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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK PUSSY BLACK-FACE; OR, THE STORY OF A KITTEN AND HER FRIENDS \*\*\*



# PUSSY BLACK-FACE

or: the Story of a Kitten and Her Friends

*A Book for Boys and Girls*

By Marshall Saunders

Author of "Beautiful Joe," "Beautiful Joe's Paradise," "Tilda Jane," etc.

*Illustrated by*  
DIANTHA HORNE MARLOWE

"When I play with my cat, who knows whether I do not make her more sport than she makes me?"

MONTAIGNE.



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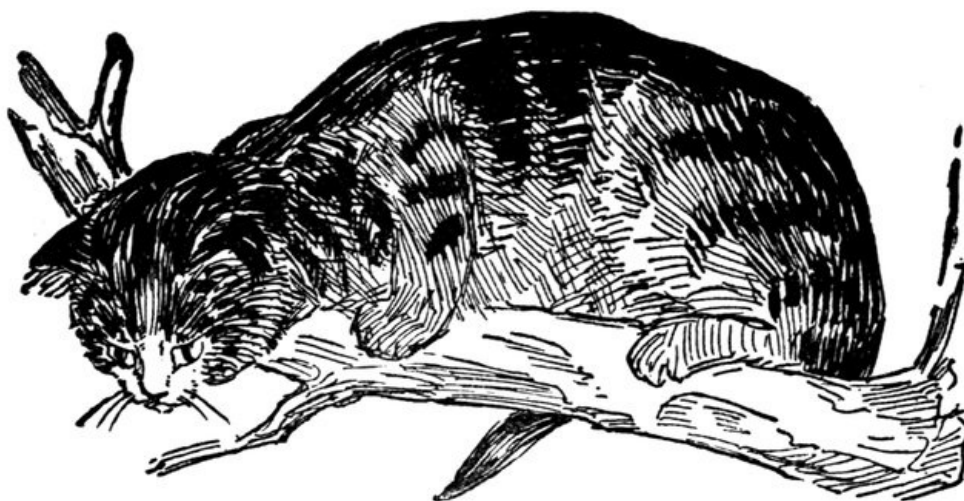
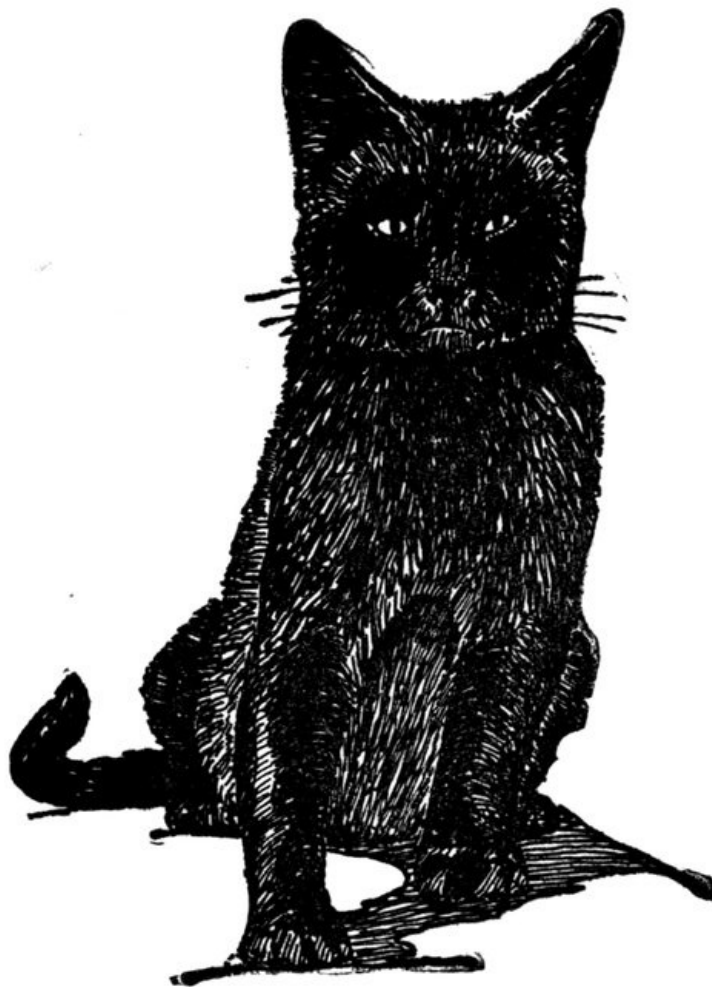
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I DEDICATE THIS STORY OF A LITTLE CAT TO THAT WHOLEHEARTED  
FRIEND OF ANIMALS—MRS. HUNTINGTON-SMITH  
Of THE ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE,  
51 CARVER STREET, BOSTON



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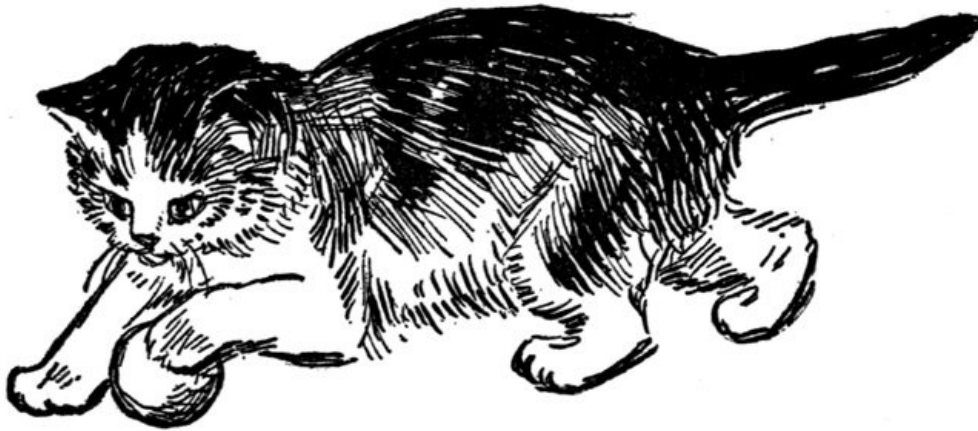


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**Pussy Black-Face**

# CHAPTER I

## BY THE FIRE

My name is Pussy Black-Face, and I am a naughty young kitten. I wish I were good like my mother. She is the best cat that I ever saw. I try to be like her, and sometimes I succeed, but most times I don't.

My mother's disposition is really lovely, but then she has a weak back. It seems to me that if I had a weak back I should be good, too, but when there is a spring in my spine that makes me want to jump all the time, and something curled up in my paws that makes me want to seize things, what can I do? How can I be good?

My mother purrs wholesome advice into my ears, and tells me to try, to try hard, and so I do, but usually it doesn't seem of any use. I might as well be bad all the time, and not worry about it.

Every night, as we sit around the fire before we go to bed, I think things over. You know how cats look and act when they are getting sleepy. Some people say that cats are stupid and can't think or feel. Don't you believe it. They are just as clever as any animals.

Well, I think the most beautiful sight in the world is our little family on these chilly, east-windy nights as we gather in the sitting-room about bedtime.

