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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE HUNTER CATS OF CONNORLOA \*\*\*

# **CAT STORIES.**

BY

**HELEN JACKSON (H. H.),**

AUTHOR OF "RAMONA," "NELLY'S SILVER MINE," "BITS OF TALK," ETC.

**LETTERS FROM A CAT.**

**MAMMY TITTLEBACK AND HER  
FAMILY.**

**THE HUNTER CATS OF CONNORLOA.**

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

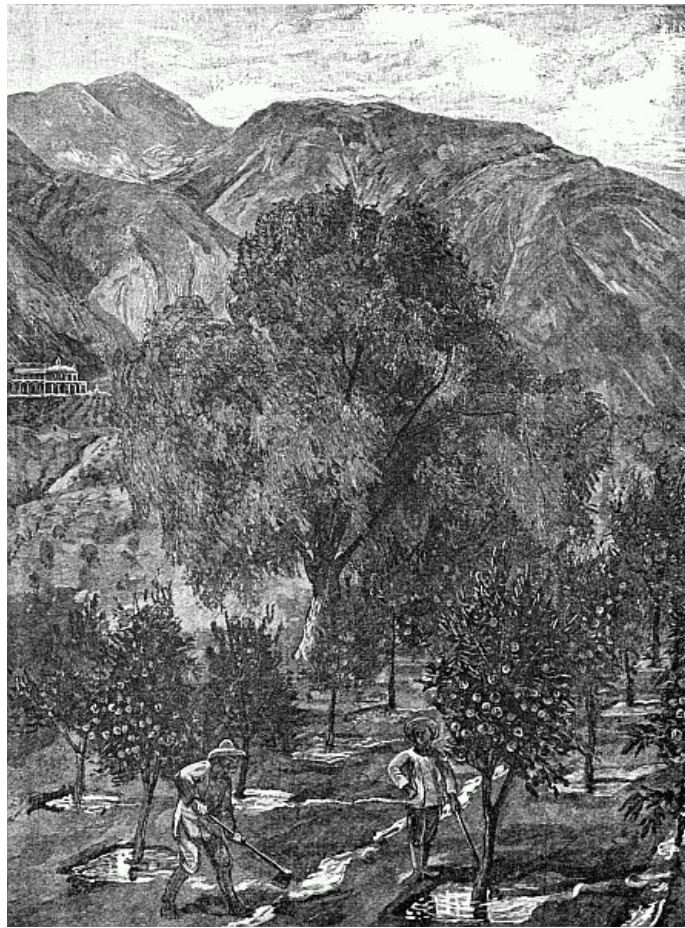
**BOSTON:**

**ROBERTS BROTHERS.**

**1886.**

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OF  
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**Connorloa**

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**THE HUNTER CATS**

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**I.**

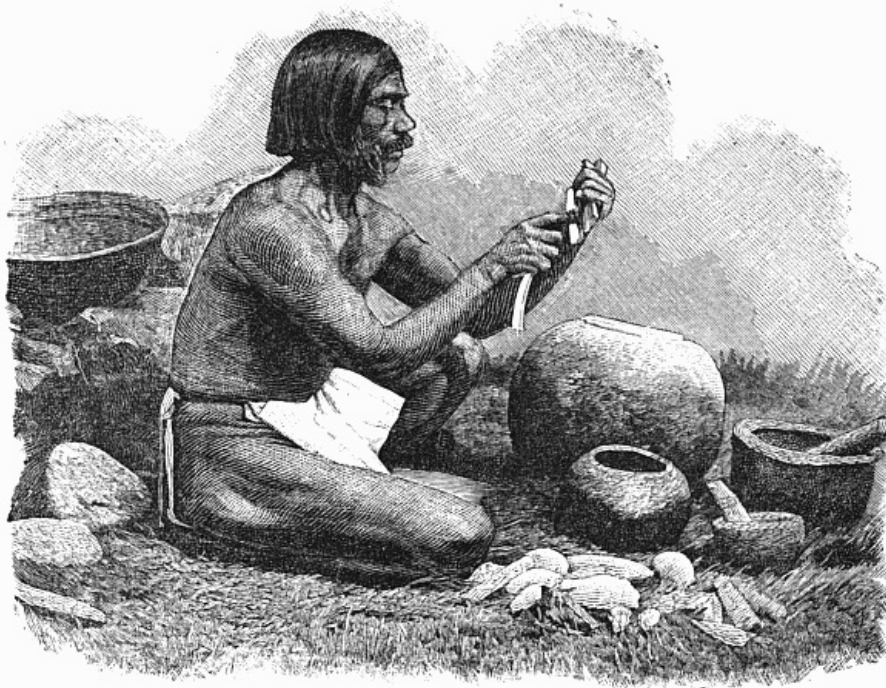
Once on a time, there lived in California a gentleman whose name was Connor,—Mr. George Connor. He was an orphan, and had no brothers and only one sister. This sister was married to an Italian gentleman, one of the chamberlains to the King of Italy. She might almost as well have been dead, so far as her brother George's seeing her was concerned; for he, poor gentleman, was much too ill to cross the ocean to visit her; and her husband could not be spared from his duties as chamberlain to the King, to come with her to America, and she would not leave him and come alone. So at the time my story begins, it had been many years since the brother and sister had met, and Mr. Connor had quite made up his mind that he should never see her again in this world. He had had a sorry time of it for a good many years. He had wandered all over the world, trying to find a climate which would make him well. He had lived in Egypt, in Ceylon, in Italy, in Japan, in the Sandwich Islands, in the West India Islands. Every place that had ever been heard of as being good for sick people, he had tried; for he had plenty of money, and there was nothing to prevent his journeying wherever he liked. He had a faithful black servant Jim, who went with him everywhere, and took the best of care of him; but neither the money, nor the good nursing, nor the sea air, nor the mountain air, nor the north, south, east or west air, did him any good. He only tired himself out for nothing, roaming from place to place; and was all the time lonely, and sad too, not having any home. So at last he made up his mind that he would roam no longer; that he would settle down, build himself a house, and if he could not be well and strong and do all the things he liked to, he would at least have a home, and have his books about him, and have a good bed to sleep in, and good food to eat, and be comfortable in all those ways in which no human being ever can be comfortable outside of his own house. [Pg 10] [Pg 11] [Pg 12]

He happened to be in California when he took this resolution. He had been there for a winter; and on the whole had felt better there than he had felt anywhere else. The California sunshine did him more good than medicine: it is wonderful how the sun shines there! Then it was never either very hot or very cold in the part of California where he was; and that was a great advantage. He was in the southern part of the State, only thirty miles from the sea-shore, in San Gabriel. You can find this name "San Gabriel" on your atlas, if you look very carefully. It is in small print, and on the Atlas it is not more than the width of a pin from the water's edge; but it really is thirty miles,—a good day's ride, and a beautiful day's ride too, from the sea. San Gabriel is a little village, only a dozen or two houses in it, and an old, half-ruined church,—a Catholic church, that was built there a hundred years ago, when the country was first settled by the Spaniards. They named all the places they settled, after saints; and the first thing they did in every place was to build a church, and get the Indians to come and be baptized, and learn to pray. They did not call their settlements towns at first, only Missions; and they had at one time twenty-one of these Missions on the California coast, all the way up from San Diego to Monterey; and there were more than thirty thousand Indians in them, all being taught to pray and to work, and some of them to read and write. They were very good men, those first Spanish missionaries in California. There are still alive some Indians who recollect these times. They are very old, over a hundred years old; but they remember well about these things. [Pg 13] [Pg 14]

Most of the principal California towns of which you have read in your geographies were begun in this way. San Diego, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, San Rafael, San Francisco, Monterey, Los Angeles,—all of these were first settled by the missionaries, and by the soldiers and officers of the army who came to protect the missionaries against the savages. Los Angeles was named by them after the Virgin Mary. The Spanish name was very long, "Nuestra Señora Reina de Los Angeles,"—that means, "Our Lady the Queen of the Angels." Of course this was quite too long to use every day; so it soon got cut down to simply "Los Angeles," or "The Angels,"—a name which often amuses travellers in Los Angeles to-day, because the people who live there are not a bit more like angels than other people; and that, as we all know, is very unlike indeed. Near Los Angeles is San Gabriel, only about fifteen miles away. In the olden time, fifteen miles was not thought any distance at all; people were neighbors who lived only fifteen miles apart. [Pg 15] [Pg 16]

There are a great many interesting stories about the first settlement of San Gabriel, and the habits and customs of the Indians there. They were a very polite people to each other, and used to train their children in some respects very carefully. If a child were sent to bring water to an older person, and he tasted it on the way, he was made to throw the water out and go and bring fresh water; when two grown-up persons were talking together, if a child ran between them he was told that he had done an uncivil thing, and would be punished if he did it again. These are only specimens of their rules for polite behavior. They seem to me as good as ours. These Indians were very fond of flowers, of which the whole country is in the spring so full, it looks in places like a garden bed; of these flowers they used to make long garlands and wreaths, not only to wear on their heads, but to reach way down to their feet. These they wore at festivals and celebrations; and sometimes at these festivals they used to have what they called "song contests." Two of the best singers, or poets, would be matched together, to see which could sing the better, or make the better verses. That seems to me a more interesting kind of match than the spelling [Pg 17] [Pg 18]

matches we have in our villages. But there is nothing of this sort to be seen in San Gabriel now, or indeed anywhere in California. The Indians, most of them, have been driven away by the white people who wanted their lands; year by year more and more white people have come, and the Indians have been robbed of more and more of their lands, and have died off by hundreds, until there are not many left.



**Indian Making Bowls.—Page 19.**

Mr. Connor was much interested in learning all he could about them, and collecting all he could of the curious stone bowls and pestles they used to make, and of their baskets and lace work. He spent much of his time riding about the country; and whenever he came to an Indian hut he would stop and talk with them, and ask if they had any stone bowls or baskets they would like to sell. The bowls especially were a great curiosity. Nobody knew how long ago they had been made. When the missionaries first came to the country, they found the Indians using them; they had them of all sizes, from those so large that they are almost more than a man can lift, down to tiny ones no bigger than a tea-cup. But big and little, they were all made in the same way out of solid stone, scooped out in the middle, by rubbing another stone round and round on them. You would think it would have taken a lifetime to make one; but they seem to have been plenty in the olden time. Even yet, people who are searching for such curiosities sometimes find big grave-mounds in which dozens of them are buried,—buried side by side with the people who used to eat out of them. There is nothing left of the people but their skulls and a few bones; but the bowls will last as long as the world stands.

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Now I suppose you are beginning to wonder when I am coming to the Hunter Cats! I am coming to them just the way Mr. Connor did,—by degrees. I want you to know about the place he lived in, and how he used to amuse himself, before he decided to build his house; and then I must tell you about the house, and then about the children that came to live with him in it, and then about the Chinamen that came to do his work, and about his orange-trees, and the gophers that gnawed the bark off them, and the rabbits that burrowed under his vines. Oh! it will be a good many pages yet before I can possibly get to the time when the Hunter Cats come in. But I will tell it as fast as I can, for I dislike long stories myself.

