



**THE
ADVENTURES OF A CAT
AND A FINE CAT TOO!**



PORTRAIT OF A LADY.

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ADVENTURES OF A CAT
AND A FINE CAT TOO!**

BY ALFRED ELWES,

AUTHOR OF 'THE ADVENTURES OF A BEAR,' 'THE ADVENTURES OF A DOG,' ETC.

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PREFACE.

In selecting the biography of another animal from the Archives of Caneville, for the entertainment of a very different race, I thought I could not do better than fix upon "The Cat;" and as the celebrated Miss Minette Gattina, the historian of poor Job, had bequeathed some of her own memoirs to her native City, furnished, too, with an

Introduction by herself, I at once seized upon the materials thus afforded me, and converted them into their present form. I know not whether they will enjoy the same favour which the Public has deigned to accord to the veracious story of "A Bear," or the simple "Adventures of a Dog." Time will show whether these true memoirs will be as attractive to youthful readers as the other tales of the feline race, from time immemorial such standard favourites; whether they will have even a chance of success, after the story of that strong-minded Puss, who trod down the ignorant, and made her own and master's fortune in a pair of top-boots; or that other famous tabby,¹ so intimately associated with City annals and the name of Whittington, whose powers of leading her proprietor to wealth were no less remarkable.

I count as but of little moment the story of the "White Cat;" for though it often charmed me in my days of romance, when the world seemed all bright and beautiful, and the Golden Age appeared no marvel, I have been since angry with myself at my admiration, as though charmed under false pretences, seeing that the said "White Cat" was no Puss after all, but a very free and easy young lady in disguise.

My Caneville Pussy is at least a true one. From the respect in which she appears to have been held in her place of birth, and from the attention which seems to have been bestowed upon her by most of the great animals of Caneville, there is every reason to believe that the scenes she describes were real; for it was a weakness of the Dons in that famous City only to grant favour where it was merited, and never to associate with those whose moral character was not above suspicion.

With these preliminary remarks, I leave Miss Minette to tell her own story. That no one was more capable of doing so may be judged from the fact that it was a customary thing with her to relate it to a crowd of admiring listeners, whom the fame of her beauty, adventures, and with attracted to her dwelling; and though the comments which were made and the questions asked by one or other of the auditory, made the narration on such occasions a rather lengthy one, the written memoirs, from which this tale has been translated, may be considered the pith, the marrow, as it were, of her "household narrative."

A. E.

*King's
Moorgate Street, London.*

Arms

Yard,

¹ ([return](#)) Some of the learned F.A.S.'s of the present day insist that this celebrated animal was *tortoise-shell*, and others aver, with equal energy, that it was *white*. Who shall decide?

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WANDERING MINSTRELS

INTRODUCTION.

I was about to address my readers with the usual phrase, that "at the request of friends" I had collected the scattered memorials of the chief events of my life, and now presented them to the reading world, in the hope that some lesson might be learnt from them, which could be useful to the inexperienced when similarly situated. But I will be more candid, and say rather, that "to please myself" I have put into a complete form the recollections in question; not however without the wish that they may prove of service to Cat, ay, and to Dog, and other kind. There never was a life spent in this world but that its history could teach a lesson; for, though every life has peculiarities of its own, and may be varied in a thousand ways, the wishes, the resolutions of most of us do not take a wide range, nor does it require a very extensive circle to limit them all.

I would not however have my readers imagine that vanity alone has induced me to record my experiences. No; I have had another, and I think a higher motive. I wished to convey to the intelligence of all animals capable of understanding the language of Caneville, some portions of the history of a *real* Cat; and, by so doing, try to remove from the minds of many the opinion that she is a creature *ignorant of the finer feelings, oblivious of gratitude*, incapable of strong attachments, and so uncertain in her temper as to scratch and bite even, one minute, the paw she has been licking and fondling the moment before. I wished to prove that the same natural disposition holds good with our race as with every other; that some of us are, from our birth, kind, rough, loveable, cruel, tender-hearted, and ferocious, just as other beasts that wear a tail or come into the world without one; and that this temperament may be modified, and even changed, by education and treatment, precisely as the dispositions of other animals.

It is a cruel wrong done to our race to exclaim, as many do, that "Cats have no attachments, no tenderness; that there is always a lurking fierceness in their hearts, which makes them forget, with the first mark of roughness or ill treatment, a thousand benefits which they may have formerly received." I deny it wholly. I, a Cat, affirm that, with few exceptions, there are no animals more loving or more tender. Look at the care which a respectable married Puss bestows upon her numerous offspring! Can any mamma more carefully wash or tend her darlings? Will any show greater willingness to forego her own occupations, in order to fondle and descend to be the playmate of her little ones? Does any display a firmer courage to defend them? And if she should give way to a little expression of feeling when her tail is trodden upon or pulled, or be

betrayed into an angry growl when her territory is invaded, what then? You would not have her show so little spirit as to receive every insult unnoticed, or return a quiet "thank you" for the pain, physical or moral, which has been inflicted on her. How would *you*, dear reader, act if *your* tail were wantonly pulled, or if *your* house were to be entered by an ugly stranger without invitation?

We most of us laugh at our good friends the Sheep, and indulge in many a sly joke at their stupidity. "What can be more absurd," we say, "than that habit of theirs of constantly playing at 'follow my leader,' and putting themselves into all sorts of disagreeable situations in consequence?" But are we any better ourselves? Are not *we* always following some leader?—always imitating somebody, and running in crowds hither and thither because so-and-so are running there too? And thus it is that *opinions*, once uttered by some great animal in authority, are taken up and repeated by his imitators, and are looked on as the very essence of wisdom, while they are often, in fact, no other, when examined, than untrue or mischievously unjust. Such are the pet sentences I have alluded to, wherein Cats are described: a whole race is sometimes condemned because a few members of it have proved unworthy; and a tribe gets a bad name because some animal of influence, a Jackass perhaps, brays out that "they are *all* worthless."

It has been often observed, and I therefore do not profess to utter an original idea by remarking it again, that when our prejudices are enlisted in favour of or against any object, every circumstance is turned to its advantage or the reverse. If we have done an animal a kindness, we are ready to do him another; if we have inflicted on him any injury, we are not at all indisposed to add a fresh one to it. And so it has happened that our numerous family, having been by many ill treated, are constantly exposed to kicks and insult from those same parties, for no other reason than that they have kicked and insulted us before. The meekness of our disposition has been distorted into hypocrisy; our quiet has been called "meditative treachery;" and our natural and innocent instincts have been styled "the proofs of a sanguinary temperament." Our every look has been perverted by our enemies into a moral squint; and our simplest caress and naturally fondling way have been set down as the strongest marks of a Jesuitical heart. In fact, in the eyes of many, nothing we can do, no step we can take, but is considered evidence of our wicked disposition; and we are not unfrequently loaded with abuse for the very things for which beasts that have a better name get love and commendation.

How happy it would make me if I thought the perusal of these few pages would induce any one to pause and reflect before condemning any one animal! And here I do not refer to my own race alone, but to the world of beasts at large; whether the Lion, creating a sensation in the class to which he belongs, or the Ass, laughed at for his stupidity in the circle to which his position in life assigns him. The same animal would often be judged differently if differently situated: were the Lion and the Ass, by some freak of nature, to change places, the stupidity of the latter would be set down as wit, and his every

saying would be applauded; whilst the Lion, instead of being looked on as the perfection of nobleness and beauty, would be styled a surly brute, and considered at the best no better than a bore.

I think I hear some of my readers exclaim, "Who is this old Cat, forsooth, that she should thus presume to teach us lessons? The 'itch for scratching' must be very strong upon her that she should insist on swelling her tale in so outrageous a manner!" I own my fault, and will bring my musings to a stop.

My wish was to meet my readers with a friendly rub; my desire was to part from them with a gentle warning. Above all, my wish was to have them think of me kindly; for, though a Cat, and no longer young,—though no more possessed of those graces which once distinguished me, when the eye, as I have been told, felt pleasure in gazing on my form,—my heart still beats warmly, tenderly, and without envy, and would feel no common joy if it thought it had not dwelt in this earthly abode in vain.



A JUVENILE PARTY.

KITTENHOOD.

There is nothing like beginning at the very commencement of a story, if we wish it to be thoroughly understood; at least, *I* think so; and, as I wish *my* story to be clear and intelligible, in order that it may furnish a hint or a warning to others, I shall at least act up to my opinion, and begin at the beginning,—I may say, at the very tip of my tale.

Being now a Cat of some years' standing (I do not much like remembering how many), I was of course a Kitten on making my entry into life,—my first appearance being in company with a brother and three sisters.

We were all declared to be "the prettiest little darlings that ever were seen;" but as the old Puss who made the remark had said precisely the same thing at sight of every fresh Kitten she beheld, and she was accustomed to see ten or twelve new ones every week, the observation is no proof of our being very charming or very beautiful.

I cannot remember what passed during the first few days of my existence, for my eyes were close-shut till the ninth morning. I have an indistinct recollection however of overhearing a few words which passed between my mother and a friend of the family who had dropped in for a little chat, on the evening of the eighth day.

The latter had been remarking on my efforts to uncloset my lids, to obtain a little peep at what was going on, when my good parent exclaimed,

"Ah! yes, she tries hard enough to stare at life now, because she knows nothing of it; but when she is as old as you or I, neighbour, she will wish more than once that she had always kept her eyes closed, or she is no true Cat."

