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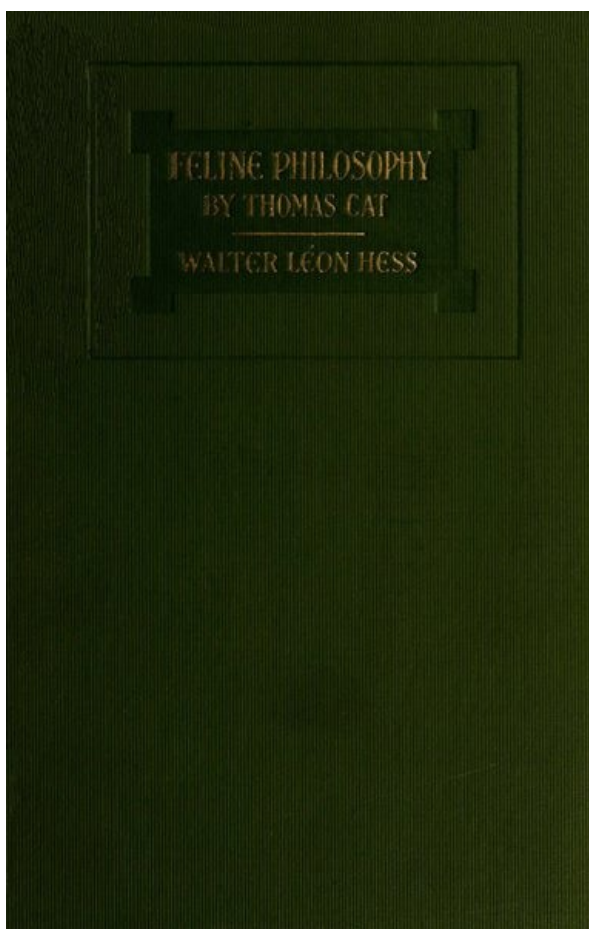
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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FELINE PHILOSOPHY \*\*\*



## **FELINE PHILOSOPHY**

BY THOMAS CAT

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH  
BY  
WALTER LÉON HESS



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*I have nine lives  
And a number of wives—  
But at last I must put a ban  
On feline ways  
And midnight lays  
For now I live with man!*

[Pg 3]



[Pg 4]

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FELINE PHILOSOPHY  
BY THOMAS CAT

[Pg 5]



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## FELINE PHILOSOPHY

BY THOMAS CAT

### FIRST CATERWAUL

The family have gone to the country,  
Horton, his wife and four children.  
They took the butler and maids, the dogs,  
The canaries and parrot. Shutters  
They put on the house and the keys  
Are turned in the locks. The silver  
Was put in the vault and everything  
Valuable carefully stowed....

Little Jack

Looked well for me. But when he found me  
Was told to put me outside; a cat has no  
Place in a house that is closed for  
The summer.

When they were sorely troubled  
With rats and mice they coaxed me to  
Come to live in the cellar. They fed  
Me richly on cream and the choicest  
Bits from their lavish table. They gave  
Me a rug to sleep, and taught the children  
To pet me. All took turns to feed me and  
They saved the bones of each fish.

The

Mice and rats disappeared; the rug  
Is filthy, in tatters. Old Horton curses  
And kicks me and kicks me down stairs when he  
Meets me; warns the baby to heed my  
Claws and the older children that  
Cats breed all sorts of diseases. Edith  
Has young men to call and "cannot abide  
The cat that is covered with ashes."  
Only Jack remembers—which reminds me  
How well I was treated. I was young when  
They found me and now have grown wise in  
Their councils.

I have no food and no  
Lodging.