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The village of San Gabriel is in a beautiful broad valley, running east and west. The north wall of the valley is made by a range of mountains, called the Sierra Madre; that is Spanish and means "Mother Mountains." They are grand mountains; their tops are almost solid stone, all sharp and jagged, with more peaks and ridges, crowded in together, than you could possibly count. At the bottom, they reach out into the valley by long slopes, which in the olden time were covered thick with trees and shrubs; but now, the greater part of these have been cut down and cleared off, and the ground planted full of orange-trees and grapevines. If you want to see how it looks to have solid miles upon miles of orange orchards and vineyards together, you must go to this San Gabriel Valley. There is no other such place in the world.

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As Mr. Connor rode about, day after day, and looked at these orchards and vineyards, he began to think he should like to have some too. So he went up and down along the base of the mountains, looking for a good place. At last he found one. It was strange nobody had picked it out before. One reason was that it was so wild, and lay so high up, that it would be a world of trouble, and cost a deal of money, to make a road up to it and to clear the ground. But Mr. Connor did not care for that. It was a sort of ridge of the mountains, and it was all grown over thick with what is called in California "chapparal." That is not the name of any one particular shrub or tree; it

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means a mixture of every sort and kind. You all know what mixed candy is! Well, "chapparal" is mixed bushes and shrubs; mixed thick too! From a little way off, it looks as smooth as moss; it is so tangled, and the bushes have such strong and tough stems, you can't possibly get through it, unless you cut a path before you with a hatchet; it is a solid thicket all the way.

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As Mr. Connor rode to and fro, in front of this green ridge, he thought how well a house would look up there, with the splendid mountain wall rising straight up behind it. And from the windows of such a house, one could look off, not only over the whole valley, but past the hills of its southern wall, clear and straight thirty miles to the sea. In a clear day, the line of the water flashed and shone there like a silver thread.

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Mr. Connor used to sit on his horse by the half hour at a time gazing at this hillside, and picturing the home he would like to make there,—a big square house with plenty of room in it, wide verandas on all sides, and the slope in front of it one solid green orange orchard. The longer he looked the surer he felt that this was the thing he wanted to do.

The very day he decided, he bought the land; and in two days more he had a big force of men hacking away at the chapparal, burning it, digging up the tough, tangled roots; oh, what slow work it was! Just as soon as a big enough place was cleared, he built a little house of rough boards,—only two rooms in it; and there he went to live, with Jim.

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Now that he had once begun the making of his house, he could hardly wait for it to be done; and he was never happy except when he was overseeing the men, hurrying them and working himself. Many a tough old bush he chopped down with his own hands, and tugged the root up; and he grew stronger every day. This was a kind of medicine he had not tried before.

A great part of the bushes were "manzanita." The roots and lower stems of this shrub are bright red, and twisted almost into knots. They make capital firewood; so Mr. Connor had them all piled up in a pile to keep to burn in his big fireplaces; and you would have laughed to see such a woodpile. It was almost as high as the house; and no two sticks alike,—all prongs and horns, and crooks and twists; they looked like monster's back teeth.

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At last the house was done. It was a big, old-fashioned, square house, with a wide hall running through the middle; on the east side were the library and dining-room; on the west, the parlor and a big billiard-room; upstairs were four large bedrooms; at the back of the house, a kitchen. No servants were to sleep in the house. Mr. Connor would have only Chinamen for servants; and they would sleep, with the rest of his Chinamen laborers, in what he called the Chinese quarter,—a long, low wooden building still farther up on the hill. Only Jim was to sleep in the house with Mr. Connor.

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The Chinese quarter was a very comfortable house; and was presided over by a fat old Chinaman, who had such a long queue that Jim called him "Long Tail." His name was See Whong Choo, which, Jim said, was entirely too long to pronounce. There were twenty Chinamen on the place; and a funny sight it was to see them all file out of a morning to their work, every one with what looked like a great dinner-plate upside down on his head for a hat, and his long, black hair braided in a queue, not much bigger than a rat tail, hanging down his back.

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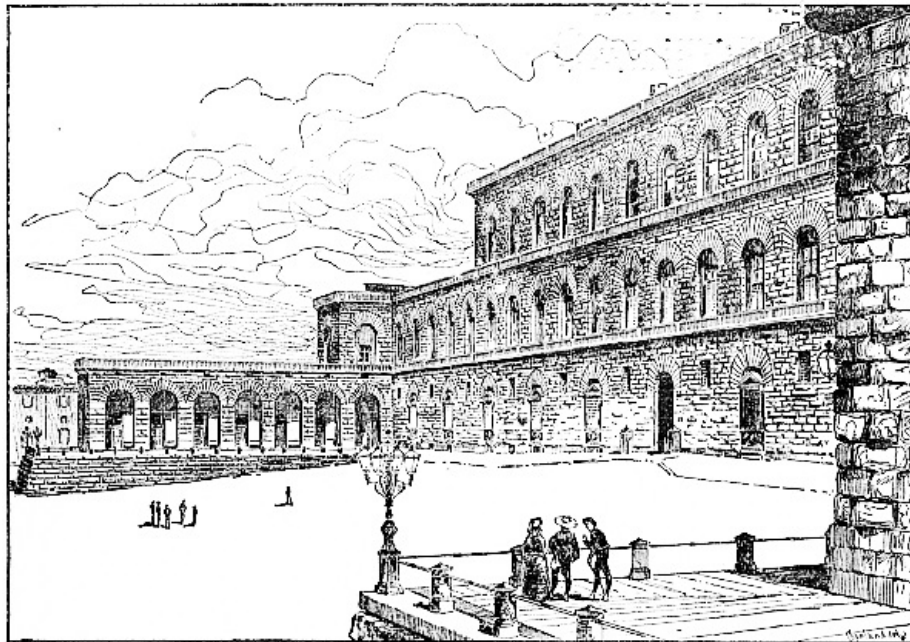
People in California are so used to seeing Chinamen, that they do not realize how droll they look to persons not accustomed to the sight.

Their yellow skins, their funny little black eyes, set so slanting in their heads that you can't tell half the time whether they are looking straight at you or not, their shiny shaved heads and pig-tails, are all very queer. And when you first hear them talking together in their own tongue, you think it must be cats trying to learn English; it is a mixture of caterwaul and parrot, more disagreeable in sound than any language I ever heard.

About a year after Mr. Connor had moved into his new house, he got a letter, one night, which made him very unhappy. It told him that his sister and her husband were dead; they had died, both of them in one week, of a dreadful fever. Their two children had had the fever at the same time, but they were getting well; and now, as there was nobody in Italy to take care of them, the letter asked what should be done with them. Would Mr. Connor come out himself, or would he send some one? The Count and his wife had been only a few days ill, and the fever had made them delirious from the first, so that no directions had been given to any one about the children; and there the two poor little things were, all alone with their nurse in their apartment in the King's palace. They had had to live in the palace always, so that the Count could be ready to attend on the King whenever he was wanted.

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**The King's Palace.—Page 31.**

Giuseppe and Maria (those were their names) never liked living there. The palace was much too grand, with its marble staircases, and marble floored rooms, so huge and cold; and armed soldiers for sentinels, standing at the corners and doors, to keep people from going into rooms without permission, and to keep watch also, lest somebody should get in and kill the King. The King was always afraid of being killed; there were so many unhappy and discontented persons in Italy, who did not want him to be King. Just think how frightful it must be to know every day,— morning, noon, and night,—that there was danger of somebody's coming stealthily into your room to kill you! Who would be a king? It used to make the children afraid whenever they passed these tall soldiers in armor, in the halls. They would hold tight to each other's hands, and run as fast as they could, past them; and when they got out in the open air, they were glad; most of all when their nurse took them into the country, where they could run on the grass and pick flowers. There they used often to see poor little hovels of houses, with gardens, and a donkey and chickens in the yard, and children playing; and they used to say they wished their father and mother were poor, and lived in a house like that, and kept a donkey. And then the nurse would tell them they were silly children; that it was a fine thing to live in a palace, and have their father one of the King's officers, and their mother one of the most beautiful of the Queen's ladies; but you couldn't have made the children believe it. They hated the palace, and everything about it, more and more every day of their lives.

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Giuseppe was ten, and Maria was seven. They were never called by their real names: Giuseppe was called Jusy, and Maria was called Rea; Jusy and Rea, nobody would ever have guessed from that, what their real names were. Maria is pronounced *Mahrea* in Italy; so that was the way she came to be called Rea for shortness. Jusy gave himself his nickname when he was a baby, and it had always stuck to him ever since.

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It was enough to make anybody's heart ache to see these two poor little things, when they first got strong enough to totter about after this fever; so weak they felt, they could hardly stand; and they cried more than half the time, thinking about their papa and mamma, dead and buried without their even being able to kiss them once for good-by. The King himself felt so sorry for the little orphans, he came to speak to them; and the kind Queen came almost every day, and sent them beautiful toys, and good things to eat; but nothing comforted the children.

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"What do you suppose will become of us, Jusy?" Rea often said; and Jusy would reply,—

"I don't know, Rea. As soon as I'm a man, I can take care of you and myself too, easy enough; and that won't be a great while. I shall ask the King to let me be one of his officers like papa."

"Oh, no! no! Jusy," Rea would reply. "Don't! Don't let's live in this horrid palace. Ask him to give you a little house in the country, with a donkey; and I will cook the dinner. Caterina will teach me how."

Caterina was their nurse.

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"But there wouldn't be any money to pay Caterina," Jusy would say.

"The King might give us enough for that, Jusy. He is so kind. I'm sure he would, don't you think so?" was Rea's answer to this difficulty.

"No," said Jusy, "I don't think he would, unless I earned it. Papa had to work for all the money he had."

It was a glad day for the children when the news came that their uncle in America was going to send for them to come and live with him; and that in three weeks the man who was to take them there would arrive. This news came over by telegraph, on that wonderful telegraph wire, down at

the bottom of the ocean. Their kind Uncle George thought he would not leave the children uncheered in their suspense and loneliness one minute longer than he could help; so he sent the message by telegraph; and the very day after this telegraphic message went, Jim set out for Italy. [Pg 37]

Jim had travelled so much with Mr. Connor that he was just the best possible person to take charge of the children on their long journey. He knew how to manage everything; and he could speak Italian and French and German well enough to say all that was necessary in places where no English was spoken. Moreover, Jim had been a servant in Mr. Connor's father's house all his life; had taken care of Mr. Connor and his sister when they were a little boy and girl together, just as Jusy and Rea were now. He always called Mr. Connor "Mr. George," and his sister "Miss Julia;" and when he set out to go for the children he felt almost as if he were going to the help and rescue of his own grandchildren. [Pg 38]

Jusy and Rea did not feel that they were going to a stranger; for they had heard about their Uncle George ever since they could remember; and all about "Jim" too. Almost every year Mr. Connor used to send his sister a new picture of himself; so the children knew very well how he looked.

