pet's domination of a bloodhound; Lord Chesterfield left his cat a pension; Victor Hugo, Matthew Arnold, Henry James, the Bronzes, Mahomet, Petrarch, Walpole, Gregory the Great and Cardinal Wolsey were other devoted slaves of kittens and cats.

Cardinal Richelieu depend-

ed on kittens for relaxation and entertainment. The melancholy that threatened to weigh upon him in an hour of inactivity was always dispelled by the appearance of a basket of frolicsome, tumbling, mischievous kittens. But Richelieu banished his feline jesters as they approached maturity and replaced them with a younger, gayer generation.

Perhaps the most innocently happy moment of Louis XV's reign was provided by a kitten. The young king, only eight, had been presiding wanly over a tedious, incomprehensible meeting of state when a kitten jumped upon the royal lap and then onto the council table where it rolled and romped amongst papers of national importance.

The Renaissance was the Golden Age for cats; ecclesiastical and royal approval was bestowed upon them, and

anyone who amounted to anything in society had at least one of the animals for a pet. One royal lady, an accomplished harpist, insisted her kitten had more than ornamental value; if she played well, the feline purred; if she played badly the animal snubbed her.

While cats may no longer enjoy the stamp of governmental approval, affection for them has not waned. Not too many years ago, this advertisement appeared in a German newspaper: "Wanted by a lady of rank, for ade-

quate remuneration, a few well-behaved and respectably-dressed children to amuse a cat, in delicate health, two or three hours a day."

Even those who profess to dislike cats weaken at the sight of a kitten. They excuse their weakness with such remarks as "Kittens aren't cold and unfriendly," or "But kittens don't catch birds," seeming to forget that the animals won their owners' affections as kittens but retained them as they grew up to become cats. — *Warren Brown, from an American Magazine.*

A WORM

The late King Edward VII was an indulgent grandparent, but he did not allow the children to interrupt him. At luncheon one day a small granddaughter, allowed as a special privilege to sit next to the king, suddenly started to say something to him just as the salad course was being served. He cut her short and continued with what he had been saying.

The child watched him anxiously and presently tried again to speak, but was again silenced. When the king was quite through with his remarks, he turned to the little girl and asked, "Now, my dear, what was it you wished to say to me?"

"It's too late now," said the little princess. "I was trying to tell you there was a worm on your lettuce." — *Louise Lamprey.*