### SECOND CATERWAUL

It's more than a week since I've eaten  
And my bed is made in the gutter. Well-fed  
And beggars go by and their boots are  
All alike ready as soon as they spy me.  
Jack Horton went by with his father and

Stooped to whisper his secret. Old Horton  
Jerked his arm and urged that he'd miss  
The train. So even railroad time  
Seems relentless as the procession  
Passes over and about me. Between buying  
A new suit for his party  
And his affection  
Even young Jack had no choice.  
Now I have to hunt  
And I've eaten a sparrow for breakfast.  
I ate with infinite relish  
Though I never ate one before;  
I was starved and the murder and crime  
Were lost in my terrible necessity.  
My depravity is beginning to wear....  
I shall wander down to the river....  
I have heard Jack's father say:  
When a man falls so low as that  
He had better drown himself than—  
I've forgotten the rest; I cannot think  
In my present state of mind.

### **THIRD CATERWAUL**

[Pg 10]

Arrived at the wharf there was not  
Another soul in sight ... except at the very end  
Where sat a most woebegone looking Tramp  
Smoking what was once a cigar  
Of price. Half smoked it had been thrust  
In the gutter at the theater-entrance  
By a careless and prosperous merchant.  
The Tramp was very near to the edge looking out  
Over the water as blankly as a blind man.  
A man! Look at him ... and I a mere cat!  
No doubt Old Horton was right.... One leap  
Into the darkness and all gloomy thoughts,  
All trouble, like the half-finished cigar  
Would give place to beautiful dreams and  
Never-ending.... At least it cannot be much  
Worse.... No! Far better than the foul gutter  
And the murderous cravings for the unattainable.  
I shall burst my bonds and jump in.



### **FOURTH CATERWAUL**

[Pg 11]

It gave a terrible fright when I struck  
The water. Even in filth and mud I found it more  
Pleasure to swim than to drown. How comfortable  
The gutter now seemed but my strength was  
Utterly useless.... My thoughts had been  
Less overwhelming than the murky slime that  
Would kill me ... and to sink, to be swallowed  
By fishes that had been sweet food for my palate.  
A boat came out of the darkness and a brown  
Arm folded me up from the last gasp in the river.  
It was going out to a yacht and the mate was the  
Man who rescued: "What luck with our rats and mice  
To find this bedraggled feline.... Maggie can give

It some milk and the Master won't curse for the Vermin...."

Perhaps I was born as an antidote!  
Perhaps I have no choice what to do!  
But whatever may be I shall at least do  
What is expected, the best that I can—  
How else can I expect anything?

## FIFTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 12]

Did you ever see a palace in a desert?  
Ralph Dimon was a good catch and Irene's  
Father was very rich. Low necked dress,  
Dress clothes, lace, jewelry, curtains of  
Fine brocade, mahogany panellings and  
Nickel-mountings dimmed the lights of Brough's  
Yacht and were more plentiful than the drops  
Of water that had nearly drowned me.  
As I was lifted over the side I saw the  
Two lovers lounging in the bow where there  
Were no lights; while inside the electric  
Lamps burned neglected. The wind blew a gale  
And I shivered; but comfortable surroundings  
And even diamonds would warm anybody but a  
Half drowned cat....

I wonder if pink ribbons  
And a silver-mounted collar would have made  
Me warmer or less hungry ... and I was most  
Interested because Irene's father never paid  
His bills without a lawsuit.... Perhaps I might  
With ribbon and collar have had food for the asking.  
But an honest cat must be kicked around  
The kitchen by Maggie. Maggie was used to it:  
"Haven't you better sense than to bring such  
Rubbish aboard, Jim? Old Brough will miss the  
Milk and there'll be the devil to pay."—And  
To think how I could rid this palace of vermin....  
But that would cost Father Brough money and  
It wouldn't show....  
Jim put me ashore ... but I was grateful!

[Pg 13]



## SIXTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 14]

What a terrible contrast: from an interrupted  
Yachting trip to the garbage can! The smell  
Of the sea is sweeter but I wasn't dressed  
For it.... The lure of a square meal is sweeter  
Than the glitter of paste.  
Think of finding a

Half beefsteak on top of the can! There was no  
Gravy but it was cooked to perfection. I ate it  
With relish, but should have enjoyed it better  
If only some one would let me work for it—  
Especially such a meal.... And yet they say beggars  
Cannot be choosers.... I found a lot more in the can  
To eat, but the steak satisfied me.  
I was very tired; so I went to sleep beside the  
Can....