First there is our dear mistress, Mrs. Darley. She is a widow with two adopted children—Billy and Margaret. After dinner they go to the study to learn their lessons, and Mrs. Darley sits for a little while with us before she goes to join them. We cats are allowed to run all over the house, but we usually prefer the sitting-room, because there is the broad window-seat for sunny mornings, and the cushions by the fire for dull weather.

Mrs. Darley always takes my mother on her lap, because she is the chief favorite, and because she has suffered so much. I am not ashamed to say that my mother was an ash-barrel cat before Mrs. Darley rescued her. That is, she was a poor cat who had to pick up her living in back yards. She is a grayish, wistful-looking creature with a quiet manner. Her name is Dust-and-Ashes. She knows a good deal, but she doesn't talk much.

My father, whose name is the Piebald Prince, is an Angora. He is very handsome, very aristocratic, very dignified, but not at all proud. He says he believes it is wrong to call any cat common or unclean. Persian cats, and Angora cats, and New Mexico cats, and Manx cats, and all kinds of cats should be treated in just the same way, and have an equal amount of respect shown them.

He always makes my mother take a front seat if there is company, and he treats her with as much consideration as if she, like himself, had come from the celebrated farm up in Maine, where only pure bred cats are raised, and where they cost great sums of money.

Many a cuff—a gentlemanly cuff—I have had from him for being disrespectful to my mother. He believes in keeping us young ones in order.

Besides myself there is my sister Serena, and my brother Jimmy Dory.

They are both much older than I am. Serena is a very clever little cat. She has beautiful manners, and purrs a good deal to herself about culture. She and Jimmy are both half Angora, and half common cat. So I am, too, for that matter, but they are much better looking than I am. My father is black and white, and we are black and white; but his black and white and Serena and Jimmy Dory's black and white are laid on prettily.

I am a fright. Every one says so—cats and human beings—so it must be true. I think myself, when I look in the glass that I am very ugly, but I don't care a bit. Why should I worry? I can't see myself, unless I look in a mirror. Let the other cats and people worry about me, and say that my white face looks as if some one had thrown an ink bottle and splashed me right across it. They are the ones that suffer, for they can see me. I don't see myself.

My body is prettier than my face. I often laugh to myself when I am creeping softly along, and some one says, "Oh! what a lovely black kitten." Then I turn round and the some one always shrieks, "You little fright!" or "You ugly little thing!"

My mother says it is naughty in me to laugh, but I tell her that girl squeals and cat squeals don't hurt me. The only things I am afraid of are sticks and stones.

Then she smiles sadly, and says, "When you grow up to be a cat, Black-Face, you will be sorry that your face does not please every one."

I must say I don't believe her. I don't believe that my mother knows half as much as I do. She is getting old and fussy, but I wouldn't say this to any one but myself for the world. The kitten next door laughed at my mother the other day, and I scratched him. I'd do it again, too. I sha'n't let any one but myself criticise my mother while I have claws in my velvet paws.

Well, I don't believe I'll think any more about myself to-night. I am getting sleepy, and my head is sinking down on my pink cushion.

I wish I hadn't broken that pretty glass vase to-day. Mrs. Darley felt very sorry. What was I doing on the mantelpiece? The dear only knows. It looked tempting up there. It is such fun to twist between things and not break them, and it is only once in a great while that I do have a smash.

I hope Billy will find his lead-pencils. I dropped them behind the sofa—and what did I do with that dead mouse I was playing with? Did I leave it on Margaret's bed? I believe I did. Well, she is a fat

little girl. It won't hurt her to scream a while. Mrs. Darley will run to her. Good night, everybody—I am—so—sleepy.



## CHAPTER II

### A CAT'S REFUGE

7

Where am I? Can I collect my thoughts and reflect a little—was there ever such an unhappy cat? Only last night I sat and purred myself to sleep beside my dear mother. Pressed close against her soft fur, I had no thought of harm, and now where am I? But I must not be silly. Let me close my eyes, and purr hard for a while, then sense will come to me.

I must not open them. When I look round this room, and see the shadowy form of cat after cat, I think I will go crazy—and yet what a simpleton I am. I am safe here. Danger is over; let me be thankful that I escaped as I did.

Well, to go back to this morning. The east wind was out of the air. When mother and I, and father, and Serena, and Jimmy Dory came yawning and stretching out of the sitting-room and looked downstairs, the hall door was wide open, the sun was pouring in.

8

Mrs. Darley was so glad. She just loves sunshine. She went round the house opening doors and windows, and just as soon as breakfast was over, we all ran out on the sidewalk.

Cats get dreadfully tired of a back yard, and the back yards on Beacon Hill are so sunless and dull. We like fun and excitement—a little mild excitement—as much as human beings do. So my father and mother sat on the big sunny stone door-step, while Serena, Jimmy Dory and I played on the pavement.

We had a tiny round pebble that we were rolling with our paws. It was such a funny little pebble. I pushed it, and danced, and caught it in my paws and tossed it, and had a beautiful time, until my mother began to warn me.

“Black-Face, don't go down the hill; there are bad boys there. Keep up here.”

“I don't see any boys,” I said wilfully.

“They will soon see you if you go down there,” said my father severely.

I didn't believe him, and I thought my mother was fussy. I see now that little cats have to learn by experience. Nothing would have convinced me that there were bad boys at the foot of the hill, if I had not seen them and felt the grasp of their unkind hands.

9

While we were playing, the little pebble suddenly began to roll down hill. How fast it went! I watched it for a few instants, and then something said: “Go after it, Black-Face!”

I tried hard not to. I looked back at my parents sunning themselves on the door-step, I stared at Serena and Jimmy Dory who were cautious young cats, and rarely disobeyed their parents.

“I'll just snatch it and run back,” I mewed hastily; then I ran.

I caught the little pebble, but alas! Something caught me. Just as I put my paw on it, I saw out of the corner of my eye a group of boys standing in a near alley. I turned to run, but it was too late. One of them sprang toward me, and seized me by the back.

Then he started to race, not up the hill, but further down. I was nearly suffocated with fright and pain, for the boy held me so tightly that I could scarcely breathe. No one had ever clutched me like this before. I had never been whipped. I had never been roughly handled, for Margaret and Billy were good children.

10

This boy was a monster. His face was red and dirty, his eyes were bulging from his head, and he stumbled as he ran, so that I was afraid he would fall on me and kill me.

I may as well say here that the boy was not as bad as he seemed to me. He had not stolen me. He was merely having some fun, or what he called fun. He was some poor child that had had no one to teach him to be kind to animals. He did not dream that I was suffering. He did not think that a cat was capable of suffering.

So he hurried on and on, and some of the other boys ran yelling behind him. I don't know exactly what streets he took. I was too terrified to notice the way we were going, but soon I saw a river in the distance. Was he going to throw me in it? Half choked as I was, I dug my claws in his coat, and gave a frantic “Meow!” for, like all cats, I hate water.

11

“Boy,” called a policeman suddenly, “what are you doing with that cat?”

