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Title: Minnie's Pet Cat

Author: Madeline Leslie

Release date: May 4, 2009 [eBook #28682]
Most recently updated: January 5, 2021

Language: English

Credits: Produced by Julia Miller and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at <https://www.pgdp.net> (This book was produced from scanned images of public domain material from the Google Print project.)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MINNIE'S PET CAT ***

Transcriber's Note

Obvious typographical errors have been corrected. A [list](#) of corrections is found at the end of the text.



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MINNIE'S PET CAT.

BY

MRS. MADELINE LESLIE,
AUTHOR OF "THE LESLIE STORIES," "TIM, THE SCISSORS-GRINDER,"
ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.

BOSTON:
LEE AND SHEPARD,
SUCCESSORS TO PHILLIPS, SAMPSON & Co.
1864.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1863, by
A. R. BAKER,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

[6]

ELECTROTYPED AT THE
BOSTON STEREOTYPE FOUNDRY.

TO MY YOUNG FRIEND,
HENRY FOWLE DURANT, JR.

[7]

These Little Volumes

ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR,

IN THE EARNEST HOPE THAT THEY MAY INCREASE IN HIM THAT
LOVE OF NATURE AND OF RURAL LIFE WHICH HAS EVER
EXERTED SO SALUTARY AN INFLUENCE IN THE
FORMATION OF THE CHARACTERS OF
THE WISE AND GOOD.

[8]

MINNIE AND HER PETS.

Minnie's Pet Parrot.
Minnie's Pet Cat.
Minnie's Pet Dog.
Minnie's Pet Horse.
Minnie's Pet Lamb.
Minnie's Pet Monkey.

[9]

MINNIE'S PET CAT.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOVING PUSS.

FIDELLE, Minnie's second pet, was a beautiful tortoise-shell cat.

She was an elegant creature. Her fur was of moderate length, of pure black, white, and reddish orange. Her eyes were large, bright, and affectionate in expression. Her form was delicate, and her motions active. In character, she was the most attached, graceful little puss I ever knew. [10]

The moment Fidelle heard Minnie's voice, she walked to the door, and was ready to welcome her, rubbing her glossy sides against the child's feet, and making little soft notes of pleasure.

Sometimes Minnie had the headache, or was tired, and lay upon the sofa; when she did so, Fidelle loved to jump up and walk softly over the little figure until she came to her mistress's face, when she quietly lay down near by, or sometimes licked her hand lovingly. She never did this to Mrs. Lee, or any other member of the family. [11]

Fidelle was an active puss, and often went bird-catching, or mousing during the night; but generally, when Minnie opened the door of her chamber in the morning, there was Fidelle ready to receive her. [12]

During the warm weather, it was Minnie's habit to take an early stroll with her father through the grounds, or to accompany him to the nursery, garden, and orchards, when he went to give orders to the men who worked for him.

On such occasions, Fidelle was always on hand, sometimes running along by her side, and then skipping to the top of a tree, or gamboling on before her. [13]

When Minnie was very small, she often used to hug the kitten so tightly as, no doubt, to cause the little creature pain; and then, in running around the room after it, the young miss used to catch it by the tail; but Fidelle never resisted, nor, if hurt, revenged herself. She seemed to understand that Minnie loved her, and that it was her duty to submit quietly to all the caprices of her young mistress. [14]

One day, when the child was about four years old, a rude boy came, with his mother, to visit

her. Seeing Fidelle frolicking about the room, highly delighted with a ball of thread, into which she had got her dainty little feet entangled, Wallace caught the cat by the tail, and held her by it in the air.

Minnie screamed with all her might, as she flew to the rescue of her pretty pet. [15]

"Go right away, you ugly boy!" she cried out. "Poor Fidelle! darling kitty! I won't let you be hurt so."

Puss remembered the insult and abuse. Whenever she saw Wallace coming toward her, she hid herself behind the sofa; and once, when he came suddenly upon her, she gave him a long, deep scratch on his hand.

Minnie never after liked this boy; and once, when Mrs. Lee was intending to invite his mother to repeat her visit, the child begged earnestly that Wallace might be left at home, saying, "He is so cruel to Fidelle, I can't bear to have him here." [16]

I told you, in the other book about Minnie's pet parrot, that she used often to ride with her mother in the afternoon. There was nothing she liked better than to take Fidelle and Tiney out with her. Sometimes Mrs. Lee allowed this; but when she was intending to make calls she feared the pets would be troublesome. [17]

Fidelle was greatly disappointed when she could not go. She would ask as well as she knew how, and I dare say some of her mews were promises to be good; but Mrs. Lee knew best when it was proper, and was obliged to be firm.

Kitty then used to stand at the door, watching her mistress, as she jumped into the carriage, returning her "Good by, dear Fidelle," by little soft purrs. [18]

When the carriage was out of sight, Puss seated herself at the window to watch for their return. Whether it was one hour or two, she almost always sat patiently, sometimes indulging herself with a nap, but never getting so sound asleep that the first rumble of the wheels did not awaken her. [19]

As soon as the carriage began to roll up the avenue, Kitty was all excitement, looking from the window, and moving her tail back and forth, then with a spring bounding to another window, where she could see them alight. If the door happened to be shut, she cried piteously until let out, when she ran quickly and jumped on Minnie's shoulder, purring as loud as she could, to express her joy. [20]

A lady was once visiting at the house, who said she liked dogs, especially such splendid great ones as Leo; but she couldn't see any thing agreeable or intelligent in a cat.

