

PART
THREE

THE
BLEAK
YEARS

1923-1956

"May the (Rat) Fancy grow, so that soon we get some real competition, with Rats not left to only the one or two fanciers who are enthusiasts to-day."

- J. Wilton Steer - "A London Rattery", 'Fur & Feather'
5th. February 1932

P A R T 3
THE BLEAK YEARS
(1923 - 1956)

The re-alignment of 'F & F' could be cited as a major contributing factor in the reorganisation of the National Mouse Club in 1929. 'F & F' had, like so many other periodicals and magazines in the "Roaring Twenties" become markedly more "flashy" and commercialised. Gone was the polite phraseology of the pre-war years and the old-fashioned typesetting; everything was more "upmarket" and, in this respect, in the Author's opinion, 'F & F' failed. Thankfully, in later years it recovered its old style which it retained in a vaguely anachronistic manner up until 1978, when again, it became much more commercialised - a fact that led to its ultimate downfall in 1981.

In the mid 20's, there were many different Mouse Clubs, quite apart from the N.M.C, which did not seem to exert much authority over the situation at the time. There was the Northern Mouse Fanciers Club and the Southern Mouse Fanciers Club, pointing to an obvious rift in North/South relations, the Yorkshire Mouse Club, the Self Mouse Club, the A.O.V* Mouse Club, the Bristol Mouse and Rat Club, the London Mouse and Rat Club, the London and Southern Counties Mouse and Rat Club (founded 1915) and the most affluent of all, the Northern Fancy Mouse Association. Only four of the above clubs are known to have catered for Fancy Rats; the two London clubs, the Bristol Mouse and Rat Club and, of course, the N.M.C. At some point somebody must have seen that the great disunity was detracting from the Fancy and splitting up its potential resources. Therefore, a campaign of amalgamation began, culminating in the absorption by the N.M.C of all but the Bristol and two London clubs.

By the mid 30's, the Bristol Mouse and Rat Club was defunct, along with the London Mouse and Rat Club, thereby reducing avenues for the exhibition of Fancy Rats to two. It was not only this factor that did not help the floundering Rat Fancy. Very few Fanciers kept Rats and most of those that did kept them as a sideline to their Mice, with the exception of such notable Fanciers as Londoner Thomas Adams. The lack of Rat Fanciers led to the London and Southern Counties Mouse and Rat Club deleting all classes for Rats from their show schedule and deleting the words "and Rat" from their club title, along with all references to Rats in the club rules in 1934. A cruel blow indeed, but who can blame the Club's Committee when such little interest in Fancy Rats was shown, let alone the Rats being shown? So it was that the National Mouse Club was the only club in Great Britain to retain classes for Fancy Rats, although over the thirty five "Bleak Years" very few were ever shown.

In compiling articles for this section entitled "The Bleak Years", it was necessary to explore sources other than 'F & F', so scarce were the articles about Fancy Rats during this time. In fact, it seems that more articles were written in America than Britain about Fancy Rats in the 30's. In 1955, an article in the top peoples' journal "Country Life" was published; "Angelica", by Baroness Elizabeth Beck, showing that the mad English, especially the English upper classes had a love for unusual pets - in this case, a Fancy Rat. However, the caption with the photograph accompanying the article (of 'Angelica's' successor, 'Angelica II') is typical of the general phraseology regarding Fancy Rats during "bleak years"; Angelica II, although an obvious Hooded Rat is termed "a pet white Rat".

1955 also saw the National Mouse Club celebrate its Diamond Jubilee - sixty years of the Fancy Mouse. Alas, its most notable old member, Walter Maxey had died in 1949 aged 83, although he undoubtedly celebrated the club's Golden Jubilee in 1945. Also absent from the '55 celebrations was the Fancy Rat.

The first revival of the Fancy Rat was still two years off...

(* A.O.V = Any Other Variety)

FUR AND FEATHER, RABBITS AND RABBIT KEEPING, MARCH 23, 1923.

Beware of Dyed Furs : They Are Dangerous.



THE ONLY WEEKLY PAPER IN THE WORLD DEVOTED TO SHOW RABBITS, CAVIES, CATS, MICE, ETC., AND THE PRODUCTION OF RABBITS FOR FUR AND FOOD.
(OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE CAT FANCY).

No. 1,712. Vol. 69.

MARCH 23, 1923.