I could not of course, at the time, have any notion what my mother meant, but I think, indeed I am *sure*, that I have discovered her meaning long ago; and all those who have lived to have sorrow,—and who has not?—will understand it too.

I had found my tongue and my legs, and so had my brother and sisters, before we got the use of our eyes. With the first we kept up a perfect concert of sounds; the legs we employed in dragging our bodies about our capacious cradle, crawling over each other, and getting in everybody's way, for we somehow managed, in the dark as we were, to climb to the edge of our bed and roll quickly over it, much to our astonishment and the amusement or annoyance of the family, just as they happened to be in the humour.

Our sight was at last granted us. On that eventful morning our mother stepped gently into our bed, which she had left an hour before; and, taking us one by one in her maternal embrace, she held us down with her legs and paws, and licked us with more affection and assiduity than she had ever bestowed on our toilet before. Her tongue, which she rendered as soft for the occasion as a Cat's tongue can be made, I felt pass and repass over my eyes until the lids burst asunder, and I could *see*!

And what a confusion of objects I first beheld! It seemed as if everything above was about to fall upon my head and crush me, and that everything around was like a wall to prevent my moving; and when, after a day or two, I began to understand better the distance that these objects were from me, I fell into the opposite error, and hurt my nose not a little through running it against a chair, which I fancied to be very much further off. These difficulties however soon wore away. Experience, bought at the price of some hard knocks, taught me better; and, a month after my first peep at the world, it seemed almost impossible I could ever have been so ignorant.

No doubt my brother and sisters procured their knowledge in a similar way: it is certain that it cost them something. One incident, which happened to my brother, I particularly remember; and it will serve to prove that he did not get *his* experience for nothing.

We were all playing about the room by ourselves, our mother being out visiting or marketing, I do not know which, and the nurse, who was charged to take care of us, preferring to chat to the handsome footman in the tortoise-shell coat over the way, to looking after us Kittens.

A large pan full of something sticky, but I do not remember what, was in a corner; and as the edge of it was very broad, we climbed on to it and peeped in.

Our brother, who was very venturesome, said he could jump over it to the opposite brim. We said it was not possible, for the pan was broad and rather slippery; and what a thing it would be if he fell into it! But the more we exclaimed about its difficulty, the more resolved he was to try.

Getting his legs together, he gave a spring; but, slipping just as he got to the other side, his claws could not catch hold of anything to support himself, and he went splash backwards into the sticky mess. His screams, and indeed ours, ought to have been enough to call nurse to our assistance; but she was making such a noise herself with the tortoise-shell footman, that my brother might have been drowned or suffocated before *she* would have come to his assistance. As it was, he managed to drag himself to the edge without any help at all; and as we feared that all of us would get punished if the adventure were known, my sisters and myself set to work and licked him all over; and then getting into bed, we cuddled up together to make him dry, and were soon fast asleep.

Although the accident was not known at the time, we all suffered for it; for my brother caught a dreadful cold, and myself and sisters were ill for several days, through the quantity of the stuff we had licked off my brother's coat, and one of us nearly died through it.

As we grew stronger and older, we were permitted, under the care of our nurse, to go into the country for a few hours to play. It may be perhaps thought, from what I have said, that nurse's care was not worth much, and that we might just as well have looked after ourselves, as the poorer Kittens of our city were accustomed to do. But this was not precisely the case; for when nurse had nobody to chat with she was very strict with us, I assure you, and on such occasions made up for her inattention at other times. That unlucky fondness of hers however for gossiping, was the cause of a great deal of mischief; and about this time it partly occasioned a sad misfortune in our family. I said *partly*, because the accident was also due to an act of disobedience; and as the adventure may serve as a double warning, I will briefly relate it.

It was a lovely morning in early summer; the sun shone gaily upon the city, looked at his brilliant face in the river, danced about among the leaves of the trees, and polished the coats of every Cat and Dog which came out to enjoy the beautiful day he was making.

To our great delight we were allowed to take a long walk in the country. Two of our cousins, and a young Pussy who was visiting at our house, were to accompany us; and nurse had strict charge to prevent our getting into mischief. Before we started our mother called us and said, that, although she had desired nurse to look after us, and take care that no harm should happen while we were out, she desired also that we should take care of *ourselves*, and behave like Kittens of station and good-breeding, not like the young Cats about the streets, poor things! who had no home except the first hole they could creep into, no food but what they could pick up or steal, and no father or mother that they knew of to teach them what was good. Such creatures were to be pitied and relieved, but not imitated; and she hoped we would, by our behaviour, show that we bore her advice in mind. "Above all," she added, "do not let me hear of your climbing and racing about in a rude and extravagant way, for a great deal of mischief is often done by such rough modes of amusement."

We hastily promised all and everything. If we had kept our words, we should have been perfect angels of Cats, for we declared in a chorus that we would do only what was good, and would carefully avoid everything that was evil; and with these fine promises in our mouths, we started off in pairs under the guidance of nurse.

We soon came to the wood, situated at some distance from the city; and, walking into it, shortly arrived at an open space, where some large trees stood round and threw broad patches of shade over the grass.

We at once commenced our gambols. We rolled over one another, we sprang over each other's backs, and hid behind the great beech trunks for the pleasure of springing out upon our companions when they stealthily came to look for us.

In the midst of our fun we observed that nurse had gone. We had been so busied with our own diversions that not one of us had observed her departure; but now that we found it out, we set off to discover where she had strolled to. We observed her, after a few minutes, cosily seated on a bank of violets, near the very same tortoise-shell footman, who lived opposite our house, although how *he* came there we could not imagine. Nor indeed did we much trouble ourselves to guess. Seeing she was so engaged we returned at once to our sport, and played none the less heartily because nurse was not there to curb us.

I remember, as if it were only yesterday, the scene which followed. I was amusing myself with one of my pretty cousins, who was dressed in white, and was about my own age. I had thrown her down on the grass, and was patting her with my paws, when I heard a scream; I turned quickly round, just in time to see one of my sisters falling from a tall tree, to which she had climbed with our young visitor, when, all of us running up, we discovered that, on reaching the ground, she had struck her head against a sharp stone, and was now bleeding and without motion.

Our cries brought nurse to the spot, who, as soon as she discovered all the mischief that had been done, without saying a word started off with all swiftness, with her tail in the air. We thought she had gone to fetch assistance or to inform our mother of what had occurred; but as she did not come back, and evening was fast setting in, we thought it best to proceed towards home, although we did not much like meeting our parents after what had happened.

There was no help for it however; so, giving a last frightened look at our poor little sister, who was now quite dead and cold, we walked sadly homewards, and reached the house just as night was falling.

I pass over what ensued,—my mother's grief, and her anger against nurse, who, by the bye, never came back to express her sorrow; I pass over also my mother's remarks upon the occasion; but I may observe, that they, added to the sad accident itself, made so deep an impression upon me, that whenever I felt inclined to disobey my good mother's admonitions, the image of my dead sister would rise up before me, and, although it did not, alas! *always* prevent my being wicked, it often did so, and on every occasion made me feel repentance for my error.

DANGERS.

My Father was what is called a sporting character. The quantity of rats he caught, and of birds he ensnared, was almost incredible; and the fame of his exploits spread throughout the neighbourhood.

A taste of so decided a kind, and a dexterity so remarkable, not unnaturally extended to his offspring; and before we had attained our full growth, we had all killed our rats and caught our birds.

To indulge this passion my father had two little huts, which he called hunting-boxes, both conveniently situated for his favourite pursuits. One was on the bank of the river, near some old timber, a famous haunt of the rats, who had a colony close by; and the other was in a wooded spot, overhung with trees, among which the birds loved to linger, although many of their number waited there to their destruction.

My mother, who had been very delicately brought up, and who had very strict notions concerning propriety in female Cats, was very anxious to keep myself and sisters away from either of these places, although she had, of course, no objection that our brother should visit them; but, as we had been all educated together, we Pussies thought it rather hard that Tommy should go whilst we were forced to stop at home; and, as our father was very indulgent, we often managed to slip off unawares and join him and our brother, trusting to his kindness to save us from our mother's displeasure.

I happened to learn one day that several sporting Cats had been invited to a great hunt, the place of meeting being my father's box beside the river. I felt the greatest desire to be present at one of these affairs, as Tommy's account of them had made my very mouth water. I knew it would be vain to ask my mother's consent, as she would not only refuse it, but would take measures to prevent my getting out if I felt inclined to disobey. I therefore kept very quiet about the matter, but resolved within myself to indulge my inclination, and get a peep at what was going on.

"It will be easy," I thought, "to do so without any one being the wiser; and even if I should be found out when I am there, I am sure father will not be angry."

With this reflection, on the appointed morning I slipped off unperceived, and, arriving at the hut a good hour before the time fixed, I climbed up to the top by the help of a tree which grew near; and stretching myself on the roof, with my eyes peering over the edge, just where a branch of the elm I had got up by afforded me a shade, I waited for the company.

They were not long in coming. My father and brother arrived first, and a servant with some provisions; they were soon followed by an immense White Cat with one eye (but what a fierce one it was!) and a handsome Tabby, his son. Next came a Cat they called

Mr. Dick, who wore a shabby grey coat, rather torn and patchy, and whose tail was ragged and dirty, yet to whom everybody showed a great deal of attention, because, as I afterwards learnt, he was very rich and ill-tempered. There were two or three others that I don't well remember, but which made the number complete.