"There are some wonderful accounts of the sagacity of cats," remarked Mr. Lee, smiling at Minnie's quick flush of indignation. "If my little daughter will bring me that book we were looking at yesterday, I think I can soon convince you that they are certainly not wanting in intelligence." [21]

"They are capable of strong attachments," said Mrs. Lee, as the child rose and left the room, followed closely by Fidelle. "I think none of Minnie's pets show more real affection for her, nor more gratitude for her kindness."

"Is this the book, father?" inquired the little girl, putting a handsomely bound volume into his hand, and looking very bright and rosy. [22]

"Yes, child, this is it."

"I thought it was, by the picture of the cats."

The lady looked surprised; and presently asked, earnestly, "Can't you read, Minnie?"

Vivid blushes spread all over the child's face, as she softly answered, "No, ma'am."

"We have our own views on that subject," said the gentleman, smiling, as he drew his only daughter tenderly to his side. "She will learn fast enough when we put her to her books. At present, our only desire is to see her enjoy herself, and lay in a good stock of health." [23]

"Why not do both, Mr. Lee?" asked the lady. "My little Marie Louise is only four, and she can read almost as well as I can. She is learning to write, too, and really pens a letter very prettily." [24]

"I dare say," added the gentleman, gravely, after giving his wife a comical look; "your daughters are all geniuses, which, I am happy to say, Minnie is not. She is only an obedient, affectionate, practical little girl," giving her a tender caress.

"But come, we were discussing, not the child's merits, but the cat's."

"True; and now for your account of them." [25]

Mr. Lee turned over the leaves of the book, thanking God that his dear, conscientious, simple-hearted Minnie was not artful, disobedient, and affected, like the child of their visitor, even though the latter might be ever so learned a miss; and presently came to the chapter on domestic cats, from which we shall quote a few incidents.

CHAPTER II.
THE CAT AND CHICKEN.

[26]

"In the summer of 1792, a gentleman who lived near Portsmouth, in England, had a favorite cat, with a family of kittens. As he did not wish so large an increase to his family, he ordered all the kittens to be drowned.

"The same day, the cat was missing, and, on farther search, one chicken also.

"Diligent search was made in every place that could be thought of, but in vain. Day after day passed, and at last the gentleman concluded some accident had deprived them of life. [27]

"Nearly a week after the kittens had been drowned, a servant had occasion to go to an unfrequented part of the cellar, where, to his great astonishment, he saw the cat lying in one corner, with the chicken hugged close to her body, and one paw laid over it as if to protect it from injury. [28]

"Puss and her adopted chicken were brought into a closet in the kitchen, where they continued some time, the cat treating her little charge in every respect as a kitten. Whenever the chicken left the cat to eat the soft dough provided for it, she appeared very uneasy, but on its return, received it with the affection of a mother, purred, and presented the appearance of being perfectly happy. [29]

"The gentleman, being curious to know whether the affection of puss was returned by her protege, carried it to the hen, the cat following with loud cries of distress. But on being released, the chicken at once returned to her attached friend, who received her with enthusiastic delight.

"Some time after, the chicken was, by some accident, killed, and, though another one was tendered her, the cat pined, and was inconsolable for the loss of her favorite." [30]

"O, father," cried Minnie, her face glowing with excitement, "wasn't that strange? I mean to try Fidelle, and see whether she likes chickens."

"More likely she'll make a meal of them," said the lady, laughing. "At any rate, your story only proves my opinion of cats, as thieving, mischievous creatures, to be true. Even she stole a chicken from the hen, the rightful owner of it, and alienated its affections from its own mother." [31]

"But all her kittens had been taken away from her, and pussies must have something to love, as well as people," exclaimed Minnie, while her quivering lip and flushed cheeks showed how much she was in earnest in what she said. [32]

"My dear," remarked her father, "the lady is only joking, to carry out her side of the argument, which, when I have read farther, I am sure she will see is a weak one."

"Here is a case just in point."

"A lady had a tame bird which she was in the habit of letting out of its cage every day. When at liberty, it would fly to the top of the mirror, or on the picture frames, and then to the floor, to pick up crumbs. [33]

"One morning, as it was busily picking crumbs of bread from the carpet, her cat, who had always before showed great kindness for the bird, suddenly seized it, and jumped with it in her mouth upon the table.

"The lady screamed, being greatly alarmed for the safety of her favorite; but on turning about, instantly discovered the cause. The door had been left open, and a strange cat had just come into the room. [34]

"After turning it out, her own cat came down from her place of safety, and dropped the bird on the carpet without doing it the smallest injury; for it commenced again picking crumbs, as if nothing alarming had occurred."

"What do you say to that, Mrs. Belcher?" inquired Mr. Lee, earnestly. [35]

"I must confess," she answered, "that was the most sensible puss I ever heard of. She certainly did a good deed, and ought to have been commended for it."

"She showed presence of mind in danger," added the gentleman, "an affection for the bird with which she daily associated, and gratitude for the kindness of her mistress, who had, no doubt, treated her tenderly." [36]

"Now here is another case."

"In the parish of Stonington, Surrey, England, a man was passing through a hay field in the month of September, 1793, when he was surprised to see a cat and a hare playing together in the hay. He stood more than ten minutes gratified at the unusual sight, when the hare, alarmed at seeing a stranger approach, ran into a thicket of fern, and was followed by the cat." [37]

"I'm sure, father, Fidelle and Tiney are good friends," cried Minnie, exultingly. "They often play together."

"Tiney is getting too fat and lazy to play much with any body," remarked Mrs. Lee, smiling.

"Will you please read more, father?"

Mr. Lee was looking over the book, and laughed heartily.

"Do please read it aloud, father," again urged Minnie. [38]

The gentleman commenced.

"In 1806, Mr. Peter King, of Islington, had two large cats, which used to sit at table with him. They were waited upon by servants, and partook of the same dainties in which he indulged himself.