When the news came that they were to go to America and live with him, they got out all of these pictures they could find, and ranged them in a line on the mantelpiece in their parlor. There was a picture of Jim too, as black as charcoal. At first, Rea had been afraid of this; but Jusy thought it was splendid. Every morning the lonely little creatures used to stand in front of this line of pictures and say, "Good-morning, Uncle George! Good-morning to you, Mr. Black Man! How soon will you get here? We shall be very glad to see you." [Pg 39]

It was over a month before he arrived. The children had been told that he might be there in three weeks from the day the despatch came; and as soon as the three weeks were ended, they began almost to hold their breaths listening for him; they were hardly willing to stir out of the palace for a walk, for fear he might come while they were away. Rea watched at the windows, and Jusy watched at the doorway which led into the corridor. [Pg 40]

"He might be afraid of the sentinel at the corner there," he said. "Caterina says there are no palaces in America."

"Goody!" interrupted Rea, "I'm so glad."

"And so perhaps he has never seen a man in armor like that; and I'd better be at the door to run and meet him."

All their clothes were packed ready for the journey; and all the things which had belonged to their mamma were packed up too, to go with them. The huge rooms looked drearier than ever. The new chamberlain's wife was impatient to get settled in the apartment herself, and kept coming to look at it, and discussing, in the children's presence, where she would put this or that piece of furniture, and how she would have her pictures hung. [Pg 41]

"I think she is a very rude lady," said Jusy. "The Queen said these were our rooms so long as we stayed, just the same as if mamma were here with us; and I think I see her coming in here that way if mamma was here!"



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## II.

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After all their precautions, Jusy and Rea were out when Jim arrived. They had been to take a walk with Caterina; and when they came back, as they passed the big sentinel at the outside gate, he nodded to them pleasantly, and said,—

"He has come!—the black signor from America." ("Signor" is Italian for "Mr.")





**Jusy and Rea. "He has come!—the black signor from America."—Page 42.**

You see everybody in the palace, from the King down to the scullions in the kitchen, was interested in the two fatherless and motherless children, and glad to hear that Jim had arrived. [Pg 43]

The very next day they set off. Jim was impatient to be back in California again; there was nothing to wait for. Caterina was greatly relieved to find that he did not wish her to go with him. The Queen had said she must go, if the black signor wished it; and Caterina was wretched with fright at the thought of the journey, and of the country full of wild beasts and savages. "Worse than Africa, a hundred times," she said, "from all I can hear. But her Majesty says I must go, if I am needed. I'd rather die, but I see no way out of it."

When it came to bidding Rea good-by, however, she was almost ready to beg to be allowed to go. The child cried and clung to her neck; and Caterina cried and sobbed too. [Pg 44]

But the wise Jim had provided himself with a powerful helper. He had bought a little white spaniel, the tiniest creature that ever ran on four legs; she was no more than a doll, in Rea's arms; her hair was like white silk floss. She had a blue satin collar with a gilt clasp and padlock; and on the padlock, in raised letters, was the name "Fairy." Jim had thought of this in New York, and bought the collar and padlock there; and the dog he had bought only one hour before they were to set out on their journey. She was in a beautiful little flannel-lined basket; and when Rea clung to Caterina's neck crying and sobbing, Jim stepped up to her and said,— [Pg 45]

"Don't cry, missy; here's your little dog to take care of; she'll be scared if she sees you cry."

"Mine! Mine! That sweet doggie!" cried Rea. She could not believe her eyes. She stopped crying; and she hardly noticed when the Queen herself kissed her in farewell, so absorbed was she in "Fairy" and the blue satin collar. "Oh, you are a very good black man, Signor Jim," she cried. "I never saw such a sweet doggie; I shall carry her in my own arms all the way there."

It was a hard journey; but the children enjoyed every minute of it. The account of all they did and saw, and the good times they had with the kind Jim, would make a long story by itself; but if I told it, we should never get to the Hunter Cats; so I will not tell you anything about the journey at all except that it took about six weeks, and that they reached San Gabriel in the month of March, when everything was green and beautiful, and the country as full of wild flowers as the children had ever seen the country about Florence in Italy. [Pg 46]

Mr. Connor had not been idle while Jim was away. After walking up and down his house, with his thinking-cap on, for a few days, looking into the rooms, and trying to contrive how it should be rearranged to accommodate his new and unexpected family, he suddenly decided to build on a small wing to the house. He might as well arrange it in the outset as it would be pleasantest to have it when Jusy and Rea were a young gentleman and a young lady, he thought. What might do for them very well now, while they were little children, would not do at all when they were grown up. [Pg 47]



So, as I told you, Mr. Connor being a gentleman who never lost any time in doing a thing he had once made up his mind to, set carpenters at work immediately tearing out half of one side of his new house; and in little over a month, there was almost another little house joined on to it. There was a good big room for Rea's bedroom, and a small room opening out of it, for her sitting-room; beyond this another room in which her nurse could sleep, while she needed one, and after she grew older, the governess who must come to teach her; and after she did not need any governess, the room would be a pleasant thing to have for her young friends who came to visit her. This kind uncle was planning for a good many years ahead, in this wing to his house.

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These rooms for Rea were in the second story. Beneath them were two large rooms, one for Jusy, and one for Jim. A pretty stairway, with a lattice-work wall, went up outside to Rea's room, and at the door of her room spread out into a sort of loggia, or upstairs piazza, such as Mr. Connor knew she had been used to in Italy. In another year this stairway and loggia would be a bower of all sorts of vines, things grow so fast in California.

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And now we are really coming to the Cats. They had arrived before the children did.

When the children got out of the cars at San Gabriel, there stood their Uncle George on the platform waiting for them. Jusy spied him first. "There's Uncle George," he shouted, and ran towards him shouting, "Uncle George! Uncle George! Here we are."

Rea followed close behind, holding up Fairy. "Look at my doggie that Signor black Jim gave me," she cried, holding Fairy up as high as she could reach; and in the next minute she herself, doggie and all, was caught up in Uncle George's arms.

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"What makes you cry, Uncle George?" she exclaimed; "we thought you would be very glad to see us!"

"So I am, you dear child," he said. "I am only crying because I am so glad."

But Jusy knew better, and as soon as he could get a chance, he whispered to Rea, "I should have thought you would have known better than to say anything to Uncle George about his having tears in his eyes. It was because we reminded him so much of mamma, that he cried. I saw the tears come in his eyes, the first minute he saw us, but I wasn't going to say a word about it."

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Poor little Rea felt badly enough to think she had not understood as quickly as Jusy did; but the only thing she could think of to do was to spring up in the seat of the wagon, and put her arms around her uncle's neck, and kiss him over and over, saying, "We are going to love you, like,—oh,—like everything, Jusy and me! I love you better than my doggie!"

But when she said this, the tears came into Mr. Connor's eyes again; and Rea looked at Jusy in despair.

"Keep quiet, Rea," whispered Jusy. "He doesn't want us to talk just yet, I guess;" and Rea sat down again, and tried to comfort herself with Fairy. But she could not keep her eyes from watching her uncle's face. Her affectionate heart was grieved to see him look so sad, instead of full of joy and gladness as she had thought it would be. Finally she stole her hand into his and sat very still without speaking, and that really did comfort Mr. Connor more than anything she could have done. The truth was, Rea looked so much like her mother, that it was almost more than Mr. Connor could bear when he first saw her; and her voice also was like her mother's.

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Jusy did not in the least resemble his mother; he was like his father in every way,—hair as black as black could be, and eyes almost as black as the hair; a fiery, flashing sort of face Jusy had; and a fiery, flashing sort of temper too, I am sorry to say. A good deal like thunder-storms, Jusy's fits of anger were; but, if they were swift and loud, like the thunder, they also were short-lived,—cleared off quickly,—like thunder-storms, and showed blue sky afterward, and a beautiful rainbow of sorrow for the hasty words or deeds.

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Rea was fair, with blue eyes and yellow hair, and a temper sunny as her face. In Italy there are so few people with blue eyes and fair hair, that whenever Rea was seen in the street, everybody turned to look at her, and asked who she was, and remembered her; and when she came again, they said, "Ecco! Ecco! (That is Italian for Look! Look!) There is the little blue-eyed, golden-haired angel." Rea did not know that the people said this, which was well, for it might have made her vain.

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It was six miles from the railway station to Mr. Connor's house. But the house was in sight all the way; it was so high up on the mountain-side that it showed plainly, and as it was painted white, you could see it in all directions like a lighthouse. Mr. Connor liked to be able to see it from all places when he was riding about the valley. He said it looked friendly to him; as if it said, all the time, "Here I am, you can come home any minute you want to."

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After they had driven about half way, Mr. Connor said,—

"Children, do you see that big square house up there on the mountain? That is Connorloa."

"Whose house is it, Uncle George?" said Jusy.

"Why, did you not hear?" replied Mr. Connor. "It is Connorloa."

The children looked still more puzzled.

"Oh," laughed their uncle. "Is it possible nobody has told you the name of my house? I have called it Connorloa, from my own name, and 'loa,' which is the word in the Sandwich Islands for 'hill.' I suppose I might have called it Connor Hill, but I thought 'loa' was prettier."

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"Oh, so do I," said Jusy. "It is lovely. Connorloa, Connorloa," he repeated. "Doesn't it sound like some of the names in Italy, Rea?" he said.

"Prettier!" said little Rea. "No word in Italy, so pretty as Connorloa; nor so nice as Uncle George."

"You dear, loving little thing!" cried Uncle George, throwing his arms around her. "You are for all the world your mother over again."

"That's just what I've been saying to myself all the way home, Mr. George," said Jim. "It's seemed to me half the time as if it were Miss Julia herself; but the boy is not much like you."

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"No," said Jusy proudly, throwing back his handsome head, and his eyes flashing. "I am always said to be exactly the portrait of my father; and when I am a man, I am going back to Italy to live in the King's palace, and wear my father's sword."

"I sha'n't go," said Rea, nestling close to her uncle. "I shall stay in Connorloa with Uncle George. I hate palaces. Your house isn't a palace, is it, Uncle George? It looks pretty big."

"No, my dear; not by any means," replied Mr. Connor, laughing heartily. "But why do you hate palaces, my little Rea? Most people think it would be the finest thing possible to live in a palace."

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"I don't," said Rea. "I just hate them; the rooms are so big and so cold; and the marble floors are so slip-py, I've had my knees all black and blue tumbling down on them; and the stairs are worse yet; I used to have to creep on them; and there is a soldier at every corner with a gun and a sword to kill you, if you break any of the rules. I think a palace is just like a prison!"

"Well done, my little Republican!" cried Uncle George.

"What is that?" said Rea.