My captor was frightened and dropped me, and he and the other boys turned and ran back. You may be sure that I made a dash for liberty. I sprang wildly past the policeman, and not daring to follow the boys who were going toward my home, I leaped into a narrow, dirty street where there was a dreadful confusion of wagons, cars and throngs of people.

I threaded my way among them all—I don't know how I escaped being killed—until finally I was forced to pause for breath.

Unfortunately some boys and girls saw me and gave chase. I don't think they wanted to hurt me. They wished to catch me, but I was in terror again, and ran into an alley. They followed me, so I sprang on a heap of boxes, and then to a low porch.

The children discovered me there, and while some tried to coax me down, others threw stones at me. I looked up desperately. There was no help for me on the ground, for a big boy had begun to climb on the porch.

12

I examined the sloping side of the house roof. Then I leaped on it. Two or three times I fell back, but at last I succeeded in making my claws hold. They were fine sharp ones, or they never would have done so.

In two minutes I was on the very roof of the house, panting hard, my heart almost out of my body, everything black before my eyes; but I was safe.

There I saw that I was free from pursuit. The children had gone away. At the same time, the roof was not very comfortable. It was cold and slippery, for, by this time, the lovely sun had gone behind a cloud, and soon I began to be very uneasy.

I thought of my father, and mother, and Serena and Jimmy Dory—that distressed group at the top of the hill—for I had had one glimpse of them as I was snatched by the boy. Oh, why had I not minded my mother, and not run away from home? What was going to become of me? Must I spend the night in this dreadful place? 13

I thought of my little blue and white saucer that Mrs. Darley's kind cook filled with milk for me every noon. "Oh, meow! meow!" I cried pitifully. "Will no one help a poor little cat?"

A skylight in the roof opened, and an old man's face looked out. Such a kind face, but still I did not trust him, and moved away to the other end of the ridge pole. "Little cat," he said seriously, "there is help even for such as you. I will go seek it," and he disappeared.

I did not know what he meant, so I continued to cry piteously. I wanted my mother and dear Mrs. Darley. I was too far up to be heard from the street, but a few persons opened near-by windows, and looked at me indifferently.

"Only a cat," they said. "Let her get down the way she came up."

"Oh, dear! dear!" I mewed, "must I stay on this roof till I perish from hunger?" For now it was beginning to get dark and cloudy and to look like rain. "Oh, meow! meow!" 14

Just as I was giving up hope, the skylight opened again.

"There she is, sir," I heard the old man say, then a young man put his head out, and looked at me.

He had a good face. I'm only a kitten, but I've found out that if a man spends his life in doing good, he has a good face.

I trusted him, and yet I was afraid to go to him, if you can understand that.

"Kitty," he said soberly, "over there," and he waved his hand toward the heart of the city, "is a place where lost dogs and cats are sheltered. Come to me, and I will take you to it. Come——" and he held out his hand.

"Oh, meow! meow!" I said, "if I go to you, perhaps you will throw me away down there in that raging, horrible street."

"No, Pussy," he said seriously, shaking his head. "No, I never have deceived an animal. Come here, and I will put you in a nice basket where no one will see you, and I will carry you through the noisy street. Here——" and he threw me a tiny piece of liver. 15

Now, I am very fond of nicely cooked liver. I think it is vulgar to eat it raw. Fortunately, I caught the liver, and it did taste good, and made me think more of the man. He still had some in his hand. I smelt it, so I crept timidly toward him along the roof.

"Poor Pussy! poor Pussy!" he kept saying, and presently I was eating from his hand, and he was stroking my ears as I ate. Then he stepped back quietly into the room. He didn't try to catch me, but he put the liver down where I could reach it.

I peeped in through the skylight. The young man and the old man were talking. "Yes, sir," the younger one was saying, "we've got a refuge for dogs and cats, but it isn't half large enough. I look at the matter this way. The animals are put in the world by the same Creator that put us here. They've got their rights. Give them their share of room on mother earth, and if you don't love them, and love to take care of them, and you worship only your own selfish, old body, then take care of the animals out of that same love for yourself." 16

"That's so, sir, that's so," and the old man nodded his head.

"Because," the young man went on, "a neglected animal is a diseased animal, and a diseased animal is a menace to the millionaire as well as to the pauper. Germs of disease can't be fenced in. So I say, kill sick and homeless creatures, if you can't get a good home for them."

"Would you kill that cat?" asked the old man pointing to me.

As his hand pointed toward me, my nose pointed straight for the skylight, but the young man reassured me.

"No," he said thoughtfully, looking me over, "that is a young, healthy kitten, and part Angora. We'll get a home for her."

By this time I had had enough liver, so I went smelling round the little table where the old man kept a basin and pitcher of water, and like the perfect gentleman that he was, he got up, and gave me a drink. 17

Then I went to sleep. I was dreadfully tired, and I knew that I could trust those two men, so finding that the softest place was the middle of the old man's bed, I jumped up there and had a beautiful nap while they went on talking.

I didn't sleep very soundly, and as soon as the young man rose, I rose too. He stretched out a hand,

took me up gently, and put me in a nice, lined basket. Then he covered me up, and said "Good-bye!" to the old man.

I didn't like the basket, but I wasn't frightened. Soon I heard round me the roar of the street, then the jarring of an electric car. Then, after a good while, I felt that the young man was walking rapidly along another street.

In a few minutes he stopped short, opened one door, then another, and then the noise of the street fell away, and I heard other noises.

"Well, Mr. Green!" a woman's voice exclaimed, "here you are at last. Do give me whatever you have got. Two urgent calls are waiting. One for a mad dog in a yard on Tremont Street, which, of course, means a poor wretch which has been chased till he is foaming at the mouth, and another for a cat and kittens deserted in a cellar on Washington Street—Do hurry."

18

I felt some one take the basket and lift the cover.

"Oh! a kitten, and half Angora," and a pleasant-faced young lady looked down at me. "Well, she must go in the cat-room. Mercy!" and she slightly raised her voice.

I stared about me. I was in a kind of office. There was a large desk and many pictures of animals were on the walls. Then a nice, motherly-looking woman came in, took me up as if I had been a baby, and carried me into a hall, and up some stairs. She talked kindly to me all the way up, and presently she opened the door of a room, put me down gently, paused an instant or two to see what kind of a reception I met with, then went away.

19

I gazed about me. Where was I? Was it a party? I had never seen so many cats together, not even in the biggest yard congress on Beacon Hill.

The room was large and beautifully neat and clean. Around the walls were boxes and baskets, and in many of them cats lay asleep. Others walked about the room, some ran up to me—mostly young ones—and asked my name and where I came from.

I put up my back at first, but when I saw they were all kindly disposed, I put it down again.

"What is this place?" I asked, sitting down against the door.

"Why, this is a cats' home," said a young thing with a yellow face. "Have you never heard of it? Sick cats, lost cats, starved cats, bad cats, good cats, young cats and old cats are all brought here. You're kept several days, and if you're not claimed, you're mercifully destroyed, or else given away. I say, do you suppose you'll be claimed?"

"Be what?" I asked.