When the collector came he took counsel of  
My presence and hunted through to see what he could  
Find of value. He looked up and down the street  
And then slipped a half-roasted-chicken into his  
Blouse; but not before casting me a look of  
Triumph.... But I never can eat two meals at a  
Sitting and chicken doesn't agree with me. Then,  
Too, even honey is nourishing, but it may give  
One indigestion.... I hope he enjoyed the chicken  
As much as I did my banquet....

Why, thought I, not  
Offer to stay in this house where plenty runs  
To overflowing....

It proved to be Brough's!

[Pg 15]



## SEVENTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 16]

I prefer the street and the gutter  
To the hospitality Brough's might have offered.  
How lucky to be a cat  
Free to accept or—refuse  
What is offered!



## EIGHTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 17]

I found a door that was open.

The grass in the entry was cut close;  
The hangings and drawing-room furniture  
Immaculate in their smug neatness. Even the  
Windows were clean and the books on the  
Shelves were well dusted. I wandered into  
The kitchen where oilcloth was spotless  
And tidy. Even the walls were fresh-papered....  
No doubt to keep the kalsomine-water  
From evaporating....

Table-manners in such  
A house, I fear, are more real than the eating.  
I turned about and went out lest the hairs  
In my coat might scatter.



## NINTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 18]

I have been housed with Jerolamon Jones  
And his wife, whom they call "tame cat,"  
For what seems a fairly long time. Jerry  
They call him for short and short is the Bible  
He reads. Lovers they are to the world and  
To each other still more—for that is the  
Judgment that counts.... Jerry has nights  
"At the club" and loves his dear wife's  
Friends. She can always reach him by 'phone  
But she wouldn't do it for worlds as she  
Trusts him beyond cavil or guile....  
And the tame cat sits on the laps of a  
Dozen or more of his friends—but only  
When Jerry is home.

I followed Jerry one night  
But his club was not where he went....  
We came home exactly at twelve—and Marion  
(That was his wife) was fast asleep in the sheets.  
Fulton had kissed her that night—and of course  
She told Jerry next day.... He trusted his wife  
As she him....

They were playing the game  
When I left—I left because only I  
Knew how to end the farce!

## TENTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 19]

I have wandered over the city aimless and homeless,  
Hungered in mind and in body.  
Days are not irksome in sunshine  
And rain promises more when it ceases.  
But the nights are so intimate  
And the rays of one's mind  
Are perlucid.  
Like a criminal tracing his steps  
Back to the scene of iniquity,  
I found myself in Horton's neighborhood....

But the house was still closed for the summer.



## ELEVENTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 20]

Mrs. Horton's maid, Alice, came home  
With the keys. She left the window open  
When she went to the corner for food.  
I took unfair advantage—thus experience has taught me—  
Climbed in at the first opportunity.  
I hid in her bedroom—the only door that was open.  
After all I had suffered  
Perhaps Jack would come back  
And then my troubles be over.  
For the first time in months  
I slept without fear and in comfort....  
It must have been after midnight  
When Old Horton came in. It was pitch dark  
So he couldn't see me. It gave me uncanny pleasure  
To follow him. He stole up to Alice's room  
As if a hundred were watching. The door remained  
Gaping to the empty house and—me.  
Presently Alice screamed and the harrowing sound  
Frightens me even now.  
Horton went back to his room  
And the house resumed its stillness.  
I sat on the floor by his bed  
Lulled by his heavy breathing....  
Out of the darkness there gleamed  
A flash from the crack of a pistol.  
Alice was fully dressed and quietly turned on her heel;  
Left the house by the basement; walked to the corner  
And river; threw something deep in its water; then back  
To the house where she'd killed him—  
Leaving the front door open.... I followed her up to her room  
Where she undressed and went back to bed....  
Dead in his they found Horton,  
And on his tomb they inscribed:

[Pg 21]

"A LOVING FATHER AND DEVOTED HUSBAND."