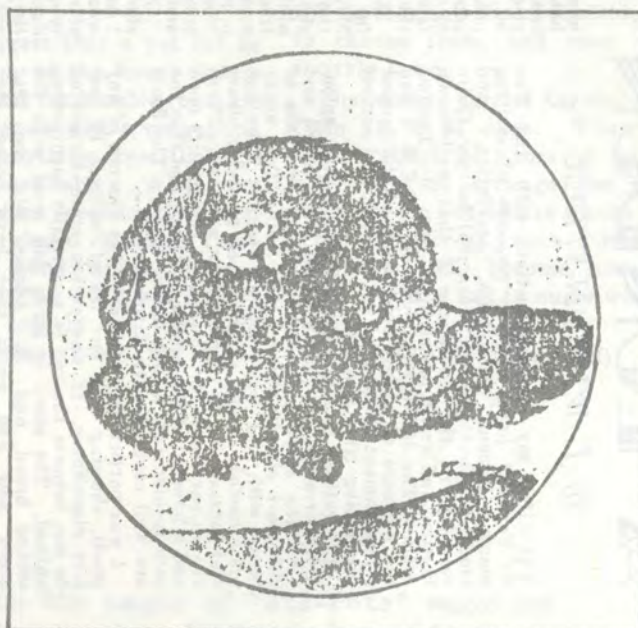
(Iss. as a newspaper for transmission abroad
as a magazine in Canada and Newfoundland)

TWOPENCE.

"THE LION SHALL LIE DOWN WITH THE LAMB."

A HOUSEHOLD CAT ADOPTS A FAMILY OF RATS.

The Cat shown in the accompanying picture is the proud mother of four kittens. She is the property of Mr. George Moore, a dairyman, of Long Leys Road, Lincoln. A few days ago Mr. Moore's son found a nest of young rats on the premises, and knowing that the Cat had a wonderful reputation as a rat catcher, he thought she would appreciate the opportunity of despatching the young rodents. He therefore put the rats into the Cat's resting place, amongst her kittens, naturally expecting to see them at once destroyed. To his surprise, the Cat immediately showed a motherly interest in the young Rats, and took them in as members of her family. At the present time she is suckling them along with her kittens, and it is quite a novel sight to see this extraordinary group. In the picture one of the rats is seen on the top of the Cat's body. Surely a more strange affection of an animal for its natural enemies has never been known. The photograph has been kindly sent to us by Mr. W. E. Feneley, of Lincoln.



A LONDON

By J. WILTON-STEER.

DURING my long connection with the Fur Fancy I have had the pleasure of visiting many famous rabbitries, caviaries, and mouseries, but never before a real rattery. Quite recently, at the invitation of that well-known breeder and exhibitor of fancy rats, Mr. Thomas Adams, The Rabbitries, Sydenham, S.E.26, I had the pleasure of seeing what must be the largest establishment of its kind in England, and a most interesting time I spent.

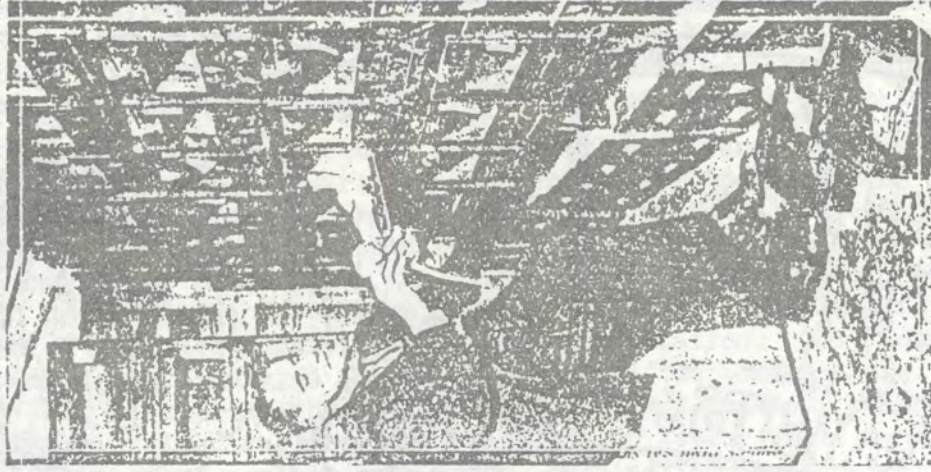
The rattery is a large, solidly-built shed, splendidly arranged so that one can walk round and view the stock with comfort. The pens are of the most simple construction, being 'tato sugar boxes with fine wire netting front. They are most useful, roomy, easy to keep perfectly clean, and inexpensive to replace when necessary. There are no partitions for nests, they being quite open and a handful of fine hay is provided, and this the rats fashion into a nest in one corner. The floors are well covered with sawdust.