"Be claimed. Will your folks come to look for you? I wish mine would," and she gazed wistfully at the door.

20

"I believe they lost you on purpose," said a little white kitten spitefully.

My new friend had to box her ears for this, so I turned to another cat who was politely offering to show me around.

She pointed out the warmest sleeping places in the room, then she took me out through a little swinging door to the roof-garden.

Just fancy—a roof-garden for cats. I was delighted with it. There were little trees in boxes, and big pans of water, and a wire netting over all to keep the cats from running away.

"No boys could chase you here," I said.

"Oh, no," my new friend replied. "No one chases us. It is a lovely place, but still it has a serious drawback."

"A drawback," I repeated, "what is it?"

"You will see—just wait."

I have seen. I have found out that all these cats are homesick. Now bedtime has come, it is dreadful. They all look sad, and some of them are moaning in their sleep. They have all been used to human beings. Cat society is not good enough for them.

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Down below in the courtyard, for this is a dogs' home as well, we can hear the big animals crying out and howling. They are dreaming of their dear masters and mistresses. Oh! I hope Mrs. Darley knows about this sheltering home for animals, and that she will come in the morning to get me. Good night, dear father Piebald Prince, and Mother Dust-and-Ashes. I am not with you, but I hope you will sleep well, and not think about me. Good night, Serena, and Jimmy Dory. You are often provoking, but I love you both.

## CHAPTER III

### A SURPRISING CHANGE

22

Last night I thought I was in a queer place, but upon my word, to-night I am in a queerer; and I don't believe that in Boston there is a more puzzled or confused little cat than I am. Here I lie, curled up in a heap of soft, white fur and pink silk—I think it is an old opera cloak—that is carefully arranged in a big armchair near the bed where sleeps a pale, pretty little girl. I was the last thing that her eyes rested on before she went to sleep, and she wished me to be the first object before her when she awoke.

There is a dull fire burning in the grate with a wire guard before it. One of the windows is open, and soon the fire will go out and the room will be quite cold, but I won't mind it, wrapped as I am in this soft cloak.

Fixing my eyes on the few red coals, I am thinking over the events of the day. Let me begin from the first, for whenever we go out and come in again, my mother says, "Please tell me everything you have done since you left me," so that she has got her kittens in the habit of relating things, and thinking them over in a orderly way.

23

Last night I went to sleep in the big room in the Cats' Home. I hadn't a very comfortable night of course, but still I slept a good deal, and whenever I woke with a start I was glad to find myself in a place where no one could chase me.

Early in the morning I went out in the roof-garden. It was rather hard for the kittens to get out, for two old cats stationed themselves each side of the swinging door and boxed the ears of every kitten that passed. One boxed the right side, and one the left, but after it was over we didn't mind it much.

The most of us drank our milk out there. Such nice big dishes of it, the woman called "Mercy" brought to us.

As soon as breakfast time was over, we began to have callers—mostly ladies and children. Some wanted to find an old cat, some to find a new cat, some to get rid of a cat, some to give money to the cats; but they all wanted to see us.

24

It was very interesting to watch the actions of the pussies. They would look narrowly at the visitors. Then if they liked a lady or a child, they would circle round that particular person, and beg to be taken away.

I was sitting apart, watching the various groups about the big room, when a little girl came right up to the corner where I was alone.

"Here is a lovely, little pussy," she said in a sympathetic voice. "Pussy, don't you want to be adopted?"

"Meow!" I said doubtfully, for every minute I was hoping that Mrs. Darley would appear.

"Oh, mamma, mamma!" said the little girl, "I love this pussy with the black splash on her face. Mayn't I have her?"

A very pretty lady came up and looked at me kindly. "Certainly, Mary, if you are able to get her. There must be some good blood in her. See how long her fur is. I will speak to the secretary about her," and she went away.

25

The little girl remained, and continued to stroke and caress me. I did not respond very much. I was uneasy and troubled.

Soon her mamma came back. "Yes, Mary, you may have her, if no one claims her, but the secretary thinks from her actions that she has been a pet cat, so we had better give the owner a chance of finding her."

"Oh, mamma, I want this kitty, I want this kitty," said the little girl longingly. "Her little sorry face just suits me. I think I could make her happy," and she took me in her arms and petted me, until, for shame's sake, I had to purr a little, and rub my head against her.

Her mother stood looking at her smilingly. Then another person came along, a taller person, and stood gazing at us over her shoulder.

I gave a loud and joyful meow, and sprang forward. That was Mrs. Darley's lovely face.

Oh! how glad I was to see her! I went round and round her. I rubbed my body against her. I sprang on her shoulder. I just burrowed in the fur collar of her coat, till she laughed and put me down.

26

"Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Darley!" said the mother of the little girl.

"Why—Mrs. Denville!" exclaimed Mrs. Darley in surprise, "I did not see you. I was so taken up with my kitten. I lost her yesterday."

Little Mary's face was a study. She was trying hard not to be disappointed, but, in spite of herself, she could not help it.

"Oh, mamma, mamma," she said in an undertone, "I have lost my kitty."

Her mother looked at her, in the way my mother looks at her kittens when they want something and she is afraid she can't get it for them.

Then this lady—this Mrs. Denville—turned to my dear mistress. "This is my daughter, Mary," she said. "Your arrival has dashed her hopes to the ground. She was hoping to become the proud

27

possessor of this kitten."

"Was she?" replied Mrs. Darley in her good-humored way. "Come here, my dear, and shake hands with me. You are a kind little girl. I can see by your eyes. Now, suppose I were to give you this kitty?"

Mary's eyes danced with joy, but horror entered into my soul.

"You see," said Mrs. Darley, caressing my ears as she spoke, "I have so many cats. I can easily spare one, but I am rather particular about my pussies. I only give them to persons who will love them and treat them sensibly. Now, I have heard of you and your love for animals, and I am sure a cat would do well in your hands, so I will give you my young Black-Face, if you like."

Little Mary came slowly up to Mrs. Darley, and laid a hand on her arm. "If you give me that kitty," she said solemnly, "and I don't take good care of it, I hope the Lord will punish me."

Mrs. Darley smiled. "I don't think that there is any danger of your ill-treating an animal. Well, now I must go. I am glad that my wandering kitten was brought here. What a blessed thing it is, that there is this refuge for lost animals." 28

"And are you not going to take away a cat?" asked Mary gently.

"I don't think so," replied Mrs. Darley. "I have four at home. I suppose, though, I could take one, for five is my limit. I never keep more than that. Mercy," she said to the woman who had just come into the room, "have you any hopeless cases?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the woman, "there's that Jane," and she pointed to a gray cat in the corner. "She's got to be killed with the old cats, I think. She's ugly looking, and she's lame, and she won't take any trouble to make herself agreeable to strangers, and she gives the young kittens a dreadful time of it. She don't enjoy life herself, and she won't let any one else enjoy it."

"Jane," said Mrs. Darley, "come here."

Jane would not come.