## TWELFTH CATERWAUL

I've been sitting in the gutter and wondering—  
 Strange dreams come to me in strange places—  
 The glare of approaching motor  
 Bewildered my thoughts still more.  
 I saw stranger things in the shadows  
 Than the glow of the lights revealed.  
 And the deepest shadows  
 Close behind the gleaming arcs of the motor  
 Showed heads that were snuggled close.  
 Edith Horton was one  
 And Brough—who is married—the other.  
 No matter how dark the night its shame is refulgent  
 To Heaven.  
 The chain of my reverie was broken  
 As the lash will draw blood from the purest....  
 And yet I am only a cat that was nearly  
 Run over!



## THIRTEENTH CATERWAUL

Jack Horton has taken me back—  
 His father's boots are now mouldy.  
 Edith does charity work and teaches in  
 Sunday-school. Brough is the superintendent....  
 The mortgage on Mallory's house  
 Was foreclosed on Saturday morning.  
 Mallory, wife and six children  
 Were sitting out on the street,  
 Their shabby trappings about them....  
 A syndicate bought the house  
 From Brough—his profit was ten thousand dollars.  
 Brough is rolling in wealth.  
 But Mallory now and Brough  
 Will seem to me much more alike:  
 Neither will pay his bills.  
 ... But Jack is kind to me  
 And Brough's not the milk  
 That I drink!



## FOURTEENTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 24]

When Mallory worked in the shops  
He drank up the wages he earned.  
Now that he's out of a job  
He's docile and kind to his wife  
And dawdles the baby all day.  
Old Horton used to say that Mallory  
Was a good mechanic and a bad father.  
Thus do critics fall out—Now that Old Horton  
Is dead  
He could not reverse his opinion  
Nor the marble slab on his grave.  
Joe Mallory was always Jack's chum; so Jack got after  
His friends.... Now he's delighted and proud  
For he found Mallory a job  
Which Mallory thoroughly liked and took  
For the price of giving up drink.



## FIFTEENTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 25]

Edith was reading the paper  
Breakfasting on the couch  
At the foot of which I sat.  
Her face was as pale as a ghost.... She read  
Something twice out loud:  
"James Brough in the Bankruptcy Court.  
Squandered his fortune on women;  
Many society girls in his net."  
She fainted just as her mother came in; so I  
Quietly left the room....

And yet there is now a law  
That the lamps of motors be dimmed!



## SIXTEENTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 26]

Jack and his older brother went to the wharf  
As Ralph Dimon is going abroad.  
He's going to stay for some time....  
Irene's been released  
From a very long engagement.  
Not only for mourning it seems  
That weddings are postponed.  
Irene looks dejected and weary—  
She came to see Edith this morning.  
The two are off for the mountains together....  
They say Ralph was richer than Brough.



## SEVENTEENTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 27]

They are sending Jack to boarding-school—  
He debated long should he take me?  
If only I were a dog!—but grown boys  
Don't make pets of cats....  
He doesn't know why he's going away—  
But I do: Alice, the maid, is in trouble  
And Mrs. Horton is shocked—and doesn't  
Want Jack to know.



## EIGHTEENTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 28]

Ever since Jack went away  
Mrs. Horton has looked after me.  
The day he left  
She came to the window  
And threw out Old Horton's boots.  
At first I thought they were thrown  
At me—but it seems that she threw them  
Wide of the window!  
When I voiced my surprise  
She hurried to me and now  
I sleep on her divan!



## NINETEENTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 29]

Clarence Horton, Jerolamon Jones and a few  
Of the other young bloods had a party last night—  
Hunt breakfast they called it, I think.  
They started by talking of dogs—hounds and  
Horse-flesh and mounts. I gathered that sort of sport  
Leaves all the toil to the dogs  
And the glory and brush to the hunter.  
For this kind of thing  
They were well fit—  
And none of them went home too sober!