As soon as they were all assembled, they sat down to breakfast; and I could see them through a chink in the roof as they demolished their meal. I had taken the precaution to bring something to eat too, and I now devoured it with much appetite; for the fresh morning air and my elevated position had made me hungry. As I munched my food, I could hear the conversation below, and was much edified by the terrible stories which some of them told about the fights they had had with rats as big as themselves, and the fierce battles they had won. I could not help observing that although Mr. Dick's adventures were much less wonderful than those of any other Cat present, they were heard with a great deal more interest, and were applauded as infinitely more remarkable.

Word was now given to prepare for the coming hunt, and every Cat rose from table, and came out among the timber. Hiding themselves behind various logs, my father stood up and uttered a loud cry, which I afterwards learnt was a signal for a quantity of ferrets, trained for that purpose, to rush into the rats' holes to drive them out. As the rats have the greatest horror of these creatures, they sprang from their hiding-places in the wildest confusion, and were at once pounced upon by the hidden Cats.

What a scene of confusion followed! The rats, who were scampering along, over and under the logs to escape from the hated ferrets, were suddenly aware of the presence of more detested and more formidable enemies, as, one by one, the sporting Cats jumped up, and made a dash at their bewildered prey.

My excitement at this spectacle was almost more than I could bear. As the growls of my friends and kindred, joined to the screams of the flying rats, became audible, and I could see the lashing of tails and the fierce glances of bright eyes, accompanied every now and then by a chase where some rat, which had been hiding beneath a log, suddenly leaped across the open ground, I sprang to my feet, I ran hither and thither, with my tail swollen to twice its natural size, from my eagerness to participate in the so-called *sport* of my relations.

I was not however destined to remain without my share of it, although I did not stir from the spot where I had been concealed. I said that a tree grew close to the hunting-box, on the roof of which I was placed, and that it was by its help that I had climbed to my present elevation. A large rat, with a body not very much smaller than my own, which had managed to escape from the fight where so many of his friends and relations had fallen, sought about for a place of refuge. Espying the tree, and seeing that all his enemies were at that moment too much engaged to attend to him, he sprang up the trunk and came rapidly towards me, little expecting to find another of his foes so far away

from her companions. I watched him come, and resolved in my own mind that he should not escape, although my heart beat a good deal at the idea of the encounter.

The rat sprang on to the roof, and was going to scamper over it, when his fierce little eyes,—and quick nose too, no doubt, for it moved incessantly,—spied me out, crouching at a short distance and ready to spring. He stopped an instant, as if considering what it were best to do, then, thinking perhaps that if he attempted to run I should be at once upon his back, and, I suppose, observing from my look that I was only a Kitten after all, he came boldly towards me, and, just as I was about to pounce upon him, he sprang, like a flash of lightning, at my face, and made his sharp teeth meet in the most tender part of my nose. In vain I shrieked and beat the terrible creature with all my strength upon the roof; it was to no purpose that I fixed my sharp claws into his sides, and tried to tear him from his hold; he would not let go, and the pain was at last so great, that, squeezing him in my paws, I rolled over and over in my agony. The roof was sloping, and slippery besides with dew, so that, blinded with terror and not knowing what I did, I gradually got near the edge, and at last tumbled over on to the party below. I should probably have been much hurt by the fall, as I was not yet clever enough to tumble on my feet, but that I came down plump upon the back of a very stout Cat, who was standing a little aside quite tired out with his exertions. Him I knocked completely over, sending him flying, to his astonishment, a dozen paces off; the rat, detached from my nose by the shock, was at once strangled by my brother; and the rest of the party, running up to me, whom they thought dead, were not a little surprised to find the daughter of their friend. My father himself took the matter very quietly; I heard him exclaim, "I say, Tommy, how came your sister here? There will be a fine noise at home when your mother hears of this;" but I heard no more; I had fainted from loss of blood, and I did not recover my senses till I found myself in my own bed, with my mother's mild eyes, full of sorrow, looking down upon me.

Notwithstanding the great cause she had to feel anger at my conduct, which was in direct opposition to her wishes and even to her commands, so frequently expressed, I had little cause to fear a scolding while I was still confined to the house and suffering pain. And even when I recovered, her remarks upon the folly of my behaviour were made with such tenderness that, while I could not help admitting their truth, I felt that I loved my mother the better for her correction. I promised,—oh! how warmly I promised her, while the smart was still within my wound, and my face was yet swollen and inflamed, that I would never more be guilty of an act of disobedience; that I would, from that time, do only what I was sure must cause her pleasure, and that I would strive in all things to acquire a good name for gentleness and other female virtues.

Alas! a Kitten's resolutions, made in the midst of pain and sorrow caused through not attending to the advice of elders, are too apt to be forgotten, when the aches are gone and the grief has worn away; at least, to my shame be it spoken, it was so in my case,

for when I recovered I was more than once guilty of acts of mischief, which, by good luck only, happened to be less serious in their results than the event of the rat-hunt.

A circumstance which helped to make me thus doubly naughty and disobedient, was the falling among bad companions. I had, at that time, the dangerous fault of easily making acquaintance, no matter whether the animals were such as I should or should not associate with. Not content also with simply speaking and being civil to them, I became at once extremely intimate, and therefore very naturally often found myself in places and among dangers which I had no right to enter into or incur.

There came into the town, from a distant and wild part of the country, a family of Cats, consisting of a father and nine daughters. They were strange, shabby, half-savage looking creatures, and, having lost their mother at an early age, had unhappily possessed no one who could restrain or teach them better, so had grown up more like Toms than quiet female Pussies. I was too young to know this at the time, and no warning voice had been raised against them; for, fearing I should be denied the pleasure of going out with my new acquaintance if I confessed to my mother that I knew them, I never said a word concerning them, but ran out to meet them on the sly. The elder Cats of the family rather frightened me, they were so terribly wild; but the three youngest, who were about my own age, I very much admired. They seemed so good-natured, so bold, and were so free in their manners, that we became, in a few days, the firmest friends; and although I was a little shocked at first at the naughty words they used,—the biggest, I am grieved to say, sometimes really swore,—yet I even got accustomed to that, and thought, silly Kitten that I was, that it sounded grand and spirited.

Many and many a time, when my good mother thought that I was visiting a relation or one of her own steady friends, was I scampering over the country with these dangerous playmates, until, had I not possessed so kind yet strict a guide at home, I should have become as bold and shameless as they. Fortunately for me, I discovered their real character before they had succeeded in ruining mine; and as the circumstance caused a final break between us, I will relate it just as it fell out.

At the distance of an easy walk from the city of Caneville was the residence of a very wealthy bloodhound, who was as proud of his noble descent as he was of his riches and influence. The grounds attached to his splendid mansion were very extensive and beautiful, and one portion, which contained some tall trees and low bushes, was called the "preserve," because birds of all kinds had their nests among the branches. In order to guard this property from thieves and intruders, several fierce dogs paraded about the grounds, and, as they had orders to kill all animals that were discovered lurking there, you may believe the place was tolerably quiet. All these particulars I only learned afterwards, when I had nearly fallen a victim to my folly; but I knew perfectly well that this ground was private property, and that I had no business whatsoever to go into it.

My three friends and myself, being out one day upon an excursion, such as I have described, I, having slipped away from home, as usual, on the sly, with only a little pinafore for clothing, came upon these beautiful grounds, and having crossed a park, where we rolled upon the green turf undisturbed, we at last stood in the "preserve."



AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

Here we were at once attracted by the quantities of birds which flew from branch to branch above our heads, and twittered gaily in the fancied security of their leafy homes. We looked, and sniffed, and watched them as they flew, until our mouths watered at the sight. Having eaten nothing since morning, our appetites were very keen, and the thought of a little poultry was not by any means a disagreeable one. But how was it to be procured? My friends, bold as they seemed, had a great objection to climb one of the trees to hunt for it; and I, although sufficiently strong and active to mount to the very highest in the course of a few seconds, had just sufficient sense of propriety left to feel that it would be wrong. What, however, will not the persuasions of the wicked sometimes do? Although I knew perfectly well that it was a great sin, that the birds were

not mine, and that I had not only no right to them, but no right either to be within those grounds, I was, in a moment of weakness, prevailed on to climb a lofty oak, and seize upon the contents of a nest we could discover among the branches.

Quick as thought, I sprang upon the gnarled trunk, and mounted to the upper boughs; in a few seconds, I stood high up in the air, with one foot resting on a convenient ledge, my fore-paws outstretched upon a nest, wherein three half-fledged birds were chirping, one of which had opened its beak at my approach, as though I were its mother, whom it asked for food.

At another time I should have been touched at the spectacle of these little helpless creatures, and could have found it in my heart to place something in their yellow mouths; but now giving heed only to my voracious appetite and the cries of my friends, who kept calling out to me to pitch them down, I seized them cruelly by their necks, and cast them, one by one, below, desiring my companions, as I did so, not to divide them till I had descended to have my share.

Imagine, however, my astonishment, my anger, at their ingratitude, when, instead of waiting my coming, each seized a bird as it fell, and began devouring it with all speed, paying no more attention to my claims or words than if I had been a stranger, instead of their *friend* and the provider of the feast.