I was particularly struck by the absence of any smell, showing that our friend believes in perfect cleanliness. It was rather more surprising to me, because the rat is a partially carnivorous animal. The stock is given fish meal with the soaked bread, and Mr. Adams told me that every now and again they have bones, etc., from the butcher to gnaw. That, of course, also helps to keep their teeth in condition, and condition here is everything.

In the old days, when our dear friend Miss Douglas was alive, it seemed to be the exception rather than the rule to find rats in perfect condition. They generally had cankered ears and scaly tails, but I saw no such thing among the hundreds I inspected here. Mr. Adams told me he would not tolerate such a thing for one moment. The rats are fed from a movable wagon which runs round the shed, and it was most interesting to watch how they all eagerly came to the front of their pens impatiently waiting for their turn to come.

My former idea of rats was that while they are intelligent they are inclined to be very nervous. Of their intelligence there can be no doubt, and once they know their owner they make the

our friend all the success he undoubtedly deserves. May the Fancy grow so that soon we get some real competition, with rats not left only to the one or two fanciers who are enthusiasts to-day.



Mr. Adams in a corner of his huge Rattery. Stenning, London

February 5th, 1932.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Thomas Adams was one of the very few Rat Fanciers in the 1930's. The above article by the famous J. Wilton-Steer, who had been President of the N.M.C. in 1905

FUR & FEATHER, RABBITS & RABBIT KEEPING.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Over page: The (reduced size) cover of 'Fur & Feather' for March 25th, 1923 and the only time that Rats ever made the front page.

In Recommendation of White Rats

By JOYA DICKMAN

DESPITE much public opinion to the contrary, a healthy bred, home-raised white rat makes a very satisfactory pet, with a minimum of trouble and muss, provided its diet and living quarters are right.

I have found them to be clean in their habits, quick to learn their names, and to identify different people and show recognition and affection. They have independence, optimism and a sense of humor. Rats that are given kindly, personal attention each day give grateful response to this treatment. They will not in the least mind being handled, will even come when you call and will evince great pleasure in having a frolic about with their owner in the spirit of play. A bit of string trailed along the floor in the same manner as would intrigue a kitten will also spell fun to a rat. They like to run in and out of improvised tunnels or paper bags, and will sometimes sport about with a small rubber ball. But

they must be shown these things and encouraged when young, as the older rats are less frivolously inclined.

There is almost as much difference in personality among these little animals as there is among people. It is a mistake to believe that because your experience with one has been unsatisfactory that any to follow will be equally discouraging. Out of thirty rats that I have owned there were only two that could actually be called "cussed," and I attributed this to the fact that I had bought them at too advanced an age and to the possibility of their former owner's mishandling them. These were exceptional cases, however, and one is not obliged to keep a bad-tempered rat.

I have had numerous pets in my time and most all of them were tried in apartment-house life. After going right down the line from monkeys, dogs, cats, canaries and ferrets, to rats—I was forced to admit that the latter gave me the least trouble and were for the smallest amount of money the most fun. An excellent feature about them is that you need never give up a week-end trip on the excuse that this pet of yours has to be nursed along at home. With the comparatively small amount of food and drink that they consume it is a simple matter to stock them up sufficiently to last for two or three days, and if you follow my suggestion at the end of this article on the ideal type of cage you will find on your return that they have kept themselves fairly clean.

I do not suggest that a pet rat be allowed the run of the house unless you are prepared for trouble, because of course they gnaw with a vengeance, and will steal anything from the cupboard that is available. When you wish to allow him freedom it is best to have a place closed off where there is nothing at hand which he may damage by gnawing. He will hugely enjoy a run outside on the lawn should you possess one. But when

this exercise is over he should be put back into his cage so that he will learn his rightful place, and the extent of his privileges.

The rat indoors should have his cage somewhere where he can be observed and where he is in the presence of the family. In this way he takes an interest in what is going on and gains full confidence in his protectors. He must be kept out of draughts, and be given clean bedding whenever this becomes dusty or stained with whatever he may have chosen to eat there. (Rats, like some people, love to eat in bed!)