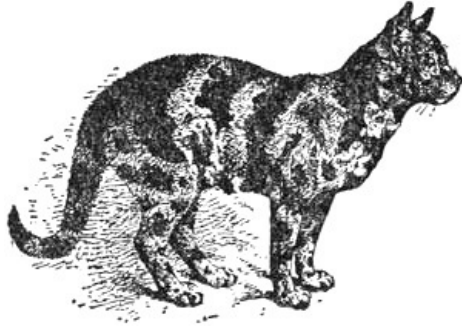


## TWENTIETH CATERWAUL

[Pg 30]

Mrs. Horton sent Alice away—she left last night  
After dark.  
It was better the neighbors  
Shouldn't see!  
There was no reason therefore  
To send poor Jack away!—  
Perhaps it was just as well?  
Mrs. Horton wouldn't have Alice around  
Lest it embarrass Edith and—her...  
I followed Alice some way and she seemed  
Quite cheerful enough.  
Waiting is much the same

No matter what one expects.



## TWENTY-FIRST CATERWAUL

[Pg 31]

Brough is through with the Courts  
And continues to ride in his car.  
He called for Edith last night  
When Mrs. Horton was out—she had gone  
To the hospital where Alice was  
Supposed to have gone....

Brough's chauffeur  
Isn't paid but it's the only way to get what  
One wants—to keep right on  
Especially when fishing for eels!  
Brough is a financier—the rest of us  
Only fish!



## TWENTY-SECOND CATERWAUL

[Pg 32]

In my morning stroll I found  
The Jerolamon Jones' door stood open;  
I looked about and went in  
But received a scanty welcome—  
Indeed I was promptly chased out  
By the maid.  
This afternoon Mrs. Jones called  
To beg Mrs. Horton  
To loan her the valuable cat  
As the maid had discovered  
A mouse.  
Thus do values increase  
And appreciation follow apace!



But I saw him hardly at all—  
To the front door he now has a key  
And the hours he keeps are quite varied.  
One morning he slept very late  
And the name that he spoke in his dreams  
Was "Alice."  
Mrs. Horton was proud of her son and the party  
She gave him was sumptuous.



## TWENTY-SIXTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 36]

We have a new cook at the Horton's  
Who saves the bean water for soup....  
I've enjoyed such broth at the Mallory's,  
But at the Horton's!!!—  
And their bills are always as large  
As before Bridget was installed.  
But Edith and Mrs. Horton are pleased  
And the baby and I can't complain!!



## TWENTY-SEVENTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 37]

There's a new baby at the Mallory's  
And the rest of the children are pleased;  
Mallory and his wife are as happy as larks....  
Edith Horton has a toy Angora  
And Mrs. Horton has forgotten me—  
Indeed she has put me out....  
Again I must wander the streets!



## TWENTY-EIGHTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 38]

I followed Alice last night  
Down to her alley and room—  
She stooped as she entered her door  
And petted me much as she used to....  
Then she cuddled her baby and seemed  
Far fonder of it than Mrs. Horton of hers  
And nearly as much  
As Edith of her angora....



## TWENTY-NINTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 39]

I sat on the curb at the corner  
Just outside the saloon  
Where politics rule and  
Presidents are made and unmade.  
Two men were discussing the War....  
And when they were through, the conclusion  
Was discussion untempered by argument....  
Unconvinced I went on my way.



## THIRTIETH CATERWAUL

[Pg 40]

All afternoon I sat in the shade  
Of a hideous skyscraper  
On the Avenue.  
Women of all sorts went by  
And their footgear and stockings  
Were varied.  
Skirts that our grandmothers used  
To clothe five- and ten-year-old girlies  
Revealed twelve inches of hose—  
Nor the three-shade boots that shod them  
Would help a Chinaman guess  
The age of the wearers who proudly  
Boasted this awful foundation....  
And yet are most of the women  
Sweet-souled and modest....  
I polished my claws once again!