"I know," said Jusy. "It is a person that does not wish to have any king. There were Republicans in Italy; very bad men. Papa said they ought to be killed. Why do you call Rea by that name, Uncle George?" and Jusy straightened himself up like a soldier, and looked fierce.

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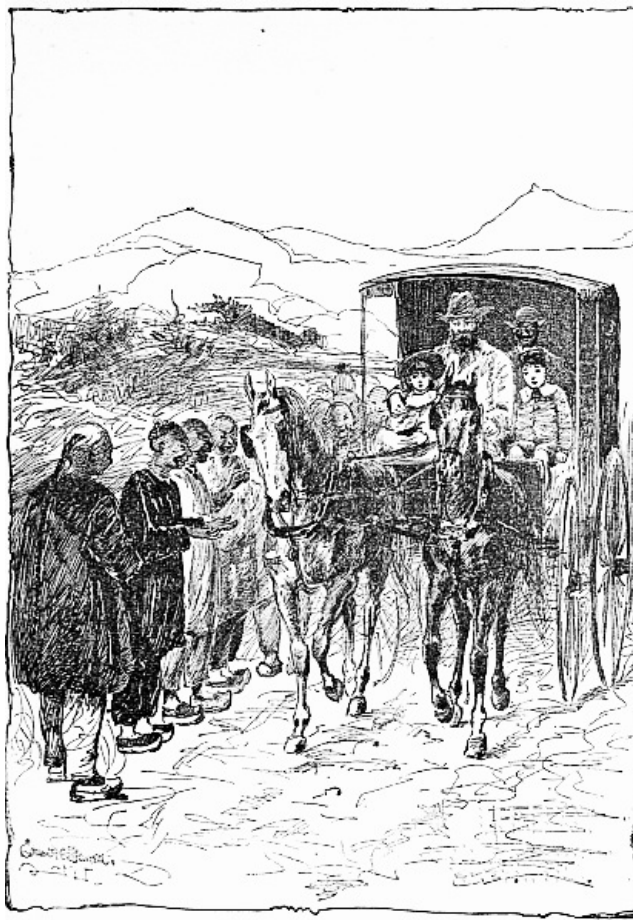
Mr. Connor could hardly keep his face straight as he replied to Jusy: "My dear boy the word does not mean anything bad in America; we are all Republicans here. You know we do not have any king. We do not think that is the best way to take care of a country."

"My papa thought it was the best way," haughtily answered Jusy. "I shall think always as papa did."

"All right, my man," laughed Uncle George. "Perhaps you will. You can think and say what you like while you live in America, and nobody will put you in prison for your thoughts or your words, as they might if you lived in Italy."

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It was near night when they reached the house. As they drove slowly up the long hill, the Chinamen were just going, on the same road, to their supper. When they heard the sound of the wheels, they stepped off the road, and formed themselves into a line to let the carriage pass, and to get a peep at the children. They all knew about their coming, and were curious to see them.



**"The Chinamen were just going to their supper, and they formed themselves into a line."—Page 60.**

When Rea caught sight of them, she screamed aloud, and shook with terror, and hid her face on her uncle's shoulder.

"Are those the savages?" she cried. "Oh, don't let them kill Fairy;" and she nearly smothered the little dog, crowding her down out of sight on the seat between herself and her uncle. [Pg 61]

Jusy did not say a word, but he turned pale; he also thought these must be the savages of which they had heard.

Mr. Connor could hardly speak for laughing. "Who ever put such an idea as that into your head?" he cried. "Those are men from China; those are my workmen; they live at Connorloa all the time. They are very good men; they would not hurt anybody. There are not any savages here."

"Caterina said America was all full of savages," sobbed Rea,— "savages and wild beasts, such as lions and wolves." [Pg 62]

"That girl was a fool," exclaimed Jim. "It was a good thing, Mr. George, you told me not to bring her over."

"I should say so," replied Mr. Connor. "The idea of her trying to frighten these children in that way. It was abominable."

"She did nothing of the kind," cried Jusy, his face very red. "She was talking to her cousin; and she thought we were asleep; and Rea and I listened; and I told Rea it was good enough for us to get so frightened because we had listened. But I did not believe it so much as Rea did."

The Chinamen were all bowing and bending, and smiling in the gladness of their hearts. Mr. Connor was a good master to them; and they knew it would be to him great pleasure to have these little children in the house. [Pg 63]

While driving by he spoke to several of them by name, and they replied. Jusy and Rea listened and looked.

"What are their heads made of, Uncle George?" whispered Rea. "Will they break if they hit them?"

At first, Mr. Connor could not understand what she meant; then in a moment he shouted with laughter.

Chinamen have their heads shorn of all hair, except one little lock at the top; this is braided in a tight braid, like a whiplash, and hangs down their backs, sometimes almost to the very ground. The longer this queer little braid is, the prouder the Chinaman feels. All the rest of his head is bare and shining smooth. They looked to Rea like the heads of porcelain baby dolls she had had; [Pg 64]

and that those would break, she knew by sad experience.

How pleased Rea and Jusy were with their beautiful rooms, and with everything in their Uncle George's house, there are no words to tell. They would have been very unreasonable and ungrateful children, if they had not been; for Mr. Connor had not forgotten one thing which could add to their comfort or happiness: books, toys, everything he could think of, or anybody could suggest to him, he had bought. And when he led little Rea into her bedroom, there stood a sweet-faced young Mexican girl, to be her nurse.

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"Anita," he said, "here is your young lady."

"I am very glad to see you, señorita," said the girl, coming forward to take off Rea's hat; on which Rea exclaimed,—

"Why, she is Italian! That is what Caterina called me. And Caterina had a sister whose name was Anita. How did you get over here?"

"I was born here, señorita," replied the girl.

"It is not quite the same word, Rea," said Mr. Connor, "though it sounds so much like it. It was 'signorita' you were called in Italy; and it is 'señorita' that Anita here calls you. That is Spanish; and Anita speaks much more Spanish than English. That is one reason I took her. I want you to learn to speak in Spanish."

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"Then we shall speak four languages," said Jusy proudly,— "Italian, French, and English and Spanish. Our papa spoke eleven. That was one reason he was so useful to the King. Nobody could come from any foreign country that papa could not talk to. My papa said the more languages a man spoke, the more he could do in the world. I shall learn all the American languages before I go back to Italy. Are there as many as nine, Uncle George?"

"Yes, a good many more," replied Uncle George. "Pretty nearly a language for every State, I should say. But the fewer you learn of them the better. If you will speak good English and Spanish, that is all you will need here."

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"Shall we not learn the language of the signors from China?" asked Rea.

At which Jim, who had followed, and was standing in the background, looking on with delight, almost went into convulsions of laughter, and went out and told the Chinamen in the kitchen that Miss Rea wished to learn to speak Chinese at once. So they thought she must be a very nice little girl, and were all ready to be her warm friends.

The next morning, as Rea was dressing, she heard a great caterwauling and miaowing. Fairy, who was asleep on the foot of her bed, sprang up and began to bark furiously; all the while, however, looking as if she were frightened half to death. Never before had Fairy heard so many cats' voices at once.

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Rea ran to the open window; before she reached it, she heard Jusy calling to her from below,—

"Rea! Rea! Are you up? Come out and see the cats."

Jusy had been up ever since light, roaming over the whole place: the stables, the Chinamen's quarters, the tool-house, the kitchen, the woodpile; there was nothing he had not seen; and he was in a state of such delight he could not walk straight or steadily; he went on the run and with a hop, skip, and jump from each thing to the next.

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"Hurry, Rea!" he screamed. "Do hurry. Never mind your hair. Come down. They'll be done!"

Still the miaowing and caterwauling continued.

"Oh, hurry, hurry, Anita," said Rea. "Please let me go down; I'll come up to have my hair done afterwards. What is it, Anita? Is it really cats? Are there a thousand?"

Anita laughed. "No, señorita," she said. "Only seventeen! And you will see them every morning just the same. They always make this noise. They are being fed; and there is only a very little meat for so many. Jim keeps them hungry all the time, so they will hunt better."

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"Hunt!" cried Rea.

"Yes," said Anita. "That is what we keep them for, to hunt the gophers and rabbits and moles. They are clearing them out fast. Jim says by another spring there won't be a gopher on the place."



**The Chinaman, Ah Foo, Feeding the Cats—Page 70.**

Before she had finished speaking, Rea was downstairs and out on the east veranda. At the kitchen door stood a Chinaman, throwing bits of meat to the scrambling seventeen cats,—black, white, tortoise-shell, gray, maltese, yellow, every color, size, shape of cat that was ever seen. And they were plunging and leaping and racing about so, that it looked like twice as many cats as there really were, and as if every cat had a dozen tails. "Sfz! Sfz! Sputter! Scratch, spp, spt! Growl, growl, miaow, miaow," they went, till, between the noise and the flying around, it was a bedlam.

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Jusy had laughed till the tears ran out of his eyes; and Ah Foo (that was the Chinaman's name) was laughing almost as hard, just to see Jusy laugh. The cats were an old story to Ah Foo; he had got over laughing at them long ago.

Ah Foo was the cook's brother. While Jim had been away, Ah Foo had waited at table, and done all the housework except the cooking. The cook's name was Wang Hi. He was old; but Ah Foo was young, not more than twenty. He did not like to work in the house, and he was glad Jim had got home, so he could go to working out of doors again. He was very glad, too, to see the children; and he had spoken so pleasantly to Jusy, that in one minute Jusy had lost all his fear of Chinamen.

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When Rea saw Ah Foo, she hung back, and was afraid to go nearer.

"Oh, come on! come on!" shouted Jusy. "Don't be afraid! He is just like Jim, only a different color. They have men of all kinds of colors here in America. They are just like other people, all but the color. Come on, Rea. Don't be silly. You can't half see from there!"

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But Rea was afraid. She would not come farther than the last pillar of the veranda. "I can see very well here," she said; and there she stood clinging to the pillar. She was half afraid of the cats, too, besides being very much afraid of the Chinaman.

The cats' breakfast was nearly over. In fact, they had had their usual allowance before Rea came down; but Ah Foo had gone on throwing out meat for Rea to see the scrambling. Presently he threw the last piece, and set the empty plate up on a shelf by the kitchen door. The cats knew very well by this sign that breakfast was over; after the plate was set on that shelf, they never had a mouthful more of meat; and it was droll to see the change that came over all of them as soon as they saw this done. In less than a second, they changed from fierce, fighting, clawing, scratching, snatching, miaowing, spitting, growling cats, into quiet, peaceful cats, some sitting down licking their paws, or washing their faces, and some lying out full-length on the ground and rolling; some walking off in a leisurely and dignified manner, as if they had had all they wanted, and wouldn't thank anybody for another bit of meat, if they could have it as well as not. This was almost as funny as the first part of it.