"Mr. King was a great admirer of fine clothes, richly laced, and of making a display. One day, as he sat eating, with his cats for company, he thought, perhaps, they might like liveries, as well as he did. He accordingly sent for the tailor, when he had them measured for their suits. The clothes were speedily sent home, and the cats wore them for the rest of their lives." [39]

"That doesn't prove much for you," remarked Mrs. Belcher, archly.

"It only shows there are some foolish cats as well as some foolish men. But whatever we may think on the subject, the king of Guinea, once thought a cat so valuable that he gladly gave a man his weight in gold if he would procure him one, and with it an ointment to kill flies. [40]

"A Portuguese, named Alphonse, was the happy individual; and he so well improved the money he made by the trade, that after fifteen years of traffic, he returned to Portugal, and became the third man in rank and wealth in the kingdom. All that for the despised cat." [41]

"O, I don't despise them in their place!" urged the lady. "They are good to keep the cellar and out buildings free from those troublesome animals, rats and mice. But I never could make a pet of a cat."

"Nor eat one, I suppose," he added, roguishly.

"No, indeed," with an expression of contempt. [42]

"They are thought by some to make a delicious meal," he went on with mock gravity. "A fricassee, for instance. Here is a recipe for the cooking:—

"Skin the cat thoroughly, cut it in pieces, and soak twenty-four hours in vinegar; then anoint it with garlic and honey, after which it is fried like a young chicken."

"Horrible!" exclaimed Mrs. Belcher; while Mrs. Lee confessed, much as she esteemed cats, she could not relish such a meal. [43]

"Is it possible they are ever used for such a purpose?" she inquired presently.

"Certainly, my dear; among the negroes they are considered a great dainty, and Goethe, in his 'Rifleman's Comrade,' said the soldiers at Palmero ate them with a relish."

[44]

CHAPTER III. PUSS AND THE PARTRIDGE.

A few days later, as Minnie sat watching Fidelle washing herself, licking her paws, and then putting them on her face and ears, her father drove into the yard, accompanied by a niece, who had come to make them a long visit.

Ida Morris was the daughter of Mr. Lee's only sister. She was a lovely girl of fourteen, having long been the companion and especial charge of her widowed mother. [45]

Mrs. Morris had now gone to Europe with her son, who was an invalid, and Ida had come to stay at her uncle's until their return.

Minnie had not seen her cousin for a year; but she knew from her parents that Ida was frank and good tempered, and very fond of pets.

When she heard the carriage, therefore, she ran joyfully to meet and welcome her visitor. [46]

Ida had grown very tall within the year, and this afternoon was exceedingly sad from the parting with her mother and brother, the latter of whom she might never see again; but when she felt Minnie's soft hand pressed so lovingly in her own, and heard the eager tones of joy at her arrival, she felt comforted.

Wiping her tear-dimmed eyes, she said, "Uncle George has been telling me about your pets; and you, dear Minnie, shall be mine." [47]

Fidelle presently came and jumped in Ida's lap, to the surprise of Mrs. Lee and Minnie.

"Why, here is the beautiful cat I saw last year," cried the young girl; "can it be possible that she remembers me? You know I petted her a great deal."

"I have no doubt that is the case," answered her aunt; "otherwise I should be at a loss to account for her sudden fondness. She is usually very shy with strangers." [48]

Ida stroked the soft, silky hair, and seemed almost as much in love with the puss as Minnie herself was, while Fidelle purred and purred, and lovingly licked the hand that fondled her.

"Oh, cousin!" cried Minnie, her cheeks glowing with animation, "we do have such good times reading stories about birds and animals. We are reading about the cat now. Father says there is something in his books about every one of my pets." [49]

"I hope I may be a listener, then."

"Oh, yes, indeed! While you are here, you are to be my ownty, downty sister, and I shall try to make you happy."

Ida kissed her; then they adjourned to the dining hall, where they had been summoned to tea. Fidelle, knowing she was not allowed there at meal times, reluctantly remained behind. [50]

In the evening, when the candles were lighted, Minnie begged her father to go on with the stories, to which he willingly consented; but first he said,—

"I suppose you know, Minnie, that the cat belongs to the same family as the lion, the tiger, the panther, the leopard, and several other wild animals. The tiger and cat are very similar in form and feature; they have the same rounded head and pointed ears; the long, lithe body, covered with fine, silky hair, often beautifully marked; the silent, stealthy step, occasioned by treading on the fleshy ball of the foot; the same sharp claws; the same large, lustrous eyes, capable, from the expansive power of the pupil, of seeing in the dark; the whiskered lip; the carnivorous teeth; and a tongue covered with bony pricklers. [51]

"In many of their habits, too, they are alike. In their natural state, they sleep a great part of the time, only rousing themselves when pressed by hunger. Then they are alike in lying in wait for their prey, not hunting it, like the wolf and dog; but after watching patiently for it, as I have often seen Fidelle watch for a mouse, they steal along with their supple joints and cushioned feet till within springing distance of their victims, when they dart upon them with an angry growl. [52]

"Though cats are very plenty now, they were not always so. The Egyptians venerated cats, as a type of one of their gods. To slay a cat was death by law. When a cat died, the family to which it belonged mourned as for a child. It was carried to a consecrated house, embalmed, and wrapped in linen, and then buried with religious rites, at Bulastes, a city of Lower Egypt, being placed in a sepulchre near the altar of the principal temple. [53]

"The Mohammedans have an extraordinary reverence for them; and a traveller, of whom I once read, saw at Damascus a hospital for cats, which was a large building walled around, and said to be full of them. [54]

"This singular institution, well supported by public alms, originated in the fact that Mahomet brought a cat to Damascus, which he kept carefully in the sleeve of his gown, and fed with his own hands. He even preferred cutting off the sleeve of his robe, rather than to disturb the repose of his favorite, who had fallen asleep in it. [55]

"I remember a curious story, which is told of Cambyses, a Persian general, who conquered Thebes by placing in front of the Persian army a corps of cats, giving to each of his soldiers, employed in the attack, instead of a buckler a live cat, and other animals venerated by the Egyptians. [56]

"Not daring to advance upon these animals, the Theban garrison fell, as the wily Persian commander anticipated, an unresisting prey to his stratagem." [57]

"And do you remember," said Mrs. Lee, to her husband, "that Moncrieff says an insult offered a cat by a Roman was the cause of an insurrection among the Egyptians?"