Enraged at their baseness, I had commenced my descent, to punish their perfidy, when the terrible sound of a dog's voice broke upon my ear. From my leafy hiding-place I peeped, in trembling, below, and saw two enormous brutes rush from a neighbouring bush, and, with a tremendous growl, fall upon my ungrateful companions. In an instant one was seized by the back of the neck, and dragged off, I knew not where; the other two fled, with shrieks of fear, pursued by the remaining dog, which, I suppose, had been attracted to the spot, with his companion, by the cries of the Cats, when telling me to throw them down the birds.

Oh! how my heart beat as I witnessed the scene I have just described, and thought that I too might have been one of the victims! Even now I might be unable to escape, but lose my life in attempting to get away. How bitterly I reproached myself for having been weak enough to choose such creatures for associates! What advantage had they ever procured me? Had I learnt from them one single thing of good? I grieved to think, not one. But what evil had their acquaintance not brought me? I had been not only guilty of disobedience to my mother,—that tender mother!—but I had trespassed upon the property of others: I had taken that to which I had no possible right; I had caused the death of three little creatures; and I had not even had the consolation of putting the smallest bit of one of the innocents into my own mouth. All these reflections passed through my Cat's brain, as I sat shivering on my elevated perch; and I resolved, as I had

so often resolved before, that if I got safely out of this danger, nothing should induce me to commit such sins, or trust to such worthless *friends* again.

Whether my repentance had anything to do with my escaping from my difficulties with a whole skin, I cannot say; but it is certain that when, after darkness had settled on the earth and all around was silent, I ventured to descend from my hiding-place, I succeeded in making my way out of the "preserve," and park beyond, in safety, when I took to my heels with all speed; nor did I stop till I had reached my own quiet home, which I stealthily entered through an open window.

A NEW LEAF.

A great change was made in my manner of life very soon after this last adventure, which may be looked upon as the closing scene of my wild and thoughtless Kittenhood. I was now entering upon a new course of existence, where far different pursuits had to engage my attention.

A distant relation of my mother's, who had never been married (a very singular circumstance in our city), and who lived in a house with only two servants to keep her company, invited me to spend some time with her, and, as she was very clever and accomplished, my mother was most pleased to let me go, as she considered that I might obtain great advantages from her society and conversation.

The sort of life I had been leading made my first days spent at Hum Villa very dull and tedious, for my cousin, although most gentle and kind, was precise to an extraordinary degree, and could not bear the least disorder either in her house, her person, or the manners or appearance of those about her. Truly both she and her servants were orderly enough; for they were washing at least ten times a day, and never sat down to a meal or got up from it without licking themselves all over for a good half hour.

By degrees however what seemed to me irksome and fussy wore imperceptibly away, and I was not long in discovering that cleanliness of body has a good deal to do with promoting purity of mind. I am certain it was so with myself; for as I got into habits of preciseness, and put my tongue to the use for which nature in part designed it, namely the washing and cleansing my person, my thoughts took a very different turn, and, after a few months, I should have avoided with horror many of those companions with whom I had been formerly so friendly, if they had, by any chance, been thrown in my way.

But this was only one of the changes which my residence with my cousin wrought in me. I had never before met with a Cat who had seen so much or who had read so many books as she. Her memory too was so good that she could relate all she had seen and much that she had read, and, as she had gone on *thinking*, as well as seeing and reading, her conversation, when I came to know her well, was delightful.

She had been into other countries; she had seen places inhabited by animals different to those which lived in Caneville; she had even learned to understand and speak their language. She told me she had read that there were cities filled with creatures called *men*, who considered themselves superior to all other beasts, which they used as slaves and killed for food. When I asked her, if there were any Cats living among these creatures—these men? she replied, there were a great many; but that they were looked upon as poor, miserable things, were often badly treated, and, at the best, were rather tolerated than liked, and never enjoyed the full confidence of their harsh masters.

In such discourse we spent a great deal of time: little by little my views became enlarged, and as she spoke to me of the noble nature of some of the animals she had met with upon her travels, the acts of kindness she had received from them, and the deeds by which many of them had rendered themselves famous, I began to appreciate more justly the position which we Cats occupied in the scale of creation. Not that I was desirous of changing my lot for that of any other beast; but I learned to look with more humility upon myself and my tribe, and understood that many things were better managed in other countries, and by other animals, than *we* managed them in Caneville.

But none of my good cousin's accomplishments pleased me so much as her perfect knowledge of music. She played several instruments in a charming and graceful manner, and her voice was so sweet that when she sang, and accompanied herself on the piano, it was most delightful to hear her.

She soon perceived my fondness for the science, and promised, if I were attentive and would follow her instructions, to teach me both to play and sing. No proposal could have been more pleasing to me. I thanked her a hundred times, and resolved to use my best efforts to do credit to my preceptress's instructions, and make myself mistress of so charming an acquirement.

I now began to study in good earnest. Under the guidance of my real friend I made great progress: I soon learned both to read and write; acquired a slight knowledge of other tongues, and made such proficiency in music as, in the opinion of my cousin, to perform many pieces with as much grace and dexterity as herself. I could sing, too, pretty well; but my voice was still weak and tremulous, and wanted the full tone and power of her own.

How happily the days now passed! How thankful did I feel to my cousin, to my good mother, to my fortunate lot, which thus gave me the means of acquiring an education that placed me so far above most of my fellow-Cats!

These thoughts however awakened such pride in my bosom, that I began to look upon Pussies who had not been blessed with the same advantages as myself, as beings so inferior that I would scarce deign to look on them. One or two Tommies, who ventured to cast tender looks upon me as I passed through the streets or peeped out of the window, I treated with scorn; and when *one*, dressed in glossy black, ventured one day to speak to me as I was returning from my mother's house, I was even so rude as not only to set up my back at him, but actually spit in his face.

Conduct of this kind is certain to meet with punishment; and my mentioning the circumstance now is a proof that I have no wish to spare myself, and that I heartily regret having ever been guilty of such behaviour.

My pride was destined to meet with a severe fall, and sorrow was about to take the place of happiness.

I had been about a year residing with my cousin, when our city was visited with a terrible malady, which destroyed many of the inhabitants. It commenced in the low and dirty parts of the town, where the poor curs and mongrels lived, in those miserable huts unfit for any dog, but which poverty obliged many of them to dwell in. It soon extended to the Cats' quarter, and some of the best families were swept off by the infection.

Death was particularly busy in my own family: my father fell first, then two of my sisters, and, at last, my mother! Her loss was heaviest of all; and I had scarce recovered from the shock when my kind friend, my good cousin, also caught the disease, and quickly passed away.

One would have thought that these various calamities, coming so quickly upon each other, would have destroyed me at once, or would have so far affected me as to kill me by degrees. The very greatest of them however seemed to produce a contrary effect, and I, who would sometimes mourn for days over a trifling misfortune, found myself sad indeed, but calm under these heavy losses.

The disease passed away; and when I was sufficiently recovered to examine my position, I saw myself mistress of a fine house, left me by my poor cousin, with all her books, papers, musical instruments, and other things, too numerous to mention.

It was on looking over the store of articles which I became thus unexpectedly possessed of, that I discovered a bundle of letters, written in a bold, Cat-like style. Although the ink had become pale with time, and many parts were torn into holes, I yet managed to make out their contents, and learn that they had been written to my cousin in her youth by some Cat of noble birth, who had wished to marry her, but whose

attentions she had for some reason refused. Perhaps she had regretted it afterwards, and for that reason had always lived alone; perhaps he had died, or left the city, or—a number of ideas came into my mind about him, and I even tried to imagine what he was like, and whether he at all resembled the Tom in black I had been so rude to some time before.



A SELECT CLASS.

I then began to consider what I should do with the packet. When I reflected that my cousin had never mentioned the subject, or even the name of her correspondent, I thought the only plan was to be equally silent, and, in order to avoid the remarks of others, put the letters in the fire; for, although I had read them myself, I felt quite persuaded she had no wish that they should be generally known. My resolution was soon taken; and casting the papers one by one into the flames, I watched them slowly burn until there was a little black heap of ashes on the hearth. The last letter was in my paw; I tore it in halves, and threw the first sheet on to the pile; the second was just going the same way, when my eye caught sight of two verses of a song, which I had

not observed till then. I stopped and read them through: they were stanzas I had sometimes heard my cousin sing; and although I do not think so much of them now as I did at the time, I preserved them from the flames, and now insert them here in memory of so kind and gentle a Cat:—

With others I may frisk and play,
With others I may talk and sing,
With others pass the live-long day,
And find, time flies with rapid wing:
A friend (I seek not to deceive)
I may, perchance, to others be;
But, ah! my darling Puss! believe,
I purr, I only purr for thee!
Thy form is stamp'd upon that heart,
Which, true to thee, will beat till death;
Thy praises, dear one that thou art,
Will mingle with my latest breath.
Deign, then, to smile upon my suit,
Nor heedlessly my vows refuse;
But trust the honour of the brute
Who seeks to win thee with his muse!

The education I had received, and the advantages I possessed in the way of books, joined to my present loneliness, induced me to carry out an idea that had more than once entered my head, and which my kind relation, when alive, had strongly encouraged. This was to get together the Kittens of some of my friends who were anxious to obtain knowledge, and impart to them some portion of that I had myself acquired,—in brief, to keep a school.