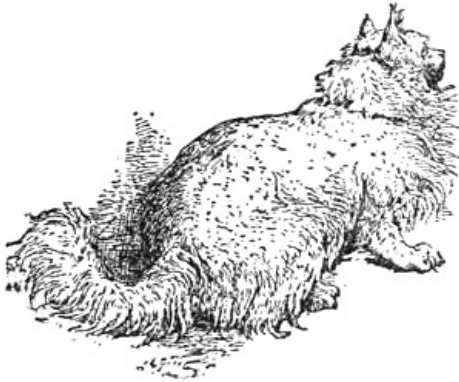




## THIRTY-FIRST CATERWAUL

[Pg 41]

I looked in at the restaurant window  
Through which gleamed a medley of color—  
Diamonds, pearl pendants and rubies,  
And ruby and gold was the wine  
Blazing first in glasses rich-stemmed,  
Then blazoned bright in the glances  
Of women;  
Some with their husbands and fathers,  
Others leering and brazen—  
But my milk tasted sweeter  
Next morning, for to the poor  
All things are pure!



## THIRTY-SECOND CATERWAUL

[Pg 42]

I hadn't eaten for hours  
And all the house doors were shut—  
The heat of the sun was oppressive  
So I languished in the shade,  
Though my appetite was appalling....  
Beside there were plenty of sparrows  
Ready to eat when I chose to....  
But when the sun was gone,  
So were the sparrows!



## THIRTY-THIRD CATERWAUL

The Mallorys have taken me in....  
 Mallory says: one more to feed....  
 But the children like it to play  
 And it looks like Horton's old cat  
 So it's certain to be a good one....  
 Even if discarded.



## THIRTY-FOURTH CATERWAUL

Mrs. Mallory read from the paper  
 Where wise ones answer fool's queries  
 And this was one of the questions:  
 Is it possible a woman  
 Who has bitten her nails all her life  
 Since first she had teeth  
 Could so cause her baby  
 The affliction of two thumbs on one hand?...  
 Did they ever think that of cats?



## THIRTY-FIFTH CATERWAUL

If we really had nine lives,  
 None akin to the others  
 And all the hopes of each life  
 Were answered in the next,  
 Perhaps a cat's existence would  
 Still be unsatisfactory?



## THIRTY-SIXTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 46]

Joe Mallory told Jack about Alice—  
At least of her fate.  
Jack found her address  
And wanted to help...  
And yet there are some  
Who believe heredity infallible!



## THIRTY-SEVENTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 47]

While Jack tried to smother  
Alice's wild burning fires  
Joe never obtruded—  
But when Jack was not watching  
Joe brought more wood  
To the kindling....  
Still they were friends.



## THIRTY-EIGHTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 48]

You should have read Brough's  
Obituary.... He died  
When he'd rescued a fortune  
By making hardware and debts:  
... MOST RESPECTED MERCHANT ...  
PHILANTHROPIST.... Loss to  
The Community ... and over a  
Dozen "Resolved's."  
The Merchants' Club framed his picture.  
And to think  
Generations of men proudly  
Will claim his descent!



## THIRTY-NINTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 49]

Edith Horton is married—  
(Joe Mallory went to the wedding)—  
Many a thorn-edge is dulled  
By brushing it by in a hurry....  
And roses often change hue  
Between the bright sun and the limelight.



## FORTIETH CATERWAUL

[Pg 50]

I watched a man cranking his motor.  
It stalled....  
He tinkered with levers  
Till he gave it up in despair  
And stood disconsolate staring.  
When he cranked it again  
It started so quickly  
That it raised the hair of my coat.



## **FORTY-FIRST CATERWAUL**

[Pg 51]

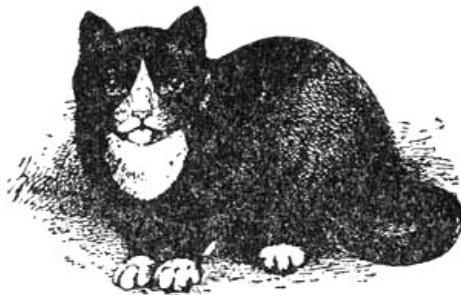
Jones' collie and Mallory's hound  
Were discussing a new-found bone  
With vicious snarling and snapping  
And other unseemly behaviour....  
On the fence above them I sat  
Distressed....  
Neither dared touch the prize....  
Nor would either allow the other.  
Then Jerry and Joe both whistled....  
The bone lies forgotten and wasted.