"Poor Jane," said Mrs. Darley. "I wonder if I could soften that unhappy face. Mercy, I'll try her. Just put her in a basket, and I will take her home—now good-bye, Black-Face." 29

I was in a whirl of confused emotions. My dear mistress was going to leave me, and I was helpless. I was not strong enough to make her take me with her. I should never again see my dear father and mother and brother and sister. It seemed to me that my heart was breaking.

"Cheer up, Black-Face," whispered Mrs. Darley, for I had climbed on her shoulder, and had my head close against her face. "Cheer up. Partings are hard to bear, both for cats and human beings, but they are sometimes for our good. You will have a lovely home with that dear child—Good-bye."

She hugged me to her for a minute, then she resolutely put me down, and though I ran and cried after her, Mary and her mother held me back. Mrs. Darley went out of the room without me, and with that horrible Jane.

I was almost a crazy little cat, and Mary's eyes filled with tears as she listened to my cries. 30

"Perhaps, mamma," she said, "we ought not to keep her."

"She will get over her trouble," her mother replied; "try her for a few days."

They asked for another basket, and Mercy brought one, and I was put in it and carried out-of-doors.

Mrs. Denville's carriage was waiting for them, and we got in and were driven to their home—and let me think again how surprised I was when I found where their home is—scarcely a stone's throw from Mrs. Darley's. Mrs. Darley is on Mount Vernon Street, the Denvilles are on Beacon Street.

I know the whole neighborhood, and as soon as we arrived in the Denvilles' house, and little Mary took me up to her room and let me look out the window I was overcome with joy. Why, I could run home any day, and I began to be comforted.

"Now, Pussy," said Mary taking me on her lap, and sitting down by the window, "I want to talk to you. I am going to tell you all about myself, and I want you to listen attentively. My name is Mary Denville, and I am not a very strong little girl. I have a very weak back." 31

"Oh meow! meow! just like my mother," I interrupted.

Mary smiled. "I see you understand me. To continue, Pussy, my father is what is called a banker. He was born in Maine, but he went to California as a young man. He married there, and we lived there until a few years ago, he and I, and dear mamma. Then we came 'East' as Californians say, for I had spinal disease, and I had to be taken to New York to see some clever doctors. Then I got better, and mamma took me to Europe. Papa bought this house, and when we came home we established ourselves here. Do you think you will like me, Pussy?"

Her little face was so sweet and so wistful that I could not help saying, "Meow!" very gently to her.

She stroked me, and turned my head toward the window and pointed out nice things on the Common opposite us. "You see, this is a beautiful situation for a home," Mary went on, half to herself, half to me. "The snow has gone now, and one can see the grass and the dear little buds coming on the trees. Can you find that squirrel away over there on the tree branch, Pussy? His bright eyes are on me. All through the winter I fed him with nice nuts, and he is grateful. Some day I will carry you down to see him, but you must not chase him, Pussy." 32

She talked to me a long time about the Common, and the people on it—it was noon, and a great many were hurrying up to the hill to get their lunch—until at last some one opened the door.

"Lunch is ready, Miss Mary," I heard some one say, and looking round I saw an old woman.

"Very well, nurse," replied my little mistress, and getting up, she slipped me in the chair by the window.

"I do not dare to take you down-stairs so soon, Black-Face, for you might run away, but I will bring you up something nice."

I sat by the window, and watched the people outside, and dozed a while, until Mary came back with a tray for me. I jumped up then, and looked at it. It contained cream toast, a slice of chicken, and a saucer of milk. 33

I had a very nice lunch, then Mary said, "Now, what shall I do with you? My governess comes at three to give me some lessons. Would you like to go in the school-room, or would you rather stay here?"

I did not want to be left alone, so I mewed round her feet, and she took me up and carried me to another room.

There was a fire in it, and a table with books on it and some straight-backed chairs. I lay down on the fur rug by the grate, and soon went fast asleep, while Mary and a tall young lady talked about things that I did not in the least understand.

So our afternoon passed, then came dinner. I was dreadfully tired and sleepy by this time, and fell to nodding over my plate of turkey bones.

Soon after dinner, Mary's old nurse put her to bed. First, though, the little girl chose the most comfortable chair in the room for me, drew it close to her bed and wrapped me in this cloak. Here I lie, curled up comfortably, half asleep and half awake, and, as I say, very puzzled and confused. Am I going to be happy here, away from my parents? What shall I do to amuse myself all day? There is not another cat in sight. I thought I heard dogs in the basement. I smelt them, anyway. I hate dogs. Well, I must go to sleep. It won't do any good to lie awake bothering about the future. Oh, how comfortable I am! My poor old mother—I wish she could have had a nice cloak like this to sleep on, when she was a poor homeless cat, crouching in the shelter of a fence to keep herself from the cold rain. Why can't all cats have nice homes? Aren't there enough homes to go round? I saw a cat on the Common this afternoon—very thin, and dirty, and skulking from tree to tree looking for scraps. Why am I wrapped in a fur cloak, and why is she out in the cold? Am I a better cat than she is? Probably not. I am called a naughty kitten. My brain is quite tired from thinking about things. I will go to sleep. 34 35

## CHAPTER IV

### I VISIT MY FAMILY

36

To-day I had quite an experience.

I have been in the Denvilles' family just three days, and the more I see of my young mistress the more I like her.

Actually, I have not done one bad thing since I came. My little mistress keeps me with her all the time. Her company is a great satisfaction to me, and a great safeguard. If some bad animals were allowed to be more in the society of the human beings they love, they also would improve.

Well, I have been closely watched to see that I did not run away. I have been even taken in the carriage to drive. Little Mary got an old muff of her mother—a huge, soft thing, and when we go out, she puts me in it. Oh! what fun I have sitting on the seat beside Mary, and staring at all the queer things in the streets. So many of them I have never seen before, and Mary explains them to me as politely as if I were a human being. Her nurse went with us one day, and her mamma went the other days.

37

On account of little Mary's delicate health she is always kept out-of-doors in the morning, while the sun is nice and warm, and she does lessons in the afternoon.

This morning when we started to drive she said, "Black-Face, suppose we go and call on your relatives?"

Now, I thought this was a perfectly sweet thing for her to say, so I mewed my approval, and Mary spoke to her nurse, and the nurse told the coachman to drive us to Mrs. Darley's.

Oh! how my heart beat when I saw that big green hall door. Just as soon as Gerty, the house-maid, opened it, I sprang out of the carriage and was into the house like a flash. Up the steps, and into the sitting-room I went. There they were, all on the window-seat—all the dear cats basking in the warm spring sunlight. I jumped in the midst of them. Didn't I give them a fright!

My dear mother uttered a little cry, my father drew himself up severely, and Serena forgot her fine manners for once, and gave me a smart cuff.