"Yes, and the same writer states that even after death, these animals were held so sacred, that they were often deposited in the niches of the catacombs. If they were killed, even by accident, the murderer was given up to the rabble to be buffeted to death. [58]

"Now, Minnie, that I have made so long a speech, for your benefit, on the high esteem with which cats have been regarded, I will read you a most remarkable instance of the sagacity of one of them."

"In the summer of 1800, a physician of Lyons was summoned to court, and requested to inquire into a murder that had been committed on a woman in that city. He accordingly went to the residence of the deceased, where he found her extended on the floor, and weltering in her blood. [59]

"A large white cat was mounted on the cornice of the cupboard, at the farther end of the apartment, where he seemed to have taken refuge. He sat motionless, with his eyes fixed on the corpse, his attitude and looks expressing horror and affright. [60]

"The next morning the room was filled with officers and soldiers; but still the cat remained exactly in the same position, entirely undisturbed by the clattering of the soldiers' arms, or the loud conversation of the company.

"But as soon as the suspected persons were brought in, his eyes glared with fury, his hair bristled, he darted into the middle of the apartment, where he stopped for a moment to gaze at them, and then precipitately retreated. This he repeated three times, to the amazement of the spectators. [61]

"The assassins returned his gaze with terror. They who had but a moment before been so bold, now became confused; and all their wicked effrontery left them. They were condemned, and afterwards acknowledged that, in the presence of the cat, they, for the first time during the whole course of the horrid business, felt their courage forsake them." [62]

"That was an awful story," remarked Mrs. Lee, having watched Minnie's shudder of horror. "I hope you have something more lively."

"Yes, here is an account of an attachment which was formed between a cat and a dog. The story is quite amusing." [63]

"Mr. Weuzel, a writer on natural history, gives an account of a cat and dog, which became so attached to each other that they would never willingly be asunder. Whenever the dog got any choice morsel, he was sure to divide it with his whiskered friend. They always ate sociably out of one plate, slept in the same bed, and daily walked out together. [64]

"Wishing," continues Mr. Weuzel, "to put their friendship to the proof, I one day took the cat by herself into my room, while I had the dog guarded in another apartment. I entertained the cat in a most sumptuous manner, wishing to see what sort of a meal she would make without her friend.

"She enjoyed the treat with great glee, and seemed to have entirely forgotten her table companion. I had had a partridge for dinner, half of which I intended to keep for my supper; my wife covered it with a plate, and put it in a cupboard, the door of which she did not lock. [65]

"The cat left the room, and I walked out on business, my wife sitting at work in an adjoining apartment. When I returned, she related to me the following:— [66]

"The cat, having hastily left the dining room, went to the dog, and mewed uncommonly loud, and in different tones of voice, which the dog from time to time answered with a short bark. Then they both went to the door of the room where the cat had dined, and waited till it was opened. One of my children opened the door, and the two friends entered the apartment. The mewing of the cat excited my wife's attention. She rose from her seat, and stepped softly up to the door, which stood ajar, to observe what was going on. [67]

"The cat led the dog at once to the cupboard which contained the partridge, pushed off the plate which covered it, and taking out my intended supper, laid it before her canine friend, who devoured it greedily. No doubt the cat, by her mewing, had made him understand what an excellent meal she had made, and how sorry she was that he had not participated in it; but at the same time had told him there was something left for him in the cupboard, and persuaded him to follow her there. [68]

"Since that time, I have paid particular attention to these animals, and am convinced that they communicate to each other whatever seems interesting to either."

[69]

CHAPTER IV. FIDELLE AT PRAYERS.

Mr. Lee was a religious man, accustomed to having morning and evening devotions, at which all the family were present. Fidelle had for a long time made it a point to be in the parlor on such occasions, and often caused a smile by the eagerness with which she ran to join them on their return from the table.

One morning, Mrs. Lee was quite ill, and unable to leave her chamber. The family, however, assembled as usual for prayers, and Fidelle among them. She seemed instantly to notice that the lady was not in her accustomed place, and, after an earnest gaze into Minnie's face, started off to call her. [70]

Mrs. Lee was quite surprised to see the cat come walking quickly into the room, up to the side of the sofa where she was lying. There she stopped, and, gazing at her, cried, "Meow! meow!" Then she ran out to the hall, and part way down the stairs. But finding the lady did not follow, she returned again, and still more earnestly cried, "Meow! meow!" trying to make her understand that, instead of lying there, she ought to be below, attending prayers. [71]

This she did three times; after which she concluded, perhaps, that she had better not abstain from the service because the lady did so, and she therefore quietly took her usual place near Mr. Lee. [72]

It was invariably her custom to remain with her eyes tightly closed while the gentleman read the Scriptures; then, when he closed the book, and the family knelt for prayer, she arose, turned over, and sat down again, which was the nearest approach she could make to imitating them. In this position she remained quietly until the service was concluded, when she at once began to caper and play as usual. [73]

Minnie had sometimes been disposed to smile to see Fidelle sitting upright, with her eyes tightly closed; and Ida acknowledged that the first time she saw her looking so demure, as though she understood and appreciated every word that was said, she had to bite her lips to keep from laughing outright. [74]

When Mrs. Lee told them what Fidelle had done, her husband was delighted with this proof of her intelligence. He said her conduct while they were engaged in devotion was an example to all of them, and wished Poll would take a lesson of her.