I never ceased to remember the words of my poor cousin when speaking on this subject. "My dear," she had often said, "it is the duty of every Cat in this world to make herself useful; she is sent here for that purpose, depend upon it; and although all Cats cannot be useful in the same way or to the same extent, some being placed in very different circumstances to others, *every* Cat, rich or poor, *may* do a certain amount of useful work, which if she neglects, she is wicked. No employment is so honourable as that of teaching to others the learning we have ourselves attained; for learning destroys prejudice, makes us better as well as wiser, and helps us to bear with greater fortitude the calamities of life. As you have yourself acquired learning, you may therefore show your usefulness by imparting it to others; and depend upon it, no consolation will be greater to you in hours of misfortune, and even on your bed of death, than the thought that you have not spent your life in vain!"

It was with such sanction that I entered on my new career. Each day might I have been seen, perched upon a high-backed chair, with book in hand, examining my class

as it stood up before me; a rod within my reach to frighten evil-doers, the inattentive, and the careless; and sometimes, with a dunce of a Kitten before me standing upon a form, with an ugly cap upon her head, on account of some terrible breach of good manners, or an extra amount of stupidity in conning her tasks.

LOVE AND WAR.

Hum Villa, the house which had been left me by my deceased cousin, stood a little back from the main street, and although surrounded with smaller dwellings, was yet quiet and retired.

This was owing to its garden, and to several fine trees which shaded it; one of them particularly, an ancient oak, that stood by the right-hand corner of the grounds, cast its broad and knotted arms over a rustic bench, and made a delightful retreat from the warmth of the summer sun.

It had been the favourite spot of my departed relation: here she would come, in the long afternoons, and, reclining on the chair, with a book in her hand, read a page or two, then stop to listen to the birds which twittered in the topmost branches of the tree, or watch the busy insects at her feet, as they ran about intent upon their pursuits of business or enjoyment.

There could not have been a stronger proof of the goodness of her disposition, than to note the friendship which existed between her and the timid birds that frequented the garden. Perhaps it was the love of music in both that created a kind of sympathy between them, for I have often hidden myself within a short distance of her seat, in order to watch the proceedings of herself and feathered friends.

When they observed her alone, they would hop down from branch to branch, until they were almost within her reach, when, after hesitating a few moments to see that no other Puss was near, they would leap down upon her seat, upon the ground, upon her very shoulder, and begin their songs. Then followed such a twittering and chattering, while their wings trembled with excitement, until, at some noise perhaps which I myself had made, they would start from their places, and in an instant fly up, up, until they had put the whole height of the tree between them and the supposed danger. Often had I wished to obtain from them a similar confidence; often by various inducements of food and voice endeavoured to lure them down. My persuasions were all useless: they would put their little heads on one side, and talk a little among themselves, apparently debating whether it would be advisable to accept my invitation; but some old and cautious birds,

I suppose, advised them to refuse my advances, for they never dared to partake of the meal I had spread for them until I had myself taken my departure.

Once only, after my cousin's death, when I was seated in the place, and in the attitude she herself was accustomed to assume, did a venturesome little creature undertake to pay me a closer visit. But I was not flattered by the attention, for it evidently mistook me for her who was no more; as, scarcely had it perched upon the arm of the bench, at the opposite end to where I was sitting, and glanced at my face, than it flew off in the greatest alarm to communicate its terrors to its companions.

Although I thus failed to secure the confidence and friendship of my cousin's allies, there were other sources of amusement which this quiet nook afforded me. Unseen myself, I had a view of at least a dozen dwellings, and of the antics played by their inhabitants. It is astonishing to a Cat of perfect good-breeding to observe the propensity of the uneducated classes to climbing and creeping about in the most elevated and dangerous positions. Within a few doors of my own house resided an old Tom, whose business I never could guess, but who was at home all day sleeping or smoking, and went out to his occupation at nightfall. Instead however of taking his rest within-doors, as one would have thought it most comfortable to do, he always had his doze in the open air, and no place would suit him but the very edge of the roof of his house, with his legs and tail generally swinging in the air. It was a wonder to me that he did not either fall or get pitched off; for his sons and daughters, an immense tribe of unruly Cats of all ages, were constantly on the roof too, chasing each other about, rolling over one another's backs, and often hissing and spitting at each other in a most shocking and boisterous way. Their poor mother had lost all control over them, and after trying, as I had often seen her, to get them into more orderly habits, she was forced to give up the struggle and allow them to take their own course.

These rude creatures had taken a particular dislike to me: first, because I had reproved the young Pussies for their behaviour, as being very unbecoming their age and sex; and secondly, on account of my having forbidden them entering my grounds to chase the poor birds who lodged in the trees.

As to the latter particular, they at first set my wishes at defiance, paid no attention to my remonstrances, and actually one day came over the palings into my garden and carried off a poor little bird which had fallen from its nest. I was then obliged to have recourse to other measures. I hired an old Tom to scare them away, which he did so effectually that they never ventured to come within his reach. But their hatred to me became all the greater; and as from their lofty position on the housetop they could see right into my garden, whenever I ventured to walk there, they saluted me with all sorts of names, called me a "Prude," the "Schoolmistress," and anything else which they thought would annoy me, so that I was pleased to have the shelter of my arbour, where I could be out of sight and yet enjoy the fresh air.

It is always unpleasant to be at variance with one's neighbours, and no doubt animals ought to make many sacrifices to prevent it, and live in harmony together; but it would have been weakness to give up the happiness and even the lives of my favourite birds—the favourites too of my poor dead Cousin—in order to please the unruly offspring of my singular neighbour. A state of war might therefore be said to exist between us, and I was not long in feeling the effect of the malice I had unwillingly provoked.

And here I must speak of an adventure which, although quite innocent in itself, caused me a great deal of pain, and forced me to become, for a long time, a wanderer from my native city.

One evening, when seated in my arbour, after my pupils were dismissed, a servant came to inform me that a strange Tom was in the parlour, who desired to speak to me. I at once went in, and observed a tall, foreign-looking figure, who introduced himself as Senhor Dickie. He explained that he was an artist; had met my cousin in his own country; had been invited by her to pay her a visit at her house in Caneville, if ever he should come that way; that he had arrived that morning, and learnt to his surprise that she was no more; that he had nevertheless taken the liberty to come to the house, in order to see the surviving relative of one for whom he entertained a warm friendship, and express his sorrow for her death.

He said all this in so Cat-like a tone, and his beautiful green eyes had so tender an expression when he spoke of my poor cousin and looked at me, that I quite felt for him, and we had a long chat together about the goodness of her who was no more. We had talked ourselves into so good an understanding, that, when he went away, I asked him, as a matter of course, to come and see me again; nor could I indeed avoid inviting him to that house to which, had my cousin been alive, he would have been, no doubt, very welcome.

Senhor Dickie came often to see me, and every time he came the better did we become acquainted. We chatted together about all sorts of things; we sang duets together (he had a fine bass voice); and at last he requested permission to take my portrait, which he did, as represented in the Frontispiece to this Autobiography.

It was on occasion of one of these visits that, on a hot summer's afternoon, we sat in the arbour together. I do not know how it was we had walked out there, whether at his wish or at my invitation, but there we sat, and I remember thinking—for I said nothing—that nature had never appeared more beautiful. The flowers seemed to be tinged with more lovely colours; the green of the trees wore a richer and deeper hue; the butterflies looked as if they had put on their most dazzling suits in celebration of some holiday; and the birds appeared to be holding high festival beneath the glowing heavens, and fluttered and twittered and sang with greater glee than they had ever seemed to do before. My companion's voice, low and deep at all times, was surely softer

on that evening than I had ever known it; and his eyes wore a look of tenderness which made me cast mine to the ground, for fear he should discover the same expression in my own.

He had just placed his paw on mine, and opened his mouth with the intention of making a speech, which I am sure would have been a sweet one, when I saw his face change, his back set up, his tail swell out and move angrily to and fro, while his ears fell back, and an angry hiss whistled fiercely from his close-set teeth, as he looked towards the palings. I turned quickly round in the direction of his eyes, and, to my horror, saw one of the malicious creatures of the house close by, who was watching us with intense satisfaction through a break in the fence, and grinning at the tender scene which I have been attempting to describe.

When she saw she was discovered, she started off towards her own house, uttering, as she went, a hoarse Mul-rou-u-u! but before she had got halfway there, my companion had leapt over the fence and pounced upon her, to punish her for her indiscreet curiosity and impertinence. The screams of the young Puss, and the loud and angry tones of Senhor Dickie (for I grieve to say he swore dreadfully), brought all her family out-of-doors, who, seeing the chastisement, and without inquiring whether it was deserved, fell upon poor Senhor Dickie in a body, and so ill-treated him, tearing his very coat off his back, that he was forced to run limping away, nor did he ever again venture to make his appearance in the neighbourhood.

When my poor companion had thus been forced to take to flight, all the anger of the enraged creatures fell on me. As I made my way into the house, hisses, screams, the most horrible sounds the Cat tribe are capable of uttering, broke from the numerous family; and, what was worse, the uproar having brought all my neighbours out-of-doors, the greatest falsehoods were told them about the origin of the dispute, and I had not strength to raise my voice in order to explain the truth. Finding there was no chance of obtaining justice, or even a hearing, from my prejudiced judges, I walked slowly into the house, apparently indifferent to what they were saying about my slyness and my cruelty; but as soon as I got in-doors all my calmness vanished. Sorrow, confusion, anger, so warred together in my bosom, that my Cat's frame could bear it no longer. I fell to the ground in a fainting fit, and was conveyed to bed by my servants, where I remained several days, a prey to as much unpleasant feeling as if I were really the cruel Puss my neighbours accused me of being, and as if it were really true that I had persuaded poor Senhor Dickie to fall upon the little spy out of spite towards her family.