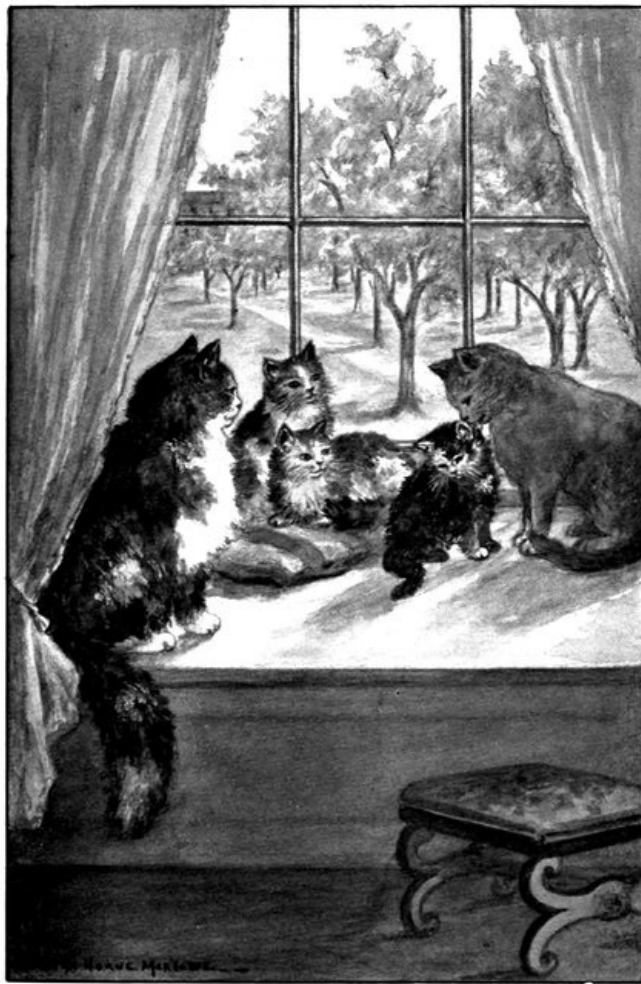
38

"Isn't that like Black-Face?" mewed Jimmy Dory; "but I'll make her say, 'I beg pardon,'" and he took me round the neck by his two paws till I squealed.

"Well, my dear kitten," said my father, when we had all got ourselves straightened out, "how are you, and how are you getting on?"

This was a very proud moment for me. Of course I had been dreadfully homesick away from them all, but still it was worth going through everything to come back and be treated with so much consideration. They were all actually sitting around, waiting for me to speak. Now that had never happened to me before in my short life, and I licked my lips, and tried to speak slowly so as to make the pleasure last.

"To begin with," I drawled, "I have nearly died of loneliness away from you all."



"MY MOTHER BEGAN TO POLISH OFF MY HEAD."

"Oh, quit that," said Jimmy Dory. "Tell us about your adventures. We saw the boy grab you, now go on. Mrs. Darley didn't tell half enough when she came from the cats' home." 39

I began from the beginning. I told them about the bad boys and the good old man, and the good young one, and the cats' home, and dear little Mary Denville. Then I said anxiously, "Have you missed me?"

No one said a word, but my mother began to polish off my head, just as she had done every day since I was a tiny kitten. Indeed, the first thing I remember was my mother licking the top of my head. Just now, she polished off one ear, she polished off the other, she made me lower my head so she could get at the back of my neck, and as she licked, I was comforted. My dear mother had missed me, if the others hadn't.

My father was clearing his throat. "Well, you see," he said with a proud, approving glance at me, "cats are attached to their offspring, but they are well pleased to see them settled in life—comfortably settled, I mean. Now I should say that, your first catastrophe over, you had fallen on your feet. The Denvilles' establishment is a very fine one." 40

"Are you happy there?" purred my mother in my ear.

"Now I am," I mewed softly. "At first I was dreadfully miserable——" Then I raised my voice. "I am not complaining," I said, addressing my father. "That would be ungrateful. Why, I am first in the affections of my little mistress. I believe she likes me better than she does her parents."

"Hem! hem!" growled my father doubtfully, while Serena and Jimmy Dory burst out laughing.

"Well, anyway," I said in some confusion, "she just surrounds me with comfort from morning till night. She never leaves me. I go everywhere with her, and there is not another cat about the place."

"Then there must be dogs," cried Jimmy Dory promptly, "and we all love dogs—oh! yes!"

"Yes, there are dogs," I returned snappishly, "but they were kept away from me at first so they wouldn't frighten me." 41

"How many of the detestable creatures have you?" inquired Serena grandly, and she threw up her head, and looked at me as if she had glasses on. It is her usual trick. She thinks it is smart to pretend that she has a pair of spectacles over the bridge of her nose. She knows it makes me feel small and kittenish, and as if I don't know anything.

"There are two," I said, "and I have got used to them already. They are the two best dogs that were ever made."

"You speak in superlatives, my dear child," purred Serena elegantly. "What breed are the creatures?"



"One is a tiny spaniel," I replied crossly, "and one is a St. Bernard."

"The two breeds I most dislike," murmured Serena. "How tiresome, I shall not be able to go to see you."

"Don't mind her," purred my mother in my ear. "She and Jimmy have been contrary and nervous since you left. They miss you very much, and so does your dear father."

"By the way," I said, "what became of the cat Mrs. Darley brought home to take my place? 'Jane' she called her."

"Oh! that vulgar creature," exclaimed Serena elevating her nose. "We soon chased her down-stairs. She undertook to fight, but I settled her."

"She is happier in the kitchen," murmured my mother. "She is a peculiar cat."

"What do you get to eat at your house?" inquired Jimmy Dory suddenly, and smacking his lips as he spoke.

"Oh, delicious things," I replied; "cream, and nice little bits of fish, and cheese, and meat just as tender as possible, and French bread and—I forget the other things."

"If that is all you have not quite as much of a variety as you had here," remarked Serena loftily.

The tears came in my eyes. If I had not been such a bad little kitten perhaps Serena would have thought more of me.

"Go kiss her," whispered my mother in her sweet, rough voice.

That voice always overcomes me. It is hoarse, because she has always a sore throat, caught from being out-of-doors so much in the cold.

I stepped firmly across Jimmy Dory to the place where Serena lay lashing her tail in the sunshine. Then I bent over her, and licked one of her pretty paws.

That pleased her. Serena would like to be a queen of cats. She didn't say a word. She didn't speak of forgiving me for going away, or coming to see me, but she lay and looked at the spot I had licked. That meant that she did really forgive me. Serena knew I loved her, but she always said I made her nervous.

"Come, have a wrestle," exclaimed Jimmy Dory, and he bit my tail to make me spring after him. We were having a glorious rough and tumble game, when Mrs. Darley and Mary came into the room. My first impulse was to run to Mary, and I did.

She was in an ecstasy. "Why, she likes me, the dear little creature!" she said catching me up. "She wants to go home with me. I was afraid that she would want to stay with her parents."

I looked back at them. I wanted to stay, and yet I didn't. I had got out into the world, and it was interesting.

My mother and father and Jimmy Dory gazed curiously at little Mary, but they did not get up to speak to her. They cared nothing for her. Mrs. Darley was their mistress, and their eyes rested lovingly on her—but Serena went up and smelt the rich fur on her coat.

"Cats are very comfortable creatures," said my little mistress, fondling me. "They don't worry us, and they creep up to us when we are in trouble."

My dear little mistress—how could I run away from her—and to-day, as she was about to leave Mrs. Darley's, I nestled very closely in her arms.