With this incident occurring under their own notice, their interest in the stories was increased, and after tea, Mr. Lee read among others the following:— [75]

“A little black spaniel had five puppies, which were considered too many for her to bring up. As, however, they were a rare kind of dog, her mistress was unwilling that any of them should be destroyed; and she asked the cook whether she thought it would be possible to bring a portion of them up by hand, before the kitchen fire. The cook answered that the cat had several kittens, and she had no doubt, if they were taken away, the puppies might be substituted. [76]

“The cat made no objection, took to them kindly, and gradually all the kittens were taken away, and she nursed the two puppies only.

“Now, the first curious fact was, that the two puppies were in a fortnight as active, forward, and playful as kittens would have been. They had the use of their legs, barked, and gamboled about, while the other three nursed by the mother were whining and rolling about like fat slugs. [77]

“The cat gave them her tail to play with; and they were always in motion. They soon ate meat, and long before the others, they were fit to be removed. This was done; and the cat became inconsolable. She prowled about the house, and on the second day of tribulation, fell in with the little spaniel, who was nursing the other three puppies. [78]

“‘O,’ said puss, putting up her back, ‘it is you who have stolen my children.’

“‘No,’ replied the spaniel, with a snarl, ‘they are my own flesh and blood.’

“‘That won’t do,’ said the cat. ‘I’ll take my oath before any justice of the peace, that you have my two puppies.’ Thereupon there was a desperate combat, which ended in the defeat of the spaniel; and then the cat walked off proudly with one of the puppies, which she took to her own bed. [79]

“Having deposited this one, she returned, fought again, gained another victory, and redeemed another puppy.

“Now, it is very singular that she should have taken only two, the exact number she had been deprived of.” [80]

“Isn’t that a nice story?” cried Minnie, joyfully clapping her hands.

“I had no idea there were such pleasant things about cats,” said Ida, laughing at her cousin’s enthusiasm. “Fidelle has risen wonderfully in my estimation. But don’t let me detain you, dear uncle.”

“I see here,” he said, “a curious account of a cat, published by M. Antoine in France.” [81]

“In a French cloister, the hours of meals were announced by the ringing of a bell. A favorite cat belonging to the establishment was accustomed, as soon as she heard the summons, to run quickly to the dining hall, that she might be fed.

“One day it happened that puss was accidentally shut up in a room by herself when the bell rang, and could not therefore obey the summons. Some hours after, she was let out, and instantly ran to the spot where dinner was always left for her; but no dinner was to be found. [82]



PUSS RINGING FOR HER DINNER. [Page 82.](#)

"In the afternoon, the bell was heard ringing at an unusual hour. The inmates of the cloister ran quickly to see what was the cause of it, when, to their surprise, they saw the cat clinging to the bell rope, and setting it in motion as well as she was able, in order that she might have her dinner served up to her." [83]

"I hope they gave her a good one," urged Minnie. "I'm sure she deserved it for being so smart."

"I have no doubt of it," remarked the gentleman, smiling. "Now, here is a story of another French cat."

"It was of a kind known as the Angora variety, a very beautiful creature, with silvery hair of fine silky texture, generally longest on the neck, but also long on the tail. Some of them are olive, the color of the lion; but they are delicate creatures, and of gentle dispositions." [84]

"This one belonged to a hotel in Paris, and having noticed that the cook always left the kitchen upon the ringing of a certain bell, and thus left the room clear for her to eat the dainties she had been preparing, soon acquired the art of pulling the bell herself." [85]

"This trick she practised for some weeks, in the mean time growing plump and sleek from her abundance of rich delicacies, until the thieving became so extensive that a person was set to watch for the rogue."

"Concealing himself, therefore, with fire-arms, ready to secure the villain, the man had to wait but a short time before he saw puss steal along near the wall, where she gently agitated the bell wire." [86]

"Cook obeyed the summons, and left the kitchen, when the cat sprang from her hiding place, and catching a pigeon, just ready for the oven, in her mouth, ran into the cellar to enjoy her plunder."

This instance of intelligence caused a hearty laugh among the hearers, which had not quite ceased when Mr. Lee said, "I have been told that a garrison of disciplined cats was once kept on the island of Cyprus, for the purpose of destroying the serpents with which it was infested. They were so well trained that they came in to their meals at the sound of a bell, and at a similar signal returned in order to the chase, where they were equally zealous and successful." [87]

[88]

CHAPTER V. KITTY AND THE FISH.

One morning, when Minnie went down stairs, she found Fidelle apparently much distressed at having stepped into some water which the chamber girl had accidentally spilled on the floor.

Puss shook one foot and then another in the most dainty manner imaginable, and then, going to a dry place, sat down to lick her paws. [89]

"What can be the reason cats don't like water?" Minnie asked her mother. "Leo thinks a bath very refreshing, and I suppose Tiney would if Kate did not scrub her so hard."

"I don't know, my dear, why it is so; but they do almost always dread the water. Though they are extremely fond of fish, they seldom venture into the water after it, but wait for it to be brought to them. [90]

"But there are cases where they have become expert fishers. I remember an account now which I think will interest you.