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After Ah Foo had set the plate in its place on the shelf, he turned to go into the kitchen to help about the breakfast; but just as he had put his hand on the door-handle, there came a terrible shriek from Rea, a fierce sputter from one of the cats, and a faint bark of a dog, all at once; and Ah Foo, looking around, sprang just in time to rescue Fairy from the jaws of Skipper, one of the biggest and fiercest of the cats.

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Poor little Fairy, missing her mistress, had trotted downstairs; and smelling on the floor wherever Rea had set her feet, had followed her tracks, and had reached the veranda just in time to be spied by Skipper, who arched his back, set his tail up straight and stiff as a poker, and, making one bound from the ground to the middle of the veranda floor, clutched Fairy with teeth and claws, and would have made an end of her in less than one minute if Ah Foo had not been there. But Ah Foo could move almost as quickly as a cat; and it was not a quarter of a second after Fairy gave her piteous cry, when she was safe and sound in her mistress's arms, and Ah Foo had

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Skipper by the scruff of his neck, and was holding him high up, boxing his ears, right and left, with blows so hard they rang.

"Cat heap wicked," he said. "You killee missy's dog, I killee you!" and he flung Skipper with all his might and main through the air.

Rea screamed, "Oh, don't!" She did not want to see the cat killed, even if he had flown at Fairy. [Pg 77]  
"It will kill him," she cried.

Ah Foo laughed. "Heap hard killee cat," he said. "Cat get nine time life good;" and as he spoke, Skipper, after whirling through the air in several somersaults, came down on his feet all right, and slunk off into the woodpile.

"I tellee you," said Ah Foo, chuckling.

"Thatee isee heapee goodee manee," cried Jusy. "I havee learnee talkee oneee language already!"

A roar of laughter came from the dining-room window. There stood Uncle George, holding his sides.

"Bravo, Jusy!" he exclaimed. "You have begun on pigeon English, have you, for the first of your nine languages?" [Pg 78]

"Isn't that Chinese?" said Jusy, much crestfallen.

"Oh, no!" said Uncle George, "not by any manner of means. It is only the Chinese way of talking English. It is called pigeon English. But come in to breakfast now, and I will tell you all about my cats,—my hunting cats, I call them. They are just as good as a pack of hunting dogs; and better, for they do not need anybody to go with them."

How pleasant the breakfast-table looked!—a large square table set with gay china, pretty flowers in the middle, nice broiled chicken and fried potatoes, and baked apples and cream; and Jusy's and Rea's bright faces, one on Mr. Connor's left hand, the other on his right. [Pg 79]

As Jim moved about the table and waited on them, he thought to himself, "Now, if this doesn't make Mr. George well, it will be because he can't be cured."

Jim had found the big house so lonely, with nobody in it except Mr. Connor and the two Chinese servants, he would have been glad to see almost anything in the shape of a human being,—man, woman, or child,—come there to live. How much more, then, these two beautiful and merry children!

Jusy and Rea thought they had never in all their lives tasted anything so good as the broiled chicken and the baked apples. [Pg 80]

"Heapee goodee cookee, Uncle George!" said Jusy. He was so tickled with the Chinaman's way of talking, he wanted to keep doing it.

"Tooee muchee putee onee letter e, Master Jusy," said Uncle George. "After you have listened to their talk a little longer, you will see that they do not add the 'ee' to every word. It is hard to imitate them exactly."

Jusy was crestfallen. He thought he had learned a new language in half an hour, and he was proud of it. But no new language was ever learned without more trouble and hard work than that; not even pigeon English! [Pg 81]



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### III.

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It had come about by chance, Mr. Connor's keeping this pack of hunting cats. He had been greatly troubled by gophers and rabbits: the gophers killed his trees by gnawing their roots; the rabbits burrowed under his vines, ate the tender young leaves, and gnawed the stems.

Jim had tried every device,—traps of all kinds and all the poisons he could hear of. He had also tried drowning the poor little gophers out by pouring water down their holes. But, spite of all he could do, the whole hill was alive with them. It had been wild ground so long, and covered so [Pg 83]



thick with bushes, that it had been like a nice house built on purpose for all small wild animals to live in.

I suppose there must have been miles of gophers' underground tunnels, leading from hole to hole. They popped their heads up, and you saw them scampering away wherever you went; and in the early morning it was very funny to see the rabbits jumping and leaping to get off out of sight when they heard people stirring. They were of a beautiful gray color, with a short bushy tail, white at the end. On account of this white tip to their tails, they are called "cotton-tails."

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When Mr. Connor first moved up on the hill, Jim used to shoot a cottontail almost every day, and some days he shot two. The rabbits, however, are shyer than the gophers; when they find out that they get shot as soon as they are seen, and that these men who shoot them have built houses and mean to stay, they will gradually desert their burrows and move away to new homes.

But the gopher is not so afraid. He lives down in the ground, and can work in the dark as well as in the light; and he likes roots just as well as he likes the stems above ground; so as long as he stays in his cellar houses, he is hard to reach.

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The gopher is a pretty little creature, with a striped back,—almost as pretty as a chipmunk. It seems a great pity to have to kill them all off; but there is no help for it; fruit-trees and gophers cannot live in the same place.

Soon after Mr. Connor moved into his new house, he had a present of a big cat from the Mexican woman who sold him milk.

She said to Jim one day, "Have you got a cat in your house yet?"

"No," said Jim. "Mr. George does not like cats."

"No matter," said she, "you have got to have one. The gophers and squirrels in this country are a great deal worse than rats and mice. They'll come right into your kitchen and cellar, if your back is turned a minute, and eat you out of house and home. I'll give you a splendid cat. She's a good hunter. I've got more cats than I know what to do with."

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So she presented Jim with a fine, big black and white cat; and Jim named the cat "Mexican," because a Mexican woman gave her to him.

The first thing Mexican did, after getting herself established in her new home in the woodpile, was to have a litter of kittens, six of them. The next thing she did, as soon as they got big enough to eat meat, was to go out hunting for food for them; and one day, as Mr. Connor was riding up the hill, he saw her running into the woodpile, with a big fat gopher in her mouth.

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"Ha!" thought Mr. Connor to himself. "There's an idea! If one cat will kill one gopher in a day, twenty cats would kill twenty gophers in a day! I'll get twenty cats, and keep them just to hunt gophers. They'll clear the place out quicker than poison, or traps, or drowning."

"Jim," he called, as soon as he entered the house,— "Jim, I've got an idea. I saw Mexican just now carrying a dead gopher to her kittens. Does she kill many?"

"Oh, yes, sir," replied Jim. "Before she got her kittens I used to see her with them every day. But she does not go out so often now."

"Good mother!" said Mr. Connor. "Stays at home with her family, does she?"

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"Yes, sir," laughed Jim; "except when she needs to go out to get food for them."

"You may set about making a collection of cats, Jim, at once," said Mr. Connor. "I'd like twenty."

Jim stared. "I thought you didn't like cats, Mr. George," he exclaimed. "I was afraid to bring Mexican home, for fear you wouldn't like having her about."

"No more do I," replied Mr. Connor. "But I do not dislike them so much as I dislike gophers. And don't you see, if we have twenty, and they all hunt gophers as well as she does, we'll soon have the place cleared?"

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"We'd have to feed them, sir," said Jim. "So many's that, they'd never make all their living off gophers."

"Well, we'll feed them once a day, just a little, so as not to let them starve. But we must keep them hungry, or else they won't hunt."

"Very well, sir," said Jim. "I will set about it at once."

"Beg or buy them," laughed Mr. Connor. "I'll pay for them, if I can't get them any other way. There is room in the woodpile for fifty to live."

Jim did not much like the idea of having such an army of cats about; but he went faithfully to work; and in a few weeks he had seventeen. One morning, when they were all gathered together to be fed, he called Mr. Connor to look at them.

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"Do you think there are enough, sir?" he said.

"Goodness! Jim," cried Mr. Connor, "what did you get so many for? We shall be overrun."

Jim laughed. "I'm three short yet, sir, of the number you ordered," he said. "There are only seventeen in that batch."

"Only seventeen! You are joking, Jim," cried Mr. Connor; and he tried to count; but the cats were in such a scrambling mass, he could not count them. [Pg 91]

"I give it up, Jim," he said at last. "But are there really only seventeen?"

"That's all, sir, and it takes quite a lot of meat to give them all a bite of a morning. I think here are enough to begin with, unless you have set your heart, sir, on having twenty. Mexican has got six kittens, you know, and they will be big enough to hunt before long. That will make twenty-three."

"Plenty! plenty!" said Mr. Connor. "Don't get another one. And, Jim," he added, "wouldn't it be better to feed them at night? Then they will be hungry the next morning."

"I tried that, sir," said Jim, "but they didn't seem so lively. I don't give them any more than just enough to whet their appetites. At first they sat round the door begging for more, half the morning, and I had to stone them away; now they understand it. In a few minutes, they'll all be off; and you won't see much of any of them till to-morrow morning. They are all on hand then, as regular as the sun rises." [Pg 92]

"Where do they sleep?" said Mr. Connor.

"In the woodpile, every blessed cat of them," replied Jim. "And there are squirrels living in there too. It is just a kind of cage, that woodpile, with its crooks and turns. I saw a squirrel going up, up, in it the other day; I thought he'd make his way out to the top; I thought the cats would have cleaned them all out before this time, but they haven't; I saw one there only yesterday." [Pg 93]

Jim had counted too soon on Mexican's kittens. Five of them came to a sad end. Their mother carried to them, one day, a gopher which she found lying dead in the road. Poor cat-mother! I suppose she thought to herself when she saw it lying there, "Oh, how lucky! I sha'n't have to sit and wait and watch for a gopher this morning. Here is one all ready, dead!" But that gopher had died of poison which had been put down his hole; and as soon as the little kittens ate it, they were all taken dreadfully ill, and all but one died. Either he hadn't had so much of the gopher as the rest had, or else he was stronger; he lingered along in misery for a month, as thin, wretched-looking a little beast as ever was seen; then he began to pick up his flesh, and finally got to be as strong a cat as there was in the whole pack. [Pg 94]

He was most curiously marked: in addition to the black and white of his mother's skin, he had gray and yellow mottled in all over him. Jim thought it looked as if his skin had been painted, so he named him Fresco.

Jim had names for all the best cats; there were ten that were named. The other seven, Jim called "the rabble;" but of the ten he had named, Jim grew to be very proud. He thought they were remarkable cats. [Pg 95]

First there was Mexican, the original first-comer in the colony. Then there was Big Tom, and another Tom called China Tom, because he would stay all the time he could with the Chinamen. He was dark-gray, with black stripes on him.