"Good-bye, pussies," she said politely to the window-seat—"Good-bye, Mrs. Darley—and now, Black-Face, we must get out in the sunshine, or nurse will be impatient."

I mewed apologetically to my family. My mother's eyes rested on me, followed me down-stairs, were fixed on me through the window as I was taken into the carriage. They are very speaking eyes. She didn't want me to leave her. She was telling me to take care of myself, to be cautious with the dogs, to come soon again to see her. Oh, I read a great deal in those eyes!

Mother cats must suffer a good deal.

After we left Mrs. Darley's this morning, Mary and I had a lovely drive. Then we came home for lunch, and had lessons in the afternoon.

Mary was considerably worried about the cat on the Common. This afternoon there was a sharp wind, and when Mary saw her come out toward dusk, and go skulking from tree to tree as her habit is, she got one of the maids to go out with some food in a basket.

The poor cat ran like the wind, and Mary's face fell. No one can catch her. There would be no use in sending the good agent after her who caught me, for we would not know where to tell him to go.

I made up my mind what I would do when I saw how my little mistress was grieved. I would get that cat for her. So this evening after dinner, when Mary went into the library to have a little chat with her papa, I slipped out in the hall. If I could get out through that big hall door I would be able to run out on the Common. I hid behind a curtain and waited. Soon a ring came at the door bell.

The young man-servant, Anthony, came sauntering through the hall. He opened the door, took a note from a boy, and while he was looking at the address, and the boy was looking at him, I crept by them both.

Neither saw me, and I sprang down the steps, across the pavement, into the street, over the other sidewalk, and down more steps to the Common. Oh, how dark and cold it was in spite of the bright

lights sparkling everywhere! How different from the Denvilles' warm house. Was I frightened? No, I was not. Something rose in me—something that was all joy. I loved the darkness, because it was like a big, safe covering over me. Boys could not see me now, nor dogs, and I could see them. I was not a bit afraid, but I was cold, and I would like to finish my work, and get into the house again.

"Meow! meow!" I said tentatively, and I walked toward the pond. The strange pussy was not there. "Meow!" I said again, and I went toward a big elm that was a favorite hiding-place of hers.

She did not answer me, and I had to conceal myself for a minute, until two young men passed.

For a long time I went from tree to tree, but there was not a sound. Then I gave up calling and, crouching on all fours behind a seat, I began to talk cat talk to myself. "I wish I could find that poor creature. I would like to do something for her. If she knew what a good home I could lead her to, she would come to me. Oh! meow! meow! I am so sorry for her."

I paused for an instant to listen to a distant fire-alarm, then I got up and began to stretch myself. I might as well go home. Just then, I thought I heard a faint sound.

"Meow!" I said encouragingly.

"Meow!" said a very small voice, a very small, thin voice.

"Meow!" I said more loudly. "Don't be afraid. I am only a kitten. Meow! meow!"

She would not come to me, and I began to investigate. There she was under the shadow of the bank, a crouching, gray creature, too terrified to move, and yet all ready to spring away.

"I'm only a kitten," I said again—"a this spring's kitten. Don't be so frightened. Have boys chased you?"

"The hull world chases me," she said in a faint voice.

"Well, I won't chase you. Can't you come nearer?"

"Nop."

"Are you hungry?" I asked, keeping my distance.

"Not very. I had a sparrow yesterday. It was dumpish, and fell out of a tree."

"My little mistress has been watching you from her window," I said. "She sent some food out to you to-day, but you ran away."

"I was scared," said the cat shiveringly. "I thought the woman wanted to put me in that basket."

"Suppose she had. She would have carried you to a good home."

"A man put me in a basket onct, and took me home. Then he tried to murder me, but I hopped out the window," she said in a dreadful voice.

"Well, no one in our house would try to kill you. I would like to do something for you. Will you follow me home?"

"Oh, no! no!" she said gaspingly. "I ain't got no acquaintance with you."

I was silent for a few seconds, planning what to do for her. I could not see her very plainly, for she kept herself well in the background, but I could see enough to make me half sick with pity. She was skin and bone, and her eyes were the most terrified things I had ever seen.

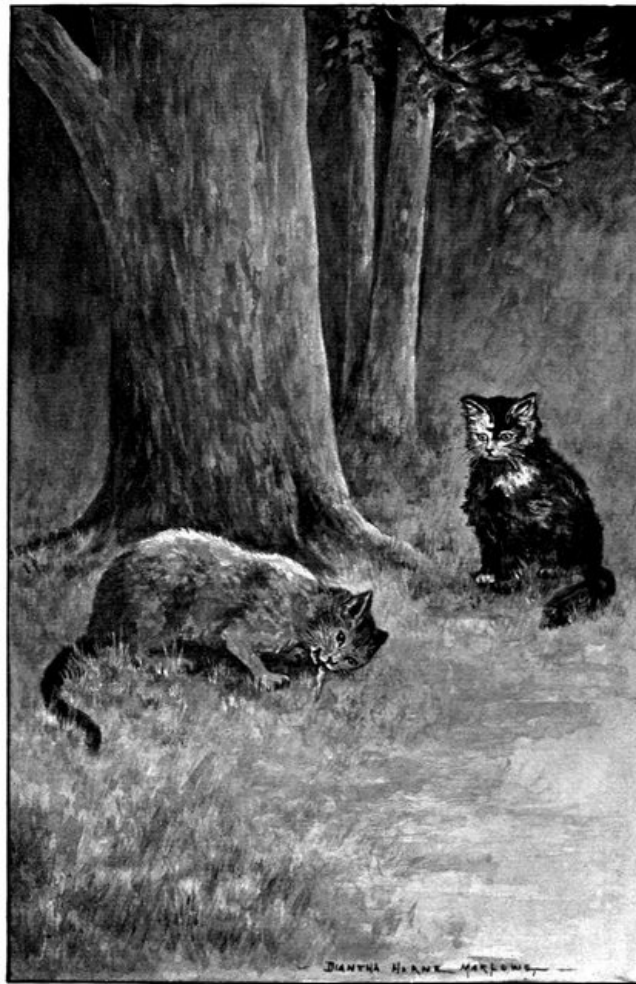
"Will you wait here a few minutes?" I said at last. "I know where I can get you a nice chicken bone. I'll run and find it, and come to you as quickly as I can."

"I never had no chicken bones," she said faintly.

"Don't move then, and I'll get you one," I returned, and I sped away.

Thinking it over, I wonder now I had patience—I, who am supposed to be so impatient—to go back to the house, to wait till the door was opened, and then to sneak in, find the bone that I had secreted in a corner of Mary's room, seize it in my mouth, skulk down-stairs, wait for another ring at the bell, and dash out again.

Well, I did it, and I laid the bone down near the cat. Then I went off a little way, and one of the most beautiful sounds I have heard so far in my short life was her hungry teeth crunching that bone. There was a good deal of meat on it, and of course she ate that first, but the bone went too. She put her head first on one side then on the other, till she cracked it all to pieces.