ONE TOO MANY.

REFLECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.

There is no place so conducive to reflection as the quiet of one's bedchamber, when confined to it by sickness. It is true, when the illness is violent, pain for the time excludes every thought beyond that of the actual suffering,—for pain makes us all very, very selfish; but when the bodily suffering is over, and our meditations come back into their usual channel; when we are in a state of convalescence, and are about shortly to resume our intercourse with the world, a crowd of thoughts comes trooping from our brains, and we live over again much of our former lives, and imagine beforehand scenes of our life to come.

At least it was so with me. When I had recovered from the fever into which the disagreeable events related in the last Chapter had thrown me, I ran over in my recollection everything that had occurred to me up to the present time. I was again a thoughtless Kitten, gamboling on the green, playing with my own tail, or resisting with all my might the efforts of my poor mother to lick me clean! Again I wandered in the fields with my young companions, clambered trees for birds, or hid myself away in solitary places for stray rats! I once more hearkened to my dead cousin's voice, as she warbled one of her pretty songs; and as I still went on reflecting, I was again sitting in the arbour, listening to the deep tones of Senhor Dickie, until the malicious face of my neighbour's daughter, peering at us from the broken paling, broke in upon my thoughts, and I heard the vile malicious screams and hisses of the ill-bred Cats which had caused his abrupt departure and my present confinement. It was a bitter recollection; and, as I recalled the scene, I hid my face in my paws and mewed aloud.

As I got calmer I meditated upon what was best to be done. I would have despised the reports of cruelty which I was sure were spread abroad against me, and have continued my school, if my scholars had felt inclined to resume their lessons; but as they had not come back after the first day, that resource was denied me. Without some occupation, I felt certain I could not bear the being at war with my neighbours; for although I had done nothing unkind, they evidently believed I had; and as there was no opportunity of convincing them of the truth, I suffered just as much as if I had been guilty.

One road was yet open to me; and as I thought of it my eyes brightened up, and a low purr of satisfaction unconsciously broke from my bosom—I could travel! This idea had no sooner entered my head than it took entire possession of me, and drove everything else out of my thoughts. I wished to be at once well and strong, in order to carry out my new-formed resolution. The prospect of a speedy change, and the thought of seeing new countries and other animals, produced at once a favourable effect, and not many days elapsed before I was able to sit up and resume some of my usual habits.

I did not venture into the garden, for fear of again exciting the remarks of my rude neighbours; but I sat by the door, and looked out upon the green trees, and the blue sky, and the lively birds, with a delight I cannot describe.

How beautiful does all nature seem after we have been deprived for some time, by illness, of the pleasure of looking upon it! How delicious is the air! how sweet the perfume of the flowers! and how agreeable to the sense the hum of each fly as it basks in the sunshine, cleaning its glittering wings, or darts in and out and round and round in chase of some companion! It is worth being ill, to enjoy such pure happiness, and to feel the gratitude which gushes up from our hearts at being permitted to see again the loveliness of creation.

It has been said by more than one animal, that Cats are such selfish creatures that they are envious of the enjoyments of others, and can feel no pleasure beyond their own particular gratifications. I deny that this is the truth. I, a Cat, boldly affirm, in defence of my tribe, that they are capable of as strong and unselfish affections as those of any other beasts; and although, as my cousin told me, when in the service of man they display a different character, such character must not be considered as their true one, but rather forced upon them by their state of servitude and the want of confidence reposed in them. Even under such disadvantageous circumstances, I have heard that they often discover traits of kindness and fidelity, and receive many slights and insults with a patience which would do honour to their masters themselves.

As I had no one to consult about my departure, or the day I should set forth, I was not interrupted in my preparations, for I was too anxious myself to obtain a change of scene, to have any delay when I once began my arrangements.

My house was put in order; my box was packed; my servants received their instructions, and were put on board-wages till my return. I promised to write to them when an opportunity offered, to inform them of my adventures, and let them know my opinions concerning the manners of foreign countries.



BON VOYAGE!

The morning at length arrived when I was to take my departure. Dressed in my second-best clothes, with a parasol in one paw,—for the sun was hot,—and with my travelling-bag, containing a few necessaries, in the other, I ventured into the streets for the first time since that memorable evening. A stout cur, whom I had hired as a valet to accompany and protect me, walked behind me with my trunk upon his head; and as I turned from the door I perceived my servants, and some other Cats whom I had at times assisted, watching me as I went, and bidding me a mournful adieu. I was affected by their gestures, and should have been more so, but that I was still in sight of my neighbours' dwellings, and was apprehensive of some disagreeable remarks. Fortunately none of them were visible. I passed their houses; I got out of the very street, but not till I had stopped at the corner and given a quiet mew to the villa where I had spent so many pleasant days, and which I was now leaving perhaps for ever. We moved on through the Cats' quarter, across one or two streets inhabited by the Dogs, and out into the open country. We soon left behind us the few straggling houses which were at the entrance of the town, and, mounting a hill, paused when we had gained the summit, partly to give a last look at the city, but more to rest my companion, who declared that his legs would never get straight again from the heavy burden which had bent them down, and that the rope with which the box was tied was positively cutting his head in two.

I reclined upon a grassy bank, and nibbled a few blades while deep in thought; but my valet, "Snub," made a more substantial use of his time; for, squatting himself down on his own hat, with his legs under him, to my horror he pulled out a half-devoured bone, which he began to gnaw with much appetite. I did not think this very becoming conduct in the valet of a genteel Pussy; but as it was not the time to find fault, I allowed him to pick his bone, and gazed long and tenderly upon that city where I had been born and brought up, and which I was now leaving for strange climes, and for the society of animals of whose very language I was perhaps ignorant.

We now descended the hill, Snub carrying the box with a little more comfort to himself, having placed his hat between the sharp cord and his own broad, flat head; and on reaching the bottom we found that an extensive wood lay before us, without any trace which seemed to show there was a high-road through it. While stopping to consult what was the best course to take, an animal came from behind a large tree, and with many bows advanced towards us. His appearance startled me not a little, for I could not at first make out who or what he was. I at length discovered that he was a Fox, a tribe distantly related to the Dogs, but so little liked by them that very few ever came into Caneville, and those who did so, clipped their ears and trimmed their tails so as to alter

their look as much as possible to the animals among whom they presented themselves. This Fox, on the contrary, wore all his native luxuriance of fur, and, by the way he carried his great brush of a tail, seemed not a little proud of it.

When he got within a few steps of us, he addressed me in broken Caneville dialect, and offered his services to show me the way through the wood. "It was a short cut," he said, "and would save me a good deal of ground, which I should be obliged to go over if I went round the forest."

Without paying attention to the nods or winks of Snub, which were however so violent as almost to upset his load, I accepted his polite offer with thanks, and bidding my valet, who walked very glumpily behind, to keep close by, I followed my polite guide, who at once entered a little path through two tall trees.

The shade grew thicker as we advanced, and I observed that the path got not only narrower, but was in some places almost invisible. It was evidently very little used, and unaccustomed as I had been of late to the country, I did not feel quite comfortable in thus penetrating deeper and deeper into the solitude; still I did not like to show any fear, more particularly as I was rather annoyed at the conduct of Snub, who, close behind me with the box upon his head, kept grumbling at its weight one minute, and actually growling in an under-tone at our guide the next.

The conduct of that guide did not exactly please me; for in his evident wish to prevent my being alarmed, he kept chatter, chatter, chatter, with all his might, and still went on, his sharp eyes here, there, and everywhere at once, in a most disagreeable manner.

We at last reached an open space, covered over with grass, and here and there strewn with immense masses of rock. The overhanging branches of the trees were, however, so closely intertwined, that no ray of sun, and very little light, could penetrate into it. Here I stopped short and declared I would go no further; an exclamation which seemed to arouse Mr. Fox's anger, for he came towards me with a threatening look that alarmed me not a little. I stepped back to avoid him, when Snub—as if by accident, although I felt sure the good dog knew perfectly well what he was about—by a dexterous stumble pitched the box off his head right against the Fox. It was only by the greatest agility that he avoided the heavy weight falling on and crushing him; as it was, he could not get his long tail out of the way in time, for the box came plump down upon it and nailed him to the ground in the most effectual manner. In vain he screamed and pulled; the weight was heavier than he could get rid of; and the more he pulled and screamed, the greater was Snub's delight, who capered round him, wagging his own tail with wonderful swiftness in the intensity of his satisfaction.

After having kept him a prisoner for a good hour, and forced him to confess that he had led us into the wood with the intention of robbing us, and even worse, Snub cut a piece of cord from off the box and tying it round Mr. Fox's neck, and then fast to the

trunk again, lifted the latter on to his head, and ordered the treacherous guide, under penalty of instant death, to lead us back at once to the place we had started from. The wounded beast was forced to obey; so taking his mutilated tail in his paw, with a thousand apologies,—to which Snub made no other reply than to bid him to "look sharp" (a very unnecessary piece of advice, as his face could scarce have been sharper than it was), and to which I made no answer at all,—he walked on in front of us, keeping at as great a distance from his tormentor as the length of the cord would allow him.