"A widow woman by the name of Rogers had a large family of children dependent on her for support. By practising the greatest economy, they were able to live for several years. At last there came a famine, when provision of every kind was so scarce that this poor family were reduced to the verge of starvation. Twenty-four hours had passed without one mouthful of food, and the widow knew not where to obtain any; when, hearing a faint scratching at the door, she went to open it. She saw there a sight which made tears of grateful joy stream from her eyes. The cat, which had long been an inmate of the family, a sharer of their prosperity and adversity, with whom one of the children had divided her last crust,—this cat stood at the door, holding in her mouth a large fish, which furnished all the household with a plentiful meal. [91]

"What was more remarkable, puss continued to do this for nearly three weeks, until better times dawned upon them, when she suddenly ceased the habit, and never was known to take to the water again." [92]

"Wasn't that a good kitty, mamma?" cried Minnie, giving Fidelle an extra squeeze. "She was a useful cat." [93]

"Yes, my dear; and when your father comes home, I think he can find a number of instances where cats have overcome their dislike of wet feet, and have become expert fishers."

In the evening, Minnie did not forget to remind her father that she liked to hear stories. Running up on the steps, she took the volume from its place, and playfully put it into his hands. [94]

After repeating to him the incident her mother had related in the morning, he turned over the leaves, and presently found the following:—

"At Caverton Mill, in Roxburghshire, a beautiful spot on the Kale water, there was a famous cat domesticated in the dwelling house, which stood two or three hundred yards from the mill. When the mill work ceased, the water was nearly stopped at the dam head, and below, therefore, ran gradually more shallow, often leaving trout, which had ascended when it was full, to struggle back with difficulty to the parent stream. [95]

"So well acquainted had puss become with this circumstance, and so fond was she of fish, that the moment she heard the noise of the mill clapper cease, she used to scamper off to the dam, and, up to her belly in water, continue to catch fish like an otter." [96]

"That is really a curious instance," remarked Mrs. Lee, "where the instinct of puss amounted almost to reason. She connected the stopping of the wheel with the shutting off the water, and found by experience that at such times the trout could be seen." [97]

"Here is another," added Mr. Lee, "related by the Plymouth Journal, in England."

"A cat who had for many years attached herself to the guard house, was in the constant habit of diving into the sea, and bringing up the fish alive in her mouth, for the use of the soldiers. At the time this account was given, she was seven years old, and had long been a useful caterer. It is supposed that she first ventured into the water, to which cats have a natural aversion, in pursuit of the water rats, but at length became as fond of it as a Newfoundland dog. She took her regular walk along the rocks at the edge of the point, looking out for her prey, and ready to dive in at a moment's notice." [98]

"We have a neighbor at home," said Ida, "who cannot endure the sight of a cat. I wish she could hear some of these incidents; it is probable that it might change her opinion of their intelligence." [99]

"They are really affectionate little creatures," rejoined Mr. Lee, "as this story would convince any one."

"A cat, which had been well treated in a family, became extremely attached to the eldest child, a little boy who was very fond of playing with her. She bore with patience all maltreatment which she received from him without making any resistance. As the cat grew up, however, she daily quitted her playfellow for a time, from whom she had before been inseparable, in order to catch mice; but even when engaged in this employment, she did not forget her friend; for as soon as she had caught a mouse, she brought it alive to him. [100]

"If he showed any inclination to take her prey from her, she let the mouse run, and waited to see whether he was able to catch it. If he did not, the cat darted at it, seized it, and laid it again before him; and in this manner the sport continued, as long as the child showed any desire for the amusement. [101]

"At length, the boy was attacked by small pox, and during the early stages of the disorder the cat never quitted his bedside; but as his danger increased, it was found necessary, on account of her cries, to remove the cat, and lock her up. The boy died. On the following day, puss, having [102]

escaped from her confinement, immediately ran to the chamber where she hoped to find her playmate.

"Disappointed in this, she sought for him with great uneasiness, and loud cries, all over the house, till she came to the door of the room where the corpse had been placed. Here she lay down in silent melancholy till she was again locked up. After the child was buried, the cat was set at liberty, when she suddenly disappeared. It was not until a fortnight later that she returned to the well-known apartment quite emaciated. She refused nourishment, and soon ran away again with dismal cries. At last, compelled by hunger, she made her appearance every day at dinner time, but always left the house as soon as she had eaten the food that was given her. No one knew where she spent the rest of her time, till she was found one day under the wall of the burying ground, close to the grave of her favorite. [103]

"So indelible was her attachment to her deceased friend, that till his parents removed to another place, five years afterwards, she never, except in the greatest severity of winter, passed the night any where else than close to the grave. [104]

"Ever afterwards she was treated with the utmost kindness by every person in the family, though she never exhibited partiality for any of them." [105]

[106]

CHAPTER VI. MOUSER AND HER MISTRESS.

Soon after this, Minnie, was ill, and obliged to keep her bed for several days. One morning she lay bolstered up with pillows, Fidelle keeping her position close under the arm of her mistress, when a particular friend of Mrs. Lee called, and was shown into the chamber.

She laughed as she saw kitty lying there, and tried to coax her away. [107]

"I love kitties," she said, passing her hand softly over the glossy fur, "and kitties love me."

Minnie's pale cheek kindled with a glow, in her sympathy with the lady's remark.