## **FORTY-SECOND CATERWAUL**

[Pg 52]

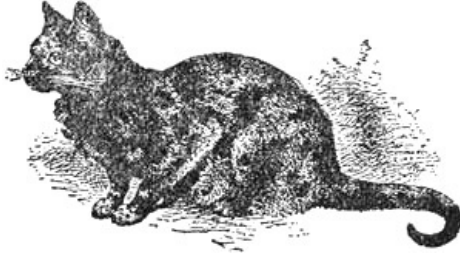
It grew very warm in the house,  
The Mallorys mopping and sweating—  
Perspiration is fuel for temper—  
Even I couldn't stand the heat  
Nor tell them no windows were open....  
But cats are always too obvious;  
So I went out for a walk.



## **FORTY-THIRD CATERWAUL**

[Pg 53]

Alice is dead of consumption....  
All Jack's efforts were useless;  
Disconsolate he tried to comfort  
The last of her wasted moments....  
"God will forgive you," he whispered....  
Yet who is the judge of the Damned?—  
And Joe is much disappointed  
Though he feels he may have hurried  
Alice's end.... I wonder  
What I repent?—or is it only  
Regret?



## **FORTY-FOURTH CATERWAUL**

[Pg 54]

All my life I have studied  
The passerby-faces  
And known them....  
Sometimes they noticed me;  
Others more often seemed  
Unconscious I saw them.  
I wondered what they were thinking....  
Or had they no thoughts  
But like wax that responds  
To momentary impressions?  
I'm sure I read all the faces....  
Did I know them—  
Except when they kicked me  
Or petted?



## **FORTY-FIFTH CATERWAUL**

[Pg 55]

At last I have to confess  
That all my judgment is blinded!  
Jack and Joe are now partners,  
Croesus and Job united  
In one homogeneous effort....  
And yet my kind make nights hideous  
By howling continuous calamity!



## **FORTY-SIXTH CATERWAUL**

[Pg 56]

Now that the Mallorys have money  
They haven't changed the brand  
Of my milk nor their butcher.  
They wear more clothes  
And better; but they still  
Continue to pet me.



## **FORTY-SEVENTH CATERWAUL**

[Pg 57]

Joe sent Pat Mallory through college;  
Up there Pat says that his father  
Is Superintendent of power—  
Old Mallory's just a plain foreman—  
But Pat still with reason  
Differs  
From the verdict given by Horton,  
For Pat still worships his father,  
And still calls me  
Poor old Cat....



## **FORTY-EIGHTH CATERWAUL**

[Pg 58]

I heard Pat talking of college—

Some of Pat's friends have been visiting—  
I wondered what they were learning!  
Pat is surely improving.  
Still Joe would always have prospered  
In or out of a college—  
And yet I shall always be  
Just a cat.



## FORTY-NINTH CATERWAUL

[Pg 59]

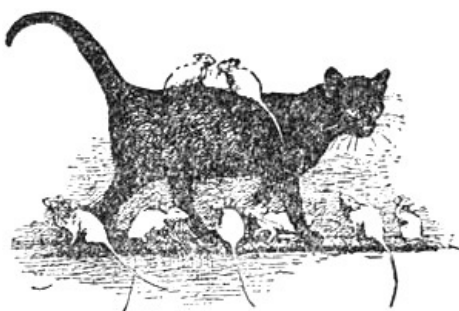
I've watched in the rain and snow  
Sunshine and cloudy weather  
For any change in my spirit;  
But whether I've eaten a fish  
Or had just a drink of milk,—  
Only that I found made  
A difference.



## FIFTIETH CATERWAUL

[Pg 60]

Go on with your work—  
Patient Stranger!  
I've told you enough of my  
Wanderings.  
The Mallorys are troubled with mice  
And never close house for the summer!





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