Next in size and beauty was a huge black cat, called Snowball. He was given to Mr. Connor by a miner's wife, who lived in a cabin high up on the mountain. She said she would let him have the cat on the condition that he would continue to call him Snowball, as she had done. She named him Snowball, she said, to make herself laugh every time she called him, he being black as coal; and there was so little to laugh at where she lived, she liked a joke whenever she could contrive one. [Pg 96]

Then there was Skipper, the one who nearly ate up Fairy that first morning; he also was as black as coal, and fierce as a wolf; all the cats were more or less afraid of him. Jim named him Skipper, because he used to race about in trees like a squirrel. Way up to the very top of the biggest sycamore trees in the cañon back of the house, Skipper would go, and leap from one bough to another. He was especially fond of birds, and in this way he caught many. He thought birds were much better eating than gophers. [Pg 97]

Mexican, Big Tom, China Tom, Snowball, Skipper, and Fresco,—these are six of the names; the other four were not remarkable; they did not mean anything in especial; only to distinguish their owners from the rest, who had no names at all.

Oh, yes; I am forgetting the drollest of all: that was Humbug. Jim gave her that name because she was so artful and sly about getting more than her share of the meat. She would watch for the biggest pieces, and pounce on them right under some other cat's nose, and almost always succeed in getting them. So Jim named her Humbug, which was a very good name; for she always pretended to be quieter and stiller than the rest, as if she were not in any great hurry about her breakfast; and then she whisked in, and got the biggest pieces, and twice as much as any other cat there. [Pg 98]

The other names were Jenny, Capitan, and Growler. That made the ten.

In a very few days after Jusy and Rea arrived, they knew all these cats' names as well as Jim did; and they were never tired of watching them at their morning meal, or while they were prowling,

looking, and waiting for gophers and rabbits.

For a long time, Rea carried Fairy tight in her arms whenever there was a cat in sight; but after a while, the cats all came to know Fairy so well that they took no notice of her, and it was safe to put her on the ground and let her run along. But Rea kept close to her, and never forgot her for a single minute.

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There were many strange things which these cats did, besides hunting the gophers. They used also to hunt snakes. In one of the rocky ravines near the house there were large snakes of a beautiful golden-brown color. On warm days these used to crawl out, and lie sunning themselves on the rocks. Woe to any such snake, if one of the cats caught sight of him! Big Tom had a special knack at killing them. He would make a bound, and come down with his fore claws firm planted in the middle of the snake's back; then he would take it in his teeth, and shake it, flapping its head against the stones every time, till it was more dead than alive. You would not have thought that so big a snake could have been so helpless in the claws of a cat.

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Another thing the cats did, which gave the men much amusement, was, that when they had killed rabbits they carried the bodies into the mules' stables. Mules are terribly frightened at the smell of a dead rabbit. Whenever this happened, a great braying and crying and stamping would be heard in the stables; and on running to see what was the matter, there would be found Big Tom or Skipper, sitting down calm and happy by the side of a dead rabbit, which he had carried in, and for some reason or other best known to himself had deposited in plain sight of the mules. Why they chose to carry dead rabbits there, unless it was that they enjoyed seeing the mules so frightened, there seemed no explaining. They never took dead gophers up there, or snakes; only the rabbits. Once a mule was so frightened that he plunged till he broke his halter, got free, and ran off down the hill; and the men had a big chase before they overtook him.

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But the queerest thing of all that happened, was that the cats adopted a skunk; or else it was the skunk that adopted the cats; I don't know which would be the proper way of stating it; but at any rate the skunk joined the family, lived with them in the woodpile, came with them every morning to be fed, and went off with them hunting gophers every day. It must have been there some time before Jim noticed it, for when he first saw it, it was already on the most familiar and friendly terms with all the cats. It was a pretty little black and white creature, and looked a good deal like one of Mexican's kittens.

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Finally it became altogether too friendly: Jim found it in the kitchen cellar one day; and a day or two after that, it actually walked into the house. Mr. Connor was sitting in his library writing. He heard a soft, furry foot patting on the floor, and thought it was Fairy. Presently he looked up; and, to his horror, there was the cunning little black and white skunk in the doorway, looking around and sniffing curiously at everything, like a cat. Mr. Connor held his breath and did not dare stir, for fear the creature should take it into its head that he was an enemy. Seeing everything so still, the skunk walked in, walked around both library and dining-room, taking minute observations of everything by means of its nose. Then it softly patted out again, across the hall, and out of the front door, down the veranda steps.

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It had seemed an age to Mr. Connor; he could hardly help laughing too, as he sat there in his chair, to think how helpless he, a grown-up man, felt before a creature no bigger than that,—a little thing whose neck he could wring with one hand; and yet he no more dared to touch it, or try to drive it out, than if it had been a roaring lion. As soon as it was fairly out of the way, Mr. Connor went in search of Jim.

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"Jim," said he, "that skunk you were telling me about, that the cats had adopted, seems to be thinking of adopting me; he spent some time in the library with me this morning, looking me over; and I am afraid he liked me and the place much too well. I should like to have him killed. Can you manage it?"

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"Yes, sir," laughed Jim. "I was thinking I'd have to kill him. I caught him in the cellar a day or two since, and I thought he was getting to feel too much at home. I'll fix him."

So the next morning Jim took a particularly nice and tempting piece of meat, covered it with poison, and just as the cats' breakfast was finished, and the cats slowly dispersing, he threw this tidbit directly at the little skunk. He swallowed it greedily, and before noon he was dead.

Jim could not help being sorry when he saw him stretched out stiff near his home in the woodpile. "He was a pert little rascal," said Jim. "I did kind o' hate to kill him; but he should have stayed with his own folks, if he wanted to be let alone. It's too dangerous having skunks round."

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In less than a year's time, there was not a rabbit to be seen on Mr. Connor's grounds, and only now and then a gopher, the hunter cats had done their work so thoroughly.

But there was one other enemy that Mr. Connor would have to be rid of, before he could have any great success with his fruit orchards. You will be horrified to hear the name of this enemy. It was the linnnet. Yes, the merry, chirping, confiding little linnnets, with their pretty red heads and bright eyes, they also were enemies, and must be killed. They were too fond of apricots and peaches and pears and raspberries, and all other nice fruits.

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If birds only had sense enough, when they want a breakfast or dinner of fruit, to make it off one, or even two,—eat the peach or the pear or whatever it might be all up, as we do,—they might be tolerated in orchards; nobody would grudge a bird one peach or cherry. But that isn't their way.

They like to hop about in the tree, and take a nip out of first one, then another, and then another, till half the fruit on the tree has been bitten into and spoiled. In this way, they ruin bushels of fruit every season.

"I wonder if we could not teach the cats to hunt linnets, Jim," said Mr. Connor one morning. It was at the breakfast-table. [Pg 108]

"O Uncle George! the dear sweet little linnets!" exclaimed Rea, ready to cry.

"Yes, my dear sweet little girl," said Uncle George. "The dear sweet little linnets will not leave us a single whole peach or apricot or cherry to eat."

"No!" said Jusy, "they're a perfect nuisance. They've pecked at every apricot on the trees already."

"I don't care," said Rea. "Why can't they have some? I'd just as soon eat after a linnet as not. Their little bills must be all clean and sweet. Don't have them killed, Uncle George."

"No danger but that there will be enough left, dear," said Uncle George. "However many we shoot, there will be enough left. I believe we might kill a thousand to-day and not know the difference." [Pg 109]

The cats had already done a good deal at hunting linnets on their own account, in a clandestine and irregular manner. They were fond of linnet flesh, and were only too glad to have the assistance of an able-bodied man with a gun.

When they first comprehended Jim's plan,—that he would go along with his gun, and they should scare the linnets out of the trees, wait for the shot, watch to see where the birds fell, and then run and pick them up,—it was droll to see how clever they became in carrying it out. Retriever dogs could not have done better. The trouble was, that Jim could shoot birds faster than the cats could eat them; and no cat would stir from his bird till it was eaten up, sometimes feathers and all; and after he had had three or four, he didn't care about any more that day. To tell the truth, after the first few days, they seemed a little tired of the linnet diet, and did not work with so much enthusiasm. But at first it was droll, indeed, to see their excitement. As soon as Jim appeared with his gun, every cat in sight would come scampering; and it would not be many minutes before the rest of the band—however they might have been scattered,—would somehow or other get wind of what was going on, and there would be the whole seventeen in a pack at Jim's heels, all keeping a sharp lookout on the trees; then, as soon as a cat saw a linnet, he would make for the tree, sometimes crouch under the tree, sometimes run up it; in either case the linnet was pretty sure to fly out: pop, would go Jim's rifle; down would come the linnet; helter-skelter would go the cats to the spot where it fell; and in a minute more, there would be nothing to be seen of that linnet, except a few feathers and a drop or two of blood on the ground. [Pg 110]

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**Jim and the Cats hunting Linnets.—Page 111.**

Jusy liked to go with Jim on these hunting expeditions. But Rea would never go. She used to sit

sorrowfully at home, and listen for the gunshots; and at every shot she heard, she would exclaim to Anita, "Oh, dear! Oh, dear! There's another dear little linnet dead. I think Jusy is a cruel, cruel boy! I wouldn't see them shot for anything, and I don't like the cats any more."

"But," said Anita, "my little señorita did not mind having the gophers killed. It does not hurt the linnets half so much to be shot dead in one second, as it does the gophers to be caught in the cats' claws, and torn to pieces sometimes while they are yet alive. The shot-gun kills in a second."

"I don't care," said Rea. "It seems different; the linnets are so pretty."

"That is not a reason for pitying them any more," said Anita gravely. "You did not find those old Indians you saw yesterday pretty. On the contrary, they were frightful to look at; yet you pitied them so much that you shed tears." [Pg 113]

"Oh, yes!" cried Rea, "I should think I did; and, Anita, I dreamed about them all night long. I am going to ask Uncle George to build a little house for them up in the cañon. There is plenty of room there he does not want; and then nobody could drive them out of that place as long as they live; and I could carry them their dinner every day. Don't you think he will?"

"Bless your kind little heart!" said Anita. "That would be asking a great deal of your Uncle George, but he is so kind, perhaps he will. If somebody does not take compassion on the poor things, they will starve, that is certain." [Pg 114]

"I shall ask him the minute he comes in," said Rea. "I am going down on the piazza now to watch for him." And taking Fairy in her arms, Rea hurried downstairs, went out on the veranda, and, climbing up into the hammock, was sound asleep in ten minutes.

She was waked up by feeling herself violently swung from side to side, and opening her eyes, saw Jusy standing by her side, his face flushed with the heat, his eyes sparkling.

"O Rea!" he said. "We have had a splendid hunt! What do you think! Jim has shot twenty linnets in this one morning! and that Skipper, he's eaten five of them! He's as good as a regular hunting dog." [Pg 115]

"Where's Uncle George?" asked Rea sleepily, rubbing her eyes. "I want Uncle George! I don't want you to tell me anything about the cats' eating the linnets. I hate them! They're cruel!"

"Tisn't cruel either!" retorted Jusy. "They've got to be killed. All people that have orchards have to kill birds."

"I won't, when I have an orchard," said Rea.