Many people object to rats mainly, if not wholly, on account of their long hairless tails. It is a simple matter to remove the cause of this objection by taking the baby when it is about three days old and snipping off the tail with a sharp, sterilized pair of scissors. Apply an astringent to stop bleeding, follow by a few drops of Merchurochrome and the operation is over. This heals in about two weeks and when the baby grows hair the stub of tail is almost entirely lost in the little puff of white fur. I have found that this procedure seems actually to benefit the youngsters. The nourishment that would otherwise be taken up by the tail is absorbed by the body and they appear much more robust than young babies with tails retained.

If you are thinking of getting a rat, I would suggest your buying a bred female and raising your own first litter. Later, when they are about 21 days old you can select the best from the lot and sell or give away the others. The advantage is that you will have a better and healthier stock to choose from, and they will be entirely tame.

The mother carries her children for from 21 to 23 days. When she is within about 24 hours of labor she will begin to arrange her bed. I definitely do not advise cloths as material for this at such a time since the babies will become lost in the folds of it and fail to nurse when they should.

(To be Concluded)

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

A trip across the Atlantic into the pages of "All-Pets" magazine and two highly readable articles by Joya Dickman, herself not a Fancier, but one of the few people in the world to keep Rats at the time.

In Recommendation of White Rats

By JOYA DICKMAN

FOR BEDDING, I tear up a newspaper into a size of about 2" x 2" as the mother, in hovering over the babies, is quite capable of keeping them warm herself. She will have, as a rule, about 8 in her litter,—all born hairless and with closed eyes. Their skin is so thin that you can practically see every organ in their bodies. With the exception of the tail operation (on the third day) one should not handle the babies until they are nearly weaned because it makes the mother nervous and irritable and disturbs their nursing. The cage must be kept closed for if given an opportunity the mother will try to carry the young away to some dark corner and hide them. It is best to cover half the cage on the outside with a cloth or newspaper. This will insure a certain amount of darkness and privacy.

In two weeks the hair will come out on the babies and during the eleventh and twelfth days the eyes will begin to open. Weaning takes place in about 21 days but they will learn to eat considerably before they understand the principle of lapping from a saucer.

It was a long time before I understood that you cannot feed a rat cooked meat and vegetables, and everything from a dinner table without bad results. Do this and they will acquire a tenacious sort of itch that looks like poisoned oak. It will develop first on their ears and then about the root of the tail. They will scratch at it all day long, until their fur begins to fall out. Kur-mange will help abate it, but a radical change of diet is vital to complete the cure. The main part of their meals should be grain (wheat, corn, sunflower seed, etc.) milk, a little fresh fruit, lettuce or different kinds of raw vegetables in small quantities (they will soon indicate their preference) and sometimes they appear to like nuts. Contrary to popular belief, rats should not be fed cheese. This is hard for them to digest and will not be found of any benefit. They love watermelon, and will often drink chocolate or tomato juice. Adherence to a diet of this sort will keep them in excellent health, and whatever small amount of scratching they do will not indicate that anything is wrong, for much of it is in the nature of "preening." If, at times, the bowels are

too loose the assumption is that you are giving too much fruit or vegetables. Remember to keep a strict watch on the ears for the red, raised places that provoke constant scratching and take it in hand at once if it develops.

Anyone who does not know how properly to cage a rat will find their odor objectionable. I have kept them in everything from cigar boxes to bird cages, but none of these were satisfactory. The best thing to do is purchase an amount of galvanized $\frac{1}{2}$ " mesh wire and make the entire cage of this, including the floor. (Important: the floor strip must be raised up one inch from the bottom of the cage walls. This primary feature permits the droppings to fall thru and keep the rat's feet perfectly dry.) Underneath the cage put some kind of a shallow pan and line with newspapers or sawdust. The sawdust makes an almost complete deodorant. For bedding you may put some scraps of cloth or use, as before mentioned, bits of newspaper. In warm weather rats appear to prefer the latter. Two drinking dishes are advisable—particularly if you are out of the house all day and wish to leave a good supply of milk or water. For these, I find most preferable aluminum ladle spoons, not very large but deep. The handles of these may be bent double backwards and hooked into the wire in the side of the cage and made stationary.