"I must tell you about my puss, Mouser," the visitor went on, seating herself close by the couch. "I was ill in bed, as you are, and puss, who is a splendid great Maltese, was very anxious about me. She feared I might be neglected, or that I should not take the right medicine, or that every thing might not be done in the best manner, and thought proper to oversee the whole business. She was continually running from the shed to my chamber, as if she were half distracted, mewing and crying in the most heart-rending manner." [108]

"Why didn't she stay on your bed, as Fidelle does?" inquired Minnie, in great interest. [109]

"I was just coming to that, my dear. Unfortunately for Mouser, she had at that very time five kittens, a family large enough, one would suppose, to occupy all her attention. But even with the care of her kittens on her mind, Mouser would not forsake her old friend. For a time, her distress and anxiety were so great, running here and there fifty times in a day, that it really began to wear upon her health, when an expedient happily was suggested to her mind. [110]

"I had provided a large box in the shed for the little family, with a piece of soft carpet doubled for their bed. Mouser paid me an early visit one morning, and, having taken a rapid, eager survey of the premises, hastened away again. But she presently returned with a kitten in her mouth, and made a bold jump with it on the bed. [111]

"I declare that great cat has brought her kitten up here," exclaimed my nurse, astonished at her effrontery. 'I'll soon teach her to keep them at home;' and taking a broom, she was proceeding to drive the intruders out in great wrath.

"Let her stay," I said, decidedly; 'she is a great pet of mine.'

"Mouser looked anxiously in my face, without dropping the kitten from her mouth, as if her life depended on my words. She seemed instantly to understand that I had conquered, for she laid the kitten down, and was gone in an instant. [112]

"I understood the whole matter at once, but had hard work to make nurse believe that I really meant to have the cat and all her family on my bed. It was with great reluctance she brought a foot blanket from the closet, and spread it over the white counterpane, all the while muttering, 'Well, I never heard any thing like it. I don't believe it's healthy. I won't be answerable for the consequences.' [113]

"When Mouser had brought the last one, and laid it on the blanket at the foot of the bed, she walked deliberately up to me, and began to lick my hand, while the look of gratitude and satisfaction she gave me amply repaid my interference in her behalf. It said, as plainly as possible, 'Now I have all I love about me, and without distraction can attend to you, my dear [114]

mistress, and not neglect my family. Now I am contented and happy.'

"I was sick two days after this. At night, Mouser and her charge were removed to the corner of the room; but whenever I made any sound of distress, she was directly at my side, looking in my face, and mewing piteously. I understood perfectly that she wished to express her sorrow and sympathy at my affliction. [115]

"When I was able to be out of bed, her delight was so great that even the nurse was convinced of her affection. She frisked about, played with her kittens, which she had not once done while I was in bed, followed me around the room, leaping upon me, and rubbing her glossy fur against my dress. Do you wonder, Minnie, that I love Mouser; and other kittens for her sake?" [116]

The lady was somewhat surprised, when the enthusiastic child, instead of answering, started suddenly and gave her a kiss. From this time, a warm friendship was established between them. [117]

When she had gone, the child had a refreshing nap, and then asked her mother to get the book and read her a story.

"Here is an affecting one," remarked Mrs. Lee, after having looked over the pages, "where puss loved her mistress as much as Mrs. Davis's Mouser did.

"A lady named Madame Helvetius had a favorite kitten, which constantly lay at her feet, seemingly always ready to defend her. It never molested the birds which she kept; it would not take food from any hand but hers, and would not allow any one else to caress it. [118]

"At the death of its mistress, the poor cat was removed from her chamber; but it made its way there the next morning, went on the bed, sat upon her chair, slowly and mournfully paced over her toilet, and cried most piteously, as if lamenting its poor mistress. [119]

"After her funeral it was found stretched lifeless on her grave, apparently having died from excess of grief."

"I think Mouser would have died just so," said Minnie, softly, "she loves her mistress so well."

"Here is another story, my dear, if you are not too tired."

"O, no, indeed! I think I should very soon be well if you would read all the time." [120]

"Henry, Earl of Southampton, was long confined in the Tower of London, as a political prisoner. He had been already some time in confinement, when, one day, he was both delighted and surprised by receiving a visit from a favorite cat.

"The poor creature being distracted with grief at the cruel separation from her master, and not being able to gain access to him through the gates of the prison, was at last sagacious enough to plan a method of visiting him. She watched her chance, scaled the walls of the Tower, and finally reached him by descending through the accumulated soot and smoke of his chimney. Whether instinct guided her aright the first time, or whether she was obliged to descend many chimneys in her eager search for the one she loved, we cannot tell; but her delight at last in finding him seemed abundantly to repay her for all her perils." [121]

"How very glad her master must have been to see her!" faltered the child, her eyes moist with emotion. "I don't see how any body can help loving cats." [122]

[123]

CHAPTER VII.

PUSS TAKING A JOURNEY.

Fidelle had one singular habit which I have not yet noticed. She used to take a solitary walk every evening at about dusk. The custom began in the following manner. For a long time Mr. and Mrs. Lee, with Minnie, were in the habit of taking a walk at sunset, and sometimes Fidelle went with them; but finding the frolics of the kitten fatigued the child, causing her to run up and down in pursuit, they ordered the cat to be kept at home. [124]

As soon as they were out of sight, puss started off by herself, and enjoyed it so much, that for years, except when the weather was very stormy, the little creature might be seen walking demurely down the avenue into the street, from which direction she usually returned in the course of an hour, walking as quietly as she went. [125]

One day a gentleman from the neighboring city came to pass the night with her father, and, knowing Minnie's fondness for animals, told her he had heard a curious account of a cat, which he would relate to her if she pleased.

The little girl was delighted, and ran at once to call her cousin Ida. They were presently seated in the parlor, Minnie having taken the precaution to carry with her the favorite volume from the [126]

library, in case it should be needed.

"I am told this story is authentic," said the gentleman. "It occurred in the summer of 1828, near Deniston, England.