"Then you won't have any orchard. That will be all," said Jusy. "At least, you won't have any fruit orchard. You'll have just a tree orchard." [Pg 116]

"Well, a tree orchard is good enough for anybody," replied Rea half crossly. She was not yet quite wide awake. "There is plenty of fruit in stores, to buy. We could buy our fruit."

"Are you talking in your sleep, Rea?" cried Jusy, looking hard at her. "I do believe you are! What ails you? The men that have the fruit to sell, had to kill all the linnets and things, just the same way, or else they wouldn't have had any fruit. Can't you see?"

No, Rea could not see; and what was more, she did not want to see; and as the proverb says, "There are none so blind as those who won't see." [Pg 117]

"Don't talk any more about it, Jusy," she said. "Do you think Uncle George would build a little house up the cañon for poor old Ysidro?"

"Who!" exclaimed Jusy.

"Oh, you cruel boy!" cried Rea. "You don't think of anything but killing linnets, and such cruel things; I think you are real wicked. Don't you know those poor old Indians we saw yesterday?—the ones that are going to be turned out of their house, down in San Gabriel by the church. I have been thinking about them ever since; and I dreamed last night that Uncle George built them a house. I'm going to ask him to."

"I bet you anything he won't, then," said Jusy. "The horrid old beggars! He wouldn't have such looking things round!" [Pg 118]

Rea was wide awake now. She fixed her lovely blue eyes on Jusy's face with a look which made him ashamed. "Jusy," she said, "I can't help it if you are older than I am; I must say, I think you are cruel. You like to kill linnets; and now you won't be sorry for these poor old Indians, just because they are dirty and horrid-looking. You'd look just as bad yourself, if your skin was black, and you were a hundred years old, and hadn't got a penny in the world. You are real hard-hearted, Jusy, I do think you are!" and the tears came into Rea's eyes. [Pg 119]

"What is all this?" said Uncle George, coming up the steps. "Not quarrelling, my little people!"

"Oh, no! no!" cried both the children eagerly.

"I never quarrel with Rea," added Jusy proudly. "I hope I am old enough to know better than that."

"I'm only two years the youngest," said Rea, in a mortified tone. "I think I am old enough to be quarrelled with; and I do think you're cruel, Jusy."

This made Uncle George smile. "Look out!" he said. "You will be in a quarrel yet, if you are not careful. What is it, Rea?"

While Rea was collecting her thoughts to reply, Jusy took the words out of her mouth.

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"She thinks I am cruel, because I said I didn't believe you would build a house for Indians up in your cañon."

"It was not that!" cried Rea. "You are real mean, Jusy!"

And so I think, myself, he was. He had done just the thing which is so often done in this world,—one of the unfairest and most provoking of things; he had told the truth in such a way as to give a wrong impression, which is not so very far different, in my opinion, from telling a lie.

"A home for Indians up in the cañon!" exclaimed Uncle George, drawing Rea to him, and seating her on his knee. "Did my little tender-hearted Rea want me to do that? It would take a very big house, girlie, for all the poor Indians around here;" and Uncle George looked lovingly at Rea, and kissed her hair, as she nestled her head into his neck. "Just like her mother," he thought. "She would have turned every house into an asylum if she could."

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"Oh, not for all the Indians, Uncle George," said Rea, encouraged by his kind smile,— "I am not such a fool as Jusy thinks,—only for those two old ones that are going to be turned out of their home they've always lived in. You know the ones I mean."

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"Ah, yes,—old Ysidro and his wife. Well, Rea, I had already thought of that myself. So you were not so much ahead of me."

"There!" exclaimed Rea triumphantly, turning to Jusy. "What do you say now?"

Jusy did not know exactly what to say, he was so astonished; and as he saw Jim and the cats coming up the road at that minute, he gladly took the opportunity to spring down from the veranda and run to meet them.



#### IV.

[Pg 123]

The story of old Ysidro was indeed a sad one; and I think, with Rea, that any one must be hard-hearted, who did not pity him. He was a very old Indian; nobody knew how old; but he looked as if he must be a hundred at least. Ever since he could remember, he had lived in a little house in San Gabriel. The missionaries who first settled San Gabriel had given a small piece of land to his father, and on it his father had built this little house of rough bricks made of mud. Here Ysidro was born, and here he had always lived. His father and mother had been dead a long time. His brothers and sisters had all died or gone away to live in some other place.

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When he was a young man, he had married a girl named Carmena. She was still living, almost as old as he; all their children had either died, or married and gone away, and the two old people lived alone together in the little mud house.

They were very poor; but they managed to earn just enough to keep from starving. There was a little land around the house,—not more than an acre; but it was as much as the old man could cultivate. He raised a few vegetables, chiefly beans, and kept some hens.

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Carmena had done fine washing for the San Gabriel people as long as her strength held out; but she had not been able for some years to do that. All she could do now was to embroider and make lace. She had to stay in bed most of the time, for she had the rheumatism in her legs and feet so she could but just hobble about; but there she sat day after day, propped up in her bed, sewing. It was lucky that the rheumatism had not gone into her hands, for the money she earned by making lace was the chief part of their living.

Sometimes Ysidro earned a little by days' works in the fields or gardens; but he was so old, people did not want him if they could get anybody else, and nobody would pay him more than half wages.

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When he could not get anything else to do, he made mats to sell. He made them out of the stems of a plant called yucca; but he had to go a long way to get these plants. It was slow, tedious work making the mats, and the store-keepers gave him only seventy-five cents apiece for them; so it was very little he could earn in that way.

Was not this a wretched life? Yet they seemed always cheerful, and they were as much attached to this poor little mud hovel as any of you can be to your own beautiful homes.

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Would you think any one could have the heart to turn those two poor old people out of their home? It would not seem as if a human being could be found who would do such a thing. But there was. He was a lawyer; I could tell you his true name, but I will not. He had a great deal to do with all sorts of records and law papers, about land and titles and all such things.

There has always been trouble about the ownership of land in California, because first it belonged to Spain, and then it belonged to Mexico; and then we fought with Mexico, and Mexico gave it to us. So you can easily see that where lands are passed along in that way, through so many hands, it might often be hard to tell to whom they justly belonged. [Pg 128]

Of course this poor old Ysidro did not know anything about papers. He could not read or write. The missionaries gave the land to his father more than a hundred years ago, and his father gave it to him, and that was all Ysidro knew about it.

Well, this lawyer was rummaging among papers and titles and maps of estates in San Gabriel, and he found out that there was this little bit of land near the church, which had been overlooked by everybody, and to which nobody had any written title. He went over and looked at it, and found Ysidro's house on it; and Ysidro told him he had always lived there; but the lawyer did not care for that. [Pg 129]

Land is worth a great deal of money now in San Gabriel. This little place of Ysidro's was worth a good many hundred dollars; and this lawyer was determined to have it. So he went to work in ways I cannot explain to you, for I do not understand them myself; and you could not understand them even if I could write them out exactly: but it was all done according to law; and the lawyer got it decided by the courts and the judges in San Francisco that this bit of land was his.

When this was all done, he had not quite boldness enough to come forward himself, and turn the poor old Indians out. Even he had some sense of shame; so he slyly sold the land to a man who did not know anything about the Indians being there. [Pg 130]

You see how cunning this was of him! When it came to the Indians being turned out, and the land taken by the new owner, this lawyer's name would not need to come out in the matter at all. But it did come out; so that a few people knew what a mean, cruel thing he had done. Just for the sake of the price of an acre of land, to turn two aged helpless people out of house and home to starve! Do you think those dollars will ever do that man any good as long as he lives? No, not if they had been a million.

Well, Mr. Connor was one of the persons who had found out about this; and he had at first thought he would help Ysidro fight, in the courts, to keep his place; but he found there would be no use in that. The lawyer had been cunning enough to make sure he was safe, before he went on to steal the old Indian's farm. The law was on his side. Ysidro did not really own the land, according to law, though he had lived on it all his life, and it had been given to his father by the missionaries, almost a hundred years ago. [Pg 131]

Does it not seem strange that the law could do such a thing as that? When the boys who read this story grow up to be men, I hope they will do away with these bad laws, and make better ones. [Pg 132]

The way Rea had found out about old Ysidro was this: when Jim went to the post-office for the mail, in the mornings, he used generally to take Anita and Rea in the wagon with him, and leave them at Anita's mother's while he drove on to the post-office, which was a mile farther.

Rea liked this very much. Anita's mother had a big blue and green parrot, that could talk in both Spanish and English; and Rea was never tired of listening to her. She always carried her sugar; and she used to cock her head on one side, and call out, "Señorita! señorita! Polly likes sugar! sugar! sugar!" as soon as she saw Rea coming in at the door. It was the only parrot Rea had ever seen, and it seemed to her the most wonderful creature in the world. [Pg 133]

Ysidro's house was next to Anita's mother's; and Rea often saw the old man at work in his garden, or sitting on his door-step knitting lace, with needles as fine as pins.

One day Anita took her into the house to see Carmena, who was sitting in bed at work on her embroidery. When Carmena heard that Rea was Mr. Connor's niece, she insisted upon giving her a beautiful piece of lace which she had made. Anita did not wish to take it, but old Carmena said,

"You must take it. Mr. Connor has given us much money, and there was never anything I could do for him. Now if his little señorita will take this, it will be a pleasure." [Pg 134]

So Rea carried the lace home, and showed it to her Uncle George, and he said she might keep it; and it was only a few weeks after this that when Anita and Rea went down to San Gabriel, one day, they found the old couple in great distress, the news having come that they were going to be turned out of their house.

And it was the night after this visit that Rea dreamed about the poor old creatures all night, and the very next morning that she asked her Uncle George if he would not build them a house in his cañon. [Pg 135]

After lunch, Mr. Connor said to Rea,—

"I am going to drive this afternoon, Rea. Would you like to come with me?"

His eyes twinkled as he said it, and Rea cried out,—

"Oh! oh! It is to see Ysidro and Carmena, I am sure!"

"Yes," said her uncle; "I am going down to tell them you are going to build them a house."

"Uncle George, will you really, truly, do it?" said Rea. "I think you are the kindest man in all the world!" and she ran for her hat, and was down on the veranda waiting, long before the horses were ready.

They found old Ysidro sitting on the ground, leaning against the wall of his house. He had his face covered up with both hands, his elbows leaning on his knees. [Pg 136]

"Oh, look at him! He is crying, Uncle George," said Rea.

"No, dear," replied Mr. Connor. "He is not crying. Indian men very rarely cry. He is feeling all the worse that he will not let himself cry, but shuts the tears all back."

"Yes, that is lots worse," said Rea.

"How do you know, pet?" laughingly said her uncle. "Did you ever try it?"

"I've tried to try it," said Rea, "and it felt so much worse, I couldn't." [Pg 137]

It was not easy at first to make old Ysidro understand what Mr. Connor meant. He could not believe that anybody would give him a house and home for nothing. He thought Mr. Connor wanted to get him to come and work; and, being an honest old fellow, he was afraid Mr. Connor did not know how little strength he had; so he said,—

"Señor Connor, I am very old; I am sick too. I am not worth hiring to work."