In washing the cage (it is advisable to do this once a week) you will find it easy to scald and dry without fear of rust. You will notice that rats soon learn not to wet their beds and will always go to one corner to leave waste. You may wash the rats themselves once a week also. Warm water, soap, and a couple of drops of Lysol will do an excellent job. Be careful to keep the suds out of their eyes and ears. Rinse well and dry thoroughly. Some rats have absolutely no objection to a bath. Others scramble a bit.

Still in America, 1935 for S.P Holman's article on Fancy Rats. Note the excellent photograph of a Hooded Rat. From Holman's article, one can deduce that perhaps he was a Fancier himself.

June, 1935

ALL-PETS MAGAZINE

VARIETIES OF FANCY RATS

By S. P. HOLMAN

THE color varieties and coat patterns of fancy rats are very few compared to the hundreds of variations of like nature found in the mouse family.

Aside from the self or uniformly colored animals, there are only two coat patterns, "Hooded" and "Irish." The former is the best known among fanciers. Contrary to general opinion there is no variety which corresponds to the spotting found in mice. Spots, when they occur, are simply a breaking up of the dorsal stripe, usually solid, of the hooded variety.

Rats of the Irish variety have a colored body with a varying patch of white on the belly. This type will often result from mating a wild grey to an ordinary Albino. By proper selection the white area may be increased until it approaches the pattern of the hooded rats. In the same way the hood and stripe of the hooded variety may be increased until it covers the greater portion of the body, when it may easily pass for the Irish pattern.

In crosses between these two types, the Irish is dominant to the hooded. Both dominate the Albino and are in turn, recessive to "self." Albinos transmit the coat patterns in a latent state but show the dominant pattern of the hooded, not in color, but by a difference in texture or length of the hair in the area usually pigmented in the colored animals. Close inspection of a pen of Albinos will disclose several animals which show this peculiar characteristic. As in the case with mice, it is impossible to "fix" the coat pattern to produce any specified degree of pigmentation, there always being a certain amount of variation present. It has long been the goal of many fanciers to



A HOODED RAT

This breed of the fancy rat is one of the most popular among fanciers. You lovers of small animals as pets might give this breed a try. Mr. Holman describes it.

produce a white rat with black eyes, to correspond with the black eyed white of the mouse fancy. As far as I know, no such animal has ever been bred.

Among the best known colors of fancy rats are black, brown, grey, yellow, cream, silver and cinnamon. The yellows may have either dark or light eyes. Any of these colors may be combined with white to form the hooded and Irish varieties.

From time to time, a hairless mutation has been noted among otherwise normal animals. From these has come a strain of rats in which the hair is partially or wholly lacking. Another mutation is that which causes certain individuals to run in circles much the same as waltzing mice. This characteristic has not, however, been developed and, therefore, there is no race of waltzing rats.

For some reason, colored rats have never been in much demand for labo-

ratory work, consequently the market is confined to those who desire them for pets or for experimental work in heredity. Personally, I find the work of creating new colors among my standard varieties, very fascinating and not nearly as intricate as when using mice. The latest addition to my list is a pretty "smoky" color, much like the variety of the same name in Persian cats.

In addition to making the best of pets and being able to live in small quarters on simple food, rats are easily trained to do numerous tricks. I have in my scrap book, a photo sent me by a lady in Connecticut, showing a pet cat holding a tiny nursing bottle for one of her rats, also another showing the same cat holding a ruler in its mouth, on each end of which a rat is balancing himself. A cage having a merry-go-round, or wheel such as is used for squirrels is a source of endless amusement for the rats as well as their owner.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

Over page: A jump of twenty years forward in time towards the end of the "Bleak Years" and into the pages of the high Society journal, "Country Life" for a rare and most humorous article about Angelica, a white Rat. The date, 13th. January was to become very significant twenty-one years later.

ANGELICA

By BARONESS ELIZABETH BECK

NO doubt it is the snake-like tail of the white rat that offends the sensibilities of grown-up people; it certainly has no such effect on children. How sad it seems that for so poor a reason the kindest of children's small pets have, of late years, been completely banished!

When we were children we all had them, but more recently, losing our beloved dogs from hard-past, I went to comfort my small son, and indeed myself, in search of a white rat. No pet store, East-end or West-end, had a white rat. Hamsters and smelly little mice in quantity, but no white rats. Finally, rather wearily, we paid a guinea for a cream hamster, an attractive little fellow, who bit us all, and finally disappeared down a mouse-hole.

