

"CAT-CHAT" AT No. 10, DOWNING STREET

By ELSIE K. MORTON

(During the recent war-crisis in London, when the Prime Minister was making his momentous air-trips to Germany, everything connected with the Chamberlain residence became suddenly invested with extraordinary interest for Londoners. Even the house-cat at No. 10 became news. The papers printed numerous articles about this ordinary old black Tom, who was to be seen almost every day basking on the doorstep or sitting on the gate-post. His daily appearances were said to be an omen of good luck for the Empire, and hundreds of people went to Downing Street every day in hope of seeing The Cat.)

FOR nearly a quarter of an hour I stood as still as a stone, right opposite No. 10, waiting. The tall policeman standing on the kerb took no more notice of me than if I had been a bit of banana skin on the pavement.

At last I plucked up courage and addressed him. I didn't like doing it, because these poor men have to answer so many foolish questions—particularly from overseas visitors!

"I've—I've come to see—that is, would you please tell me—" I began timidly, "if—"

"No, you won't see him to-day," he said crisply. "No use waiting!"

"Oh dear! Why not?"

"Because he's gone, of course."

"Gone! Where's he gone?"

"He's flown to Germany to see Hitler, of course. Don't you read the papers?" he asked severely.

"But a friend told me she saw him here only half an hour ago! At lunch-time. I've come specially to see him!"

"Saw him here? At lunch-time?" exclaimed the tall policeman.

"Yes! Sitting on the gate-post, cleaning his whiskers!"

"Sitting on the—! What the—who the—who? What are you talking about?" demanded the policeman, not too politely.

"The Cat. I've come to see The Cat. The Black Cat at No. 10," I said patiently. "I

Elsie K. Morton Returns to N.Z.

ELSIE K. MORTON, writer of this delightful sketch, recently returned to New Zealand after two years spent abroad seeking travel experience, principally in Europe. To New Zealanders, she is best known for her two books, "Along the Road" and "Joy of the Road." An interview with her will appear in next week's "Record."

read about him in the paper the other night. He's supposed to bring good luck when the Empire's in a tight corner, you know. Has Mr. Chamberlain taken him with him?"

"Taken him—what, taken the black cat to Germany? No! Of course not!"

"But you said he had! You said distinctly I wouldn't see him because he'd gone to Germany!"

"I said the Prime Minister had gone to Germany to see Hitler. I don't know a thing about any cat!"

"Don't you really?" I asked in surprise. "I thought everybody knew about No. 10's Black Cat! Don't you read the papers?"

Another Tack

THE policeman made no reply. He seemed to be watching the flight of a bird.

"Ah, that reminds me," I said, following his upward gaze. "Quite possibly he is up in Mrs. Chamberlain's roof garden. I've read a lot in the papers about that, too. . . . I'd just love to see it!" I paused hopefully.

The policeman made no reply. He seemed absorbed in contemplation of a St. James's Palace chimney pot.

"Yes, I'd just love to see it," I repeated gently. "I'm from New Zealand. We don't have roof gardens there. I'm going back soon."

A look of relief seemed to sweep over the policeman's stern features. His gaze fell from the skies. I shot a quick glance at him and moved a trifle nearer.

"Yes, very soon," I said softly. "Do you—oh, officer, do you think I could possibly get a glimpse of Mrs. Chamberlain's garden before I go?"

"Why, yes! Quite possibly!" he said promptly.

"Oh, really?" I cried excitedly.

"How?"

"From an aeroplane!"

The heartless wretch!

"No, I don't think I'll bother, thanks," I said coldly, moving away. "Goodbye. I'm sorry I've missed The Cat. It's always a pleasure to talk to a really intelligent animal!"

"Good-bye." His voice was actually cordial now. "I'll tell him you called!"

I paused for a parting shot. "Do you think you'll know him when you see him?"

"I always know a cat when I see one!" He replied.

But I pretended not to hear. . . .

Miller's Virtuous Wife In Lively Ballet Of Spain

Gay Melodies To Delight The Gloomy

MUSICAL wizard of Spain is de Falla. In his delightful ballets he conjures up scenes of such gorgeous colour, such dazzling romance that the listener is bewitched and intoxicated by their alluring charm.

The gay melodies and fascinating rhythms of his music cast a spell which even the gloomiest mortal must find impossible to resist.

How wonderfully de Falla knows every corner of Spanish life! In "The Three Corners Hat" ballet, the action is founded on a story wherein a pompous magistrate seeks to seduce a miller's virtuous wife, only to meet defeat and ridicule at the hands of the lady and her watchful spouse. The ballet takes its name from the official hat of this magistrate or Corregidor.

The scene is the approach to a mill and, in the opening dances, the miller and his wife are busy about their garden and its grape vines. They are clearly a devoted couple. A voice is heard near the beginning singing an Andalusian song; it is a summer afternoon.

The pompous and ungainly Corregidor, with his suite, passes by, and is so smitten by the charms of the miller's wife

that he soon returns to pay his addresses to her. She dances a Fandango for him, fooling him so successfully as to leave him ridiculously discomfited.

In the evening of the same day—St. John's Festival—the miller's friends drink and make merry with him and his wife, and then the miller dances for them—a vigorous and rhythmic measure. Hardly has he ended when the Corregidor's minions appear and arrest him, refusing any reason for their warrant.

When the miller's wife has put out the lights and shut the mill, the Corregidor appears furtively, fired by wicked hopes, but again is discomfited, falling in the darkness, into the mill-stream.

The husband escapes his captors and returns, and, after various complications, the ballet ends in the happy reunion of the faithful pair, with their neighbours hurrying in to toss the wicked Corregidor in a blanket.

"The Three Corners Hat Suite" by Manuel de Falla, will be played by the New Light Symphony Orchestra, under Dr. Malcolm Sargent, from 1YA on Saturday, January 14.

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