"Bless you!" said Mr. Connor. "I don't want you to work any more than you do now. I am only offering you a place to live in. If you are strong enough to do a day's work, now and then, I shall pay you for it, just as I would pay anybody else." [Pg 138]

Ysidro gazed earnestly in Mr. Connor's face, while he said this; he gazed as if he were trying to read his very thoughts. Then he looked up to the sky, and he said,—

"Señor, Ysidro has no words. He cannot speak. Will you come into the house and tell Carmena? She will not believe if I tell it."

So Mr. Connor and Rea went into the house, and there sat Carmena in bed, trying to sew; but the tears were running out of her eyes. When she saw Mr. Connor and Rea coming in at the door, she threw up her hands and burst out into loud crying. [Pg 139]

"O señor! señor!" she said. "They drive us out of our house. Can you help us? Can you speak for us to the wicked man?"

Ysidro went up to the bed and took hold of her hand, and, pointing with his other hand to Mr. Connor, said,—

"He comes from God,—the señor. He will help us!"

"Can we stay?" cried Carmena.

Here Rea began to cry.

"Don't cry, Rea," said Mr. Connor. "That will make her feel worse."

Rea gulped down her sobs, enough to say,—

"But she doesn't want to come into the cañon! All she wants is to stay here! She won't be glad of the new house." [Pg 140]

"Yes, she will, by and by," whispered Mr. Connor. "Stop crying, that's my good Rea."

But Rea could not. She stood close to the bed, looking into old Carmena's distressed face; and the tears would come, spite of all her efforts.

When Carmena finally understood that not even Mr. Connor, with all his good will and all his money, could save them from leaving their home, she cried again as hard as at first; and Ysidro felt ashamed of her, for he was afraid Mr. Connor would think her ungrateful. But Mr. Connor understood it very well.

"I have lived only two years in my house," he said to Rea, "and I would not change it for one twice as good that anybody could offer me. Think how any one must feel about a house he has lived in all his life." [Pg 141]

"But it is a horrible little house, Uncle George," said Rea,— "the dirtiest hovel I ever saw. It is worse than they are in Italy."

"I do not believe that makes much difference, dear," said Uncle George. "It is their home, all the same, as if it were large and nice. It is that one loves."

Just as Mr. Connor and Rea came out of the house, who should come riding by, but the very man that had caused all this unhappiness,—the lawyer who had taken Ysidro's land! He was with the

man to whom he had sold it. They were riding up and down in the valley, looking over all their possessions, and planning what big vineyards and orchards they would plant and how much money they would make.

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When this man saw Mr. Connor, he turned as red as a turkey-cock's throat. He knew very well what Mr. Connor thought of him; but he bowed very low.

Mr. Connor returned his bow, but with such a stern and scornful look on his face, that Rea exclaimed,—

"What is the matter, Uncle George? What makes you look so?"

"That man is a bad man, dear," he replied; "and has the kind of badness I most despise." But he did not tell her that he was the man who was responsible for the Indians being driven out of their home. He thought it better for Rea not to know it.

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"Are there different sorts of badness,—some badnesses worse than others?" asked Rea.

"I don't know whether one kind is really any worse than another," said Mr. Connor. "But there are some kinds which seem to me twice as bad as others; and meanness and cruelty to helpless creatures seem to me the very worst of all."

"To me too!" said Rea. "Like turning out poor Ysidro."

"Yes," said Mr. Connor. "That is just one of the sort I mean."

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Just before they reached the beginning of the lands of Connorloa, they crossed the grounds of a Mr. Finch, who had a pretty house and large orange orchards. Mr. Finch had one son, Harry, about Jusy's age, and the two boys were great cronies.

As Mr. Connor turned the horses' heads into these grounds, he saw Jusy and Harry under the trees in the distance.

"Why, there is Jusy," he said.

"Yes," said Rea. "Harry came for him before lunch. He said he had something to show him."

As soon as Jusy caught sight of the carriage, he came running towards it, crying,—

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"Oh, Uncle George, stop! Rea! come! I've found Snowball! Come, see him!"

Snowball had been missing for nearly a month, and nobody could imagine what had become of him. They finally came to the conclusion that he must have got killed in some way.

Mr. Connor stopped the horses; and Rea jumped out and ran after Jusy, and Mr. Connor followed. They found the boys watching excitedly, one at each end of a little bridge over the ditch, through which the water was brought down for irrigating Mr. Finch's orchards. Harry's dogs were there too, one at each end of the bridge, barking, yelping, watching as excitedly as the boys. But no Snowball.

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"Where is he?" cried Rea.

"In under there," exclaimed Jusy. "He's got a rabbit in there; he'll be out presently."

Sure enough, there he was, plainly to be heard, scuffling and spitting under the bridge.

The poor little rabbit ran first to one end of the bridge, then to the other, trying to get out; but at each end he found a dog, barking to drive him back.

Presently Snowball appeared with the dead rabbit in his teeth. Dropping it on the ground, he looked up at the dogs, as much as to say, "There! Can't I hunt rabbits as well as you do?" Then they all three, the two dogs and he, fell to eating the rabbit in the friendliest manner.

[Pg 147]

"Don't you think!" cried Jusy. "He's been hunting this way, with these dogs, all this time. You see they are so big they can't get in under the bridge, and he can; so they drive the rabbits in under there, and he goes in and gets them. Isn't he smart? Harry first saw him doing it two weeks ago, he says. He didn't know it was our cat, and he wondered whose it could be. But Snowball and the dogs are great friends. They go together all the time; and wherever he is, if he hears them bark, he knows they've started up something, and he comes flying! I think it is just splendid!"

[Pg 148]

"Poor little thing!" said Rea, looking at the fast-disappearing rabbit.

"Why, you eat them yourself!" shouted Jusy. "You said it was as good as chicken, the other day. It isn't any worse for cats and dogs to eat them, than it is for us; is it, Uncle George?"

"I think Jusy has the best of the argument this time, pet," said Uncle George, looking fondly at Jusy.

"Girls are always that way," said Harry politely. "My sisters are just so. They can't bear to see anything killed."

After this day, Rea spent most of her time in the cañon, watching the men at work on Ysidro's house.

[Pg 149]

The cañon was a wild place; it was a sort of split in the rocky sides of the mountain; at the top it

was not much more than two precipices joined together, with just room enough for a brook to come down. You can see in the picture where it was, though it looks there like little more than a groove in the rocks. But it was really so big in some places that huge sycamore trees grew in it, and there were little spaces of good earth, where Mr. Connor had planted orchards.

It was near these, at the mouth of the cañon, that he put Ysidro's house. It was built out of mud bricks, called adobe, as near as possible like Ysidro's old house,—two small rooms, and a thatched roof made of reeds, which grew in a swamp. [Pg 150]

But Mr. Connor did not call it Ysidro's house. He called it Rea's house; and the men called it "the señorita's house." It was to be her own, Mr. Connor said,—her own to give as a present to Ysidro and Carmena.

When the day came for them to move in, Jim went down with the big wagon, and a bed in the bottom, to bring old Carmena up. There was plenty of room in the wagon, besides, for the few little bits of furniture they had.

Mr. Connor and Jusy and Rea were at the house waiting, when they came. The cook had made a good supper of meat and potato, and Rea had put it on the table, all ready for them. [Pg 151]

When they lifted Carmena out of the wagon, she held, tight clutched in her hand, a small basket filled with earth; she seemed hardly willing to let go of it for a moment.

"What is that?" said Jusy.

"A few handfuls of the earth that was ours," replied Ysidro. "We have brought it with us, to keep it always. The man who has our home will not miss it."

The tears came into Mr. Connor's eyes, and he turned away.

Rea did not understand. She looked puzzled; so did Jusy.

Jim explained. "The Indian women often do that," he said. "When they have to move away from a home they love they carry a little of the earth with them; sometimes they put it in a little bag, and wear it hanging on their necks; sometimes they put it under their heads at night." [Pg 152]

"Yes," said Carmena, who had listened to what Jim said. "One can sleep better on the earth that one loves."

"I say, Rea!" cried Jusy. "It is a shame they had to come away!"

"I told you so, Jusy," said Rea gently. "But you didn't seem to care then."

"Well, I do now!" he cried. "I didn't think how bad they'd feel. Now if it were in Italy, I'd go and tell the King all about it. Who is there to tell here?" he continued, turning to his Uncle George. "Who is there here, to tell about such things? There must be somebody." [Pg 153]

Mr. Connor smiled sadly. "The trouble is, there are too many," he said.

"Who is above all the rest?" persisted Jusy. "Isn't there somebody at the top, as our King is in Italy?"

"Yes, there is one above all the rest," replied Mr. Connor. "We call him the President."

"Well, why don't you write and tell him about Ysidro?" said Jusy. "I wish I could see him, I'd tell him. It's a shame!"

"Even the President could not help this, Jusy," said Mr. Connor. "The law was against poor Ysidro; there was no help; and there are thousands and thousands of Indians in just the same condition he is." [Pg 154]

"Doesn't the President make the laws?" said Jusy.

"No," said Mr. Connor. "Congress makes the laws."

"Oh," said Jusy, "like our Parliament."

"Yes," said Mr. Connor.

Jusy said no more; but he thought of little else all the afternoon; and at bedtime he said to Rea,—

"Rea, I am real sorry I didn't care about those old Indians at first, when you did. But I'm going to be good to them now, and help them all I can; and I have made up my mind that when I am a man I shall not go to Italy, as I said I would, to be an officer for the King. I shall stay here, and be an officer for the American President, instead; and I shall tell him about Ysidro, and about all the rest of the Indians." [Pg 155]

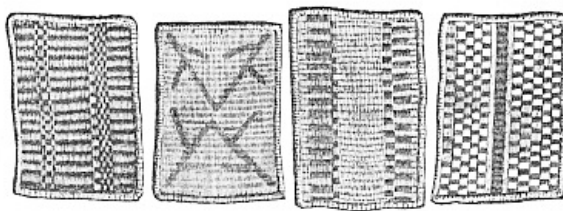
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There is nothing more to be told about the Hunter Cats. By degrees they disappeared: some of them went to live at other houses in the San Gabriel Valley; some of them ran off and lived a wild life in the cañons; and some of them, I am afraid, must have died for want of food.

Rea was glad when they were all gone; but Jusy missed the fun of seeing them hunt gophers and [Pg 156]

linnets.

Perhaps, some day, I shall write another story, and tell you more about Jusy and Rea, and how they tried to help the Indians.



**Mats made by Ysidro.—Page 126.**

Transcriber's Note: Only 'The Hunter Cats of Connorloa', is transcribed in this e-text.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE HUNTER CATS OF CONNORLOA \*\*\*

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