Then, by chance, we found a store with four white rats. The manager confessed he had no idea where they came from, and that the only customer to date had been a snake charmer, with whom he, the manager, had kindly declined to co-operate.

She cost the pathetic sum of two-and-threepence. She was weak and bewildered when we brought her home, through lack of handling and exercise. She wobbled doubtfully about the room, having taken a dislike to the stupid mouse-cage which was all we were able to buy. Next day we found her a palatial hamster cage, with a tin lining (against savage little teeth) and a wide glass front. The glass front was immediately removed, as white rats do not need to be enclosed, and the tin lining she philosophically ignored. We called her Angelica, after an old favourite, a name which was unromantically reduced to Jelly-bags by our small son. We began feeding her, each time a little farther from the cage. In three weeks' time she would gallop out, with a swish of that unfortunate tail, sit up and beg for her food, or follow us round like a tiny inquisitive dog, continually getting stepped on.

Then came the moment when we had to travel. To my husband's concern, she was popped into a tennis-ball box and stowed away in our car. After a time, however, she found

and this was long is one of the most amusing things to watch.

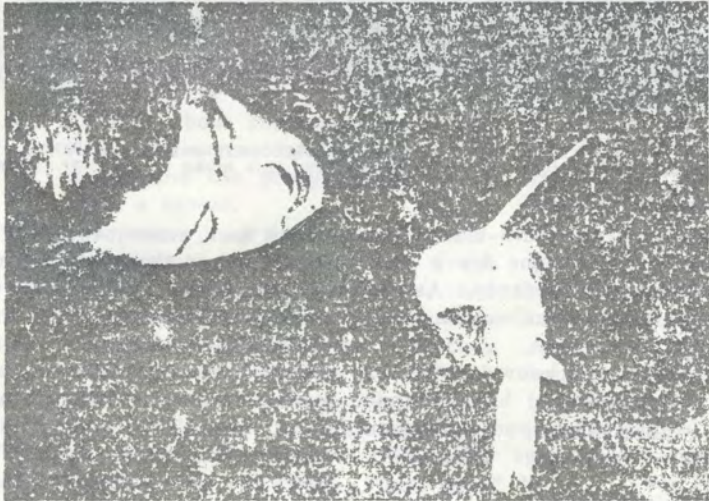
They are really more like squirrels, than brown wild rats, and their diet is almost that of the rabbit, namely lettuce, brown bread, milk and carrots. They will play with a piece of meat or fish, sometimes hide it, but seldom eat it. They dislike cheese. No doubt people in restaurants thought me curiously eccentric as I popped little pieces of lettuce and carrot into my bag, and the odd fried potato, the mad English, indeed, but any such worry was forgotten when we went back to our room and a tiny figure hurtled towards us to haul out what we had brought her. One thing was remarkable, considering the short while we had had her, and this was the distinction she could make between our foot-steps and those of a chambermaid on a visit, at whose approach she hid quickly under the bed.

When we left the room for any length of time we put her, with her box half open, in a drawer or cupboard, where she would sleep peacefully until we returned. If she were discovered, we always knew it from her agitated behaviour, or by meeting the manager, or his assistant, guiltily leaving our room. In no hotel was there any complaint. Indeed, in Hongkong she made great friends with the chambermaid, who had once had a hamster (until it chewed up her clothes); she was taken on show all round the hotel, ate far too much, and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Back in London, she returned happily to her tin lined cage on the landing, where she would pop out to keep an eye on anyone coming or going.

We now have, since Angelica's death, Angelica II, the hooded white rat of the photograph, which, having been taken very young, is anything, even tamer and more absurdly playful.

The great charm of these gentle little creatures for children lies in their complete lack of smell, that they refuse under any circumstances to bite, that they do not chew furniture or carpets and that they have no desire at all to run away.



THE AUTHOR WITH ANGELICA II.
A PET WHITE RAT

that when we cornered last she was thrown about, so, slightly incensed, she left the box, found one of my husband's old sheepskin gloves, and in this travelled for the rest of our thousand-mile drive round Scandinavia and Germany. Sometimes a little pink nose would show, sometimes the tip of that despised tail, but these were hastily thrust back when we passed through Customs. She entered and left hotels in my pocket. When we were long in reaching our room she registered indignation by refusing to go back to her box, and by long and violent washing.

White rats play and wash like kittens,