We reached, after some time, the place where we had entered the wood, when Snub, advising our polite conductor to be more honest for the future, undid the knot which bound him to the trunk and set him again at liberty. The Fox no sooner found himself free, than, with a cry of satisfaction, anger, and defeated wickedness, he darted back among the trees, and was instantly out of sight.

LIFE ABROAD.

The first adventure that one meets with on entering the world is certain to make a deeper impression on the memory than any of those which may succeed it. Thus it was that I have a distinct recollection of our meeting with Mr. Fox, described in the last Chapter, and all the minute circumstances that attended the discovery of his treachery and his punishment by Snub. But from that time, a confusion of objects and events rushes into my brain when I attempt to think over the particulars of my journey.

The beautiful pictures of Nature, which almost every turn on the road presented to me, are however indelibly fixed in my memory, and I shall never forget the loveliness of the sun rising from behind the grey hills, and enriching the sober colours of the landscape with a tinge of gold; or the splendid spectacle displayed from the summit of one of those same hills at noonday, with a very world of beauties at my feet, laid out in trees, and stream, and field, with a light breeze driving the patches of cloud over the face of the hot sun, and shifting at every moment the light and shade beneath; or, lovelier still, the calm repose of evening, when that same sun had run his course and was sinking to his rest amid the harmonious sounds of Nature, and surrounded by the glories of piles and piles of golden and crimson clouds, which, as he sank lower and lower down, gradually lost their splendour and faded almost imperceptibly in colour, until all was grey, and the night-wind swept over the landscape as if mourning at the day's departure! These things cannot be forgotten while our memory exists at all, and the joy they awoke in my breast at seeing them, was like that which I had felt when my dead cousin used to sing some of her delightful songs,—it was all music to me.

But the first sight of the sea was what filled me with wonder, delight, and fear! The immense breadth of water,—at one time so calm as though it were asleep; at another, moaning as if it grieved for the many brave and good hearts it had engulfed; and on other occasions, fretting against the rocks, or, when moved by some strong impulse, working itself white with fury, and carrying all before it in its impetuous course. All these various moods were matter to me of astonishment and awe, which no familiarity could ever diminish; and I watched the waves roll in, and throw shells or corks or pieces of smooth wood to my very feet, with the same surprise after weeks of acquaintance, as I had done on the first day of my beholding the ocean.

Our road had led through districts but little frequented by other animals, and, with the exception of a stray fox or hare, we met scarcely a single creature. We carefully avoided all intercourse with the former, and the latter as carefully kept away from communication with ourselves; for the sight of us appeared so to alarm the poor beasts, that they would not even answer our questions, whether we were proceeding towards the habitations of more civilized animals.

To tell the truth, I so thoroughly enjoyed this part of my journey, that I felt little inclination to change it for the confinement and stiffness of city life; and as I had no difficulty in procuring food or lodging,—for mice and wild birds abounded, and any old tree gave me shelter,—I could have been content to spend some months in this errant mode of existence, and meditate in the half-solitude on the vanities of animal life. But I reprov'd myself for my selfishness when I looked at Snub. He, poor fellow, who had not been blessed with the same advantages of education as myself, had little inclination to continue a course which presented much to be endured and little to be enjoyed. The bold bending of a bough of a tree, which I found so admirable, he considered very inferior to the joint of some savoury bone; the wide expanse of the waters was to him less charming than the confined limits of some dish containing one of our favourite Caneville compounds. Nor could it be expected that he should feel much enthusiasm at sight of a fine prospect, when his head was aching with the weight of my luggage, and his feet were sore with the burden they had had so long to support over flinty, uneven ground. I confessed to myself the justice of this reflection, and became at last as anxious as he for our arrival at some city.

A few days after, various things convinced us that we were not far removed from one. Heaps of rubbish lay strewn confusedly here and there, which were uncomfortable to look at, and much more uncomfortable to smell! The road was broader and harder, as if beaten down by many feet. By-and-by a house or two appeared,—then two together,—then three,—until at last we saw a whole street, with quantities of little objects running in and out them. I would willingly have examined what the animals were who occupied these dwellings, which were indeed miserable enough. I learnt afterwards that they were inhabited by pigs; and their huts, that were never too clean or neat, were called in the language of the country *styes*, but so unpleasant an odour came from them that I could

not be prevailed on to go very near. The town itself now came in sight, and, as I had never seen any other than Caneville, my curiosity was aroused as I drew closer to make acquaintance with the inhabitants, and see if they were at all like either of the tribes of beasts between which my native place was divided. Snub was no less delighted at the prospect of getting rid of his load and refreshing his body upon some more savoury food than he had lately indulged in.

It was not at that time that I knew all the particulars which I afterwards obtained concerning this foreign city; but I may as well relate here all that I subsequently gleaned.

The place was called Norsarque, and was inhabited by animals of every sort and size, who lived in houses large, small, middling, high, low, miserable, and beautiful, just as their means or taste allowed them. They were not, I found, the richest beasts who occupied the most costly dwellings; on the contrary, I often discovered some very poor animals who made a most splendid figure; for, curiously enough, although the Norsarquians had a very great notion of their own wisdom, they often believed the greatest nonsense which any creature chose to tell them, provided the speaker wore a fine coat, and seemed to think a good deal of himself.

I could write a history of the many funny and contradictory things I met with in Norsarque; but perhaps nobody would read it if I did, so I will go on with my own adventures, and only speak of such matters as particularly concerned myself. I must however mention, as a circumstance that had afterwards a great deal to do with causing my departure from the town, that the place was governed by some superior, or thought to be superior, animal, chosen from among the principal beasts; but that the inhabitants generally were so discontented and fond of quarrelling, that they had scarcely elected him King, than they began to find fault with him and with everything he did, and were not satisfied until they killed him or drove him away, and set up another in his place. Sometimes this royal beast was a Pig; sometimes a Lion; once he was a Fox, and, although very much hated by all his subjects, he managed to make them quarrel among themselves, and so employ their time as to have no leisure left to think of him, until one unlucky day, when, having nothing else to do, they rose up against him and drove him out, and put some other animal in his place. When I arrived at Norsarque, a Bear was on the throne; so the Bears were in high favour, and several fresh ones had lately come to the city to seek their fortunes,—and very rough-looking beings they were too!

With the aid of Snub, I managed to procure some handsome apartments in a genteel quarter; and, as I intended to make a long stay in the place, I procured everything which could make them comfortable.

When once established, I directed some attention to my humble companion. As I was convinced of his fidelity and his attachment to myself, I resolved to keep him for my own private servant, and I therefore hired others to do the necessary work of the house.

But as Snub could not attend me in my walks in the costume he wore when he left his native place, I procured a complete livery-suit, in the fashion at Norsarque; and Snub soon looked splendid in a dress of bottle-green, with white buttons springing out all over his body, just like daisies on a lawn, and, I assure you, with his hat surrounded with a broad gold band, and his hair powdered, he looked a very different figure. Having thus cared for his outer dog, I did what I could to improve his name; and scorning to remember that he ever bore such a vulgar one as *Snub*, I made him *Snubbini* forthwith, and took care always to pronounce every letter of the word. It was astonishing to observe the effect which these little matters produced on my neighbours. They took me for a grand Cat at once; and I overheard a Pussy, who was talking to another on the roof of the house situated on the opposite side of the street where I lived, that I was a foreign Princess in disguise, and was rich enough to buy half Norsarque, if I felt inclined! But how they had learnt *that* piece of news, I could not imagine.

I had been residing some months among the restless inhabitants of Norsarque, when an incident took place, which, although I thought but little of it at the time, turned out of great importance to me.

I happened to be walking in one of the principal Squares, or *Places* as they were called, when my ear was attracted by the sound of music.

Although the performers were not of the best, and their time was about as good as their tune,—that is to say, both indifferent enough,—I could not help stopping as I went by to see the show.

There were three mongrels, rather fantastically dressed, blowing all the breath they could spare into two flageolets and a flute, but as one or the other was forced to stop every now and then to recover his wind, and always managed to do so in the most pathetic part, the effect was more curious than agreeable. Several animals were standing round, and a little wee Pup went about among them collecting, with a hat big enough to hold a great deal more than was ever put into it. But the creature who most attracted my attention was a huge lump of a Bear, with so ugly a face that it made me quite shudder to look at him, who seemed the master of the band, and held a tray up to the various windows where any heads had been put out to listen to the music. He was in the act of doing so, when I came up, to the window of a large house, where a fat, white Puss, evidently the servant of some rich family, was nursing a darling little Kitten that was mewling with delight at the scene below.



WANDERING MINSTRELS.

The servant had thrown down a few coppers in reply to the Bear's demand for money, when the ill-tempered brute, not satisfied with the donation, swore in so terrible a way, that the frightened nurse let go her hold of the Kitten, which fell direct from her paws.

I rushed forward to save it, upsetting as I went the unfortunate little Pup, who was at that moment presenting the hat for my contribution, and was just in time to seize it by the tail before it reached the pavement. At the same instant the door burst open, a troop of servants rushed out, headed by a Cat, superbly dressed. The band of musicians disappeared, as if by magic, the great Bear being the first to take to flight; the newcomers surrounded me, and I had the satisfaction of putting the Kitten, unharmed, into its mother's paws. A tender scene then ensued; and as ingratitude was not among this Lady Puss's failings, I was begged to enter, nay, was almost carried into the house, to receive the repeated thanks of the noble family.

THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE.

Señor Don Tomás Ricárdo, the husband of the Lady Puss whose Kitten I had been the means of saving, was one of the richest, and perhaps the noblest, Cats of all our tribe, residing in Norsarque.

He was very indignant when he heard from his Lady how nearly the darling of his family had been killed through the rudeness of a Bear, and he curled his whiskers and waved his tail in the excess of his anger. He did more than this; he went out among his friends, and, calling together a meeting of Cats, who were very numerous in the city, he made, as I heard, a speech which produced an immense effect upon them.

He commenced by saying that the Cat tribe was known (among themselves) to be the most ancient, the most noble, the most virtuous, the most courageous, and the most clever of all the animals who lived upon the face of the earth. (This was received with loud mews of satisfaction; and one enthusiastic Tom called out, "Cats for ever!") He then began to compare our race with other beasts generally, and, saying a good deal in favour of the Dogs, for a reason which will presently appear, yet still placing Cats in the first rank of created things, he went on to speak of Bears. Encouraged by the groans, which the mention of such disagreeable beasts occasioned, he boldly inveighed against the conduct of *the* Bear, then upon the throne; spoke of his favouritism in encouraging into the city so many of his tribe, and asked the meeting, in an injured tone, how they would feel when an entire army of these monstrous animals should march in and live upon the best of the land, while they, the Cats, would starve for want of the necessaries of life. (Of course the audience declared they should not like it at all, and uttered the most discordant cries to prove their assertion, amid which the same enthusiastic Tom exclaimed, "Down with the Bears!") His hearers being thus prepared to receive the most favourable accounts of the doings of Cats, and the most atrocious histories of the actions of Bears, Señor Don Tomás Ricárdo proceeded at once to the adventure of the morning, in which his Kitten had nearly been brought to an untimely end, and, although the mishap was quite as much due to the carelessness of the nurse as to the rudeness of the master of the band, he worked up such a wonderful picture, that the audience, thrilled with horror, soon after separated, with a determination to bear the tyranny of the Ursine Dynasty no longer.

I cannot tell what machinery was put in operation to produce the effects which shortly after ensued; but I suppose, in a place where beasts are fond of change and have very little to do, it is not difficult to get them to do mischief. It is certain that an alliance was

formed between the Cats and Dogs of the city, who outnumbered together the rest of the inhabitants, and one fine day, about a week after the meeting just described, there was a revolution in Norsarque; the Bears who could not escape were torn to pieces by the enraged rebels, and after some hours' fighting, peace was restored, and Señor Don Tomás Ricárdo was elected King! Cats were appointed with Dogs to fill different offices of State, and all animals of these races were, as it is easy to imagine, in very high favour.

The change was a very important one to me. I had been on most friendly terms with Señora Dona Ricárdo ever since my saving her Kitten; and when her husband was appointed to his elevated dignity, and she herself became Queen, Her Majesty did not forget her former companions, but offered me the post of Puss of Honour!

Behold me now, from the wild little creature, robbing birds' nests and hunting rats, raised to the high dignity of attendant on a Queen! It is true, I was rather mortified to think that my elevation was due more to a mere combination of circumstances than to any merit of my own; but I consoled myself with the reflection that mine was not a solitary example, and that if we animals refused to enjoy the goods of fortune when they were thrown in our way, because we did not happen exactly to deserve them, there would be very few beasts who could enjoy anything at all.

His Majesty Don Tomás was ambitious of renown; and no sooner found himself upon the throne, than he proceeded to make a great many changes and reforms, which, though certainly very necessary, were far from pleasing to his subjects.

Her Majesty Dona Tomás was ambitious, too, but *her* reforms produced a very contrary effect; for as they referred to the dress of the female sex, which she laboured to make as showy and attractive as possible, every alteration was received with enthusiasm, and the more frequent the changes, the greater they were liked. She spent whole days in considering the propriety of long and short waists; she had many sleepless nights in thinking over some new fashion for a cloak; and the quantity of bonnets she spoiled before she got one to her mind, would have covered the heads of half the female inhabitants of Norsarque. The one she selected at last, curiously enough, did not cover the head at all, but sticking up in a very pretty way at the back of the neck, allowed the whole head to be visible. It was natural enough that the young Pussies, who had pretty faces and glossy hair, should think a fashion—which permitted them to show both to the admiring gaze of passers-by—a most delightful one; but it seemed strange to me at first that the old and ugly Cats should adopt it so eagerly. On thinking a second time, however, my surprise vanished; for, in the first place, you never could convince a Cat that she was *not* pretty or graceful or attractive in some way; and secondly, no female Cat ever seemed to know when she was old.

These were some of the brilliant days of my existence; but, alas! the most brilliant are always those which fade away the quickest. I said that the reforms of His Majesty were not received with the same pleasure as those carried out by the Queen. He had the good sense to observe that they were not liked; but was too proud to withdraw them when he had once declared that they should be carried through. Discontent increased daily,—a feeling said to be fomented by the Dogs, who were more dissatisfied than the rest, because, I suppose, they had received more;—murmurs were soon heard throughout the city; and another fine day, with the same rapidity which had marked the fall of the Bears and the elevation of the Cats, saw the Cats overthrown in their turn, and the Dogs,—those ungrateful Dogs!—raised in their place.

The same confusion occurred on this occasion as happened previously. His Majesty Don Tomás Ricárdo was strangled by a Cur, as he was escaping from the Palace; Her Majesty fled no one knew whither. The household ran off in every direction, and I took to flight with the rest. Fortunately *Snubbini*—who was a great favourite with everybody and had some friends among the dominant party—saved me from either violence or insult, and I was able to remain shut up in my own apartment until things were once more settled, and calm was restored.

When that event did occur, I resolved in my own mind to depart from Norsarque, and take my way back to the city of my birth, which I now felt a strong inclination to see again. The proposal seemed no less delightful to my faithful valet than it was agreeable to myself; but how far the thought of the effect which our fine clothes and foreign habits was to produce upon the good beasts of Caneville mixed itself up with our wish to return to our native country, I leave to the charitable to determine.

It was with a very different train that I took my departure from Norsarque to that with which I had entered it. Then *Snub*, with a single box upon his head, was my solitary attendant and my only luggage; now *Snub*, converted into *Snubbini*, my servant, multiplied by four, and my trunk by five, made no despicable figure. We carried with us all the necessaries for lodging at night and for refreshment during the day; and passing on by easy journeys, we arrived, in about three weeks, at Caneville.

How delightful did each well-known spot appear to me as I drew near and recognized its familiar feature! how fondly did I gaze upon each hill, each tree, which I had visited and loved in earlier days! with what a mixed feeling of gratitude, of pain, and pleasure, did I recline upon the soft grass, and, gazing on the city, pass in review the scenes and events which had occurred there, and in which I had been an actress! I have known many pleasures in the course of my life, but I count the return to one's country, after a long absence, as one of the purest and most satisfactory. I am not aware if the having left it with the shame of crime could destroy this delight; but I, who left mine with the feeling of disappointment and vexation, felt that *it*, at least, had no power to make my

pleasure less; for the first few days of my return—during which I visited every old haunt, and every spot to which was attached a recollection—were perfectly happy.



A VERY FINE CAT.

Age creeps upon us all imperceptibly, and we are long before we can bring ourselves to *confess* that we are growing old: even when we *say* so, we flatter ourselves that we are yet strong and hearty, and have many years in store to live before we reach our resting-place. We may however generally discover we are no longer young by comparing the different effects produced on us by the same events at various periods of our existence; and if we find that we cease to attribute to them the same consequence with which we once invested them, we shall not be far wrong in looking upon our change of opinion as one of the proofs of our first youth being over. As I write these Memoirs, I cannot forbear smiling at many things to which, at the time they were acting, I attached a vast deal of importance. I remember, as if it were only yesterday, my first entrance into the streets of Caneville after my long absence abroad. I recollect, with wonderful accuracy, my having selected my most showy dress, my most fashionable

mantle, my most delightful bonnet, with which to astonish the weak minds of the inhabitants of my native city. I remember glancing round with pride at Snubbini, who had put on his richest suit of livery, and who was strutting along with his gold-headed staff under his arm, and his nose straight before him. I remember, too, the satisfaction I experienced when, on drawing near my house, one of my former neighbours, who was reputed the richest and proudest Cat of the quarter, drew aside to let me pass, and made me a profound bow as I swept by!

I think I have learnt to be wiser since that time, and to appreciate things as they *are*, not by what they *seem*. It is long before vanity can be eradicated from the heart; but I do believe I managed to root out some of mine before my pretensions to youth and beauty were entirely departed. Solitary thought and study, stolen from the gaieties of the world, have taught me great truths; they have proved to me the more vividly the goodness of my deceased cousin, and the wisdom of her counsels. I have again aimed at being *useful* to my fellow-creatures; and although I have often failed, I have sometimes succeeded, and one success, in such a pursuit, outweighs a thousand failures. If I can only impress this truth upon *one* out of, I hope, my many readers, there may be some good even in a Cat's Tale.

THE END.

JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR, PRINTER,
LITTLE QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ADVENTURES OF A CAT, AND A FINE CAT TOO! ***

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