"A gentleman, by the name of Stankley, owned a cat, who was a great favorite with the children, and was in the constant habit of going out of doors to play with them. One day she returned to the house without any of her usual company, and going directly to Mrs. Stankley, rubbed herself against her feet, crying, to arrest attention. She then went to the door and returned, which motions she repeated so long that the lady suspected the little creature had something in view. She therefore put on her bonnet, and followed her out. To her astonishment, it ran on before her, turning continually, and apparently delighted that it had gained its object, until they had gone some distance. Here the cat left her, and darted forward, when, to her surprise, she saw her youngest child stuck fast in the mud of a ditch, unable to move. [127] [128]

"When the mother extricated the child, the cat testified her pleasure in every possible way, jumping on the lady's dress, and purring as loudly as possible." [129]

"I imagine," remarked Mr. Lee, "that the power of observation in the inferior animals is greater than is generally supposed. Those who have most carefully watched them, and noted their characters and habits, think they not only come to know persons and events, but to distinguish particular days, like the Sabbath, and to comprehend the meaning of many words. [130]

"I saw, the other day, a curious proof that cats observe what is passing around them.

"There was a lady who lived at Potsdam with her children. One day, the youngest ran a splinter into her little foot, which caused her to scream out most violently.

"At first, her cries were disregarded, as it was supposed they proceeded, as they often did, from impatience. At last, the elder sister, who had been asleep, was awakened by the screams, and as she was just getting up to quiet the child, she observed a favorite cat, with whom they were wont to play, and who was of a remarkably gentle disposition, leave its place under the stove, go to the crying girl, and strike her on the cheek with one of its paws so as to draw blood. [131]

"After this, the animal walked back with the greatest composure and gravity to its place, as if satisfied with having chastised the child for crying, and with the hope of indulging in a comfortable nap. She had, no doubt, often seen the child punished in this way for crossness; and as there was no one near to administer correction, puss had determined to take the law into her own hand." [132]

This story occasioned a great laugh, though Minnie pitied the crying girl, who not only had to bear the splinter, but the punishment of the cat. [133]

"Another story, exhibiting the close observation of cats," rejoined Mr. Lee, "relates to their habit of returning home from a long distance. A most remarkable instance of this was given by a gentleman who removed from the county of Sligo to Dublin, a distance of about ninety miles. [134]

"When about to change their residence, he and his children regretted exceedingly being obliged to leave a favorite cat behind them, which had endeared itself to them by its docility and affection.

"They had not been settled many days in their new abode, when one evening, as the family were sitting and chatting merrily at the tea table, the servant came in, followed by a cat so precisely like the one left behind that all the family repeated his name at once; the little creature testifying great joy, in his own way, at the meeting. [135]

"The gentleman took the puss in his arms, while all gathered about to examine him; but no difference could be found between their old favorite and this one. Still it was difficult to believe it was their poor deserted pet, for how could he have travelled after them? or how could he have found them out? [136]

"Yet the exact resemblance, the satisfaction which the poor animal evinced, as he walked about in all the confidence of being among friends, with his tail erect, and purring with pleasure, left little doubt that this was indeed their own cat.

"At last, one of the family examined his claws, and found they were actually worn down with travelling. This circumstance convinced them that poor puss had really followed them the whole journey of ninety miles. [137]

"As soon as they could believe it was their own, they gave the faithfully attached creature an enthusiastic greeting and a sumptuous repast."

"I think that is the most remarkable case of which I ever heard," responded the visitor, "though I know that cats are famous for returning to their own homes. But here was a road over which puss had never travelled, with nothing whatever to guide him in his difficult search for those he loved." [138]

CHAPTER VIII. THE SAGACIOUS CAT.

The next evening, when Mr. Lee returned home, he gave Minnie a small parcel, which he told her was a present from their late visitor. It was a beautifully bound book, containing many interesting stories on her favorite subject.

She could not rest until she had persuaded Ida to read it to her. Two of the incidents are so remarkable, that I shall quote them to close my book on Minnie's pet cat, hoping my young readers will be encouraged by these stories to be kind to pussy, and indeed to all the creatures that God has made. [140]

"De la Croix, a lecturer on experimental philosophy, was one day proving to his class that no creature could live without air. For this purpose he placed a cat in a large glass jar, under the receiver of an air pump, and began to exhaust the air. [141]

"Puss flew about, feeling decidedly uncomfortable, but, after a quick examination of her situation, saw a small aperture, upon which she placed her paw.

"The lecturer went on; but puss did not, as he expected, fall down lifeless. She had discovered a method of preventing the air in the jar from escaping. When he ceased pumping, she took her paw away; but the instant he took hold of the handle, she put it there again. [142]

"Finding her too sagacious to be quietly killed, De la Croix was obliged to send for a less intelligent cat before he could proceed with his lecture."

"In April, 1831, an exhibition of six cats was opened in Edinboro', by a company of Italians, which gave astonishing proofs of their intelligence. They were kept in a large box, and each came forth at the command of the owner, seeming perfectly to understand its duty. They had been taught to beat a drum, turn a spit, strike upon an anvil, turn a coffee roaster, and ring bells. [143]

"Two of them, who seemed to be more sagacious than the rest, drew a bucket suspended by a pulley, like a draw well. The length of the rope was about six feet, and they perfectly understood when the bucket was high enough to stop pulling. Most of the time they stood upright on their hind legs. [144]

"One of them would turn a wheel when a piece of meat stuck on a spit was put before it. But the instant the meat was removed, she stopped, considering the labor needless till the meat was replaced."

Transcriber's Note

The following typographical errors were corrected.

Page	Error	Correction
41	I suppose"	I suppose,"
95	So well	"So well

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MINNIE'S PET CAT ***

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