“SHE PUT HER HEAD FIRST ON ONE SIDE THEN ON THE OTHER, TILL SHE CRACKED IT ALL TO PIECES.”

“Did that taste nice?” I asked, when she had finished.

She gratefully licked her lips. “It's the first square meal I ever had.”

“Do you call that square?” I asked in dismay. “Why, it's only a first course. But I can't bring you any more to-night. Will you wait here to-morrow night for me?”

“I don' know,” she said timidly.

“Please come,” I said. “I'll bring you a nice piece of meat, maybe beefsteak.”

Her mouth watered, and I saw I had conquered her.

“Will you come alone?” she asked.

“Yes, stark alone. Now, good night. My young mistress will be anxious, if she misses me.”

She didn't say good night. She hadn't any manners, but what could one expect from such a poor creature—and she didn't talk nicely. She is a common, low-down thing, but is that any reason why she should be left to starve? She is just as good as I am in one way, and thinking over the matter, as I sit dozing here in my big chair, I am glad that I went to see her. I will be sure to go again to-morrow.

Little Mary is coming up-stairs. I just got home in time. Poor Common cat. I wonder how you will sleep?

## CHAPTER V

### THE CAT ON THE COMMON

53

For some nights I have been so tired that the instant I jumped up on my opera cloak I went right to sleep. No time for thought, no time for a little cat to review the events of her day, and wonder whether she had done right or wrong, and whether she had made a simpleton of herself, or whether she had been very wise.

However, there is no need for me to indulge in wonderment. I am a foolish, light-hearted, selfish, mischievous kitten. I have always heard that from my birth, from dear Serena, and I know it without her telling me. My mother has always praised me, but I see through her. She is so good that she wants to make me good too, and when I hear my mother praising any one, cat, dog, or human being, it always makes me suspicious of that creature. The less it deserves praise, the more she gives it. However, I must not dwell on my badness. I do not imagine it has a good effect upon me. I will think over the one really kind thing that I believe I have done in the course of my short life. Perhaps I did not do it in the best way—however, I did it, and to my great joy I sit here dozing and dreaming, and occasionally opening my eyes to look at that Common cat, who, at the present moment, is under Mary's bed, sound asleep.

54

Yes, I got her here, but it was hard work. How care pulls one down. I declare, I have been just worn out with anxiety and secrecy. I hate to do things slyly. Now for days I have had to manœuvre. First to hide some of my food, then to get it out to the cat.

The night after my first interview with her, all went well. I secured a lovely piece of Porterhouse steak. I carried it down-stairs, I hid with it behind the curtain. There were a good many rings at the bell that night, and I had no trouble in getting out, and no trouble in getting in. The Common cat was in her place behind the bench with her eyes shining like hungry stars.

55

She tore at the food, and I watched her with my own mouth watering in sympathy. When she had finished, she licked her lips and washed her face, and muttered enjoyably, "That's the stuff!"

It gave me a warm feeling round my heart to see her so satisfied, and bidding her to be in the same place the next night I ran home.

The next night I had a dreadful time, a horrible time. It was raining cats and dogs, as the saying is, only I never saw them. There were very few rings at the bell, but at last one came after I had been crouching for half an hour under the thick curtain before the door of the reception-room.

As I slipped out the front door carrying a tea biscuit in my mouth, which was the only thing I had been able to hide that day, I could hear my dear young mistress calling me to come to bed. That was enough to make me nervous, and then I kept dropping the biscuit, and it got soggy in the rain, and by the time I got to the poor cat, I was, to tell the truth, just a little bit out of temper.

56

"There, you see," I said, almost throwing the biscuit at her, "I haven't anything nice for you. Whereas if you would come in the house, and throw yourself on the mercy of my young mistress, I assure you that she would find a good home for you."

"Oh, I dassen't," said the poor cat in a terrified way.

I silently watched her eat the biscuit, then I shook the rain drops off myself, and started for the house.

Alas! the door was shut, and kept shut. I crouched close up to it, and mewed as loudly as I could, for, to my grief, I could hear Mary and the servants inside calling, "Pussy! Pussy!"

They did this at intervals for an hour or two.

Then I heard Mr. Denville's deep voice by the hall door. "Tell the child to go to bed. Her cat is coiled up somewhere asleep, and does not want to be disturbed. She will appear in the morning."

"Oh, papa!" I heard in a well-known, tearful voice, and I knew that little Mary was calling to him over the stair railing, "my kitty wouldn't stay away from me, if she heard me call. Something has happened to her."

57

"Perhaps she has been stolen," said Mrs. Denville to her husband.

"Oh! why don't they open the door," I thought to myself. "How stupid they are!"

By this time I was very uncomfortable. My long hair was dripping with rain drops, and I was shivering with cold.

Just when my need was sorest, I heard to my delight a command in the familiar deep voice, "Open the door, Anthony, and look outside."

Mr. Denville was really a very clever man. As Anthony opened the door, I sprang inside. I just rushed up-stairs, and wet and bedraggled as I was, my dear little mistress caught me in her arms.

I was dried by the fire, and put to bed, and next morning at the breakfast table there was a great deal of talk about "Pussy," and how she got out-of-doors.

58

"She never, never would go out herself," said little Mary shaking her pretty head as she ate her boiled egg. "Never, mamma. Black-Face hates the street. Some naughty person must have stolen her, and she ran away from him, and came back home. Oh! how I shall watch her after this."

I was sitting close by her feet under the breakfast table, and her decision filled me with dismay. How was I to get food to the poor Common cat that night?

I could not do it. I was not left alone for one instant, and the food I hid and tried to take under the bed, was found and thrown to the sparrows.

I was in a fine plight. However, I had to go to bed, and sleep as well as I could.

The next night, which was to-night, I had better luck. Mary's back was turned for a few minutes after dinner. I ran like a fox to the hall, and got behind the curtain. During the day I had managed to put a little piece of mutton there. Not a very large piece for a well-fed cat, but a good hearty meal for a cat that didn't know what it was to go to bed with a full stomach.

59

This evening there were plenty of rings at the bell, and I soon slipped out. To my surprise, the big St. Bernard watch dog, Mona, who is usually in the back yard, was sitting on the steps close to the door.

The dogs are very friendly to me, both this big one and the little one, who is called Dolly. I acted a little silly at first, and used to put up my back whenever I saw them, but this big creature came up to me one day, and said, "You little simpleton, put your back down. I am here to protect you. If any dog sprang at you, I would shake him till he didn't know whether he was a dog or a door-mat. You might as well be friends," and she touched me with her great muzzle.

After that we were friends, and seeing her on the step this evening gave me courage, until I reflected that the size of her great body would frighten the poor Common cat to death, if she should see her. So I would not enter into conversation, but stepped softly down the steps, carrying the mutton between my teeth.

60

Mona stretched out her thick neck, and sniffed at me. "You foolish cat, are you going through the street with that bait in your mouth? Something will catch you."

"Nothing will," I said in a voice muffled by the mutton, and I went on toward the Common.

Mona followed me slowly. What was I to do? I turned, and instead of going right on the Common, went deliberately down Beacon Street toward Charles Street.

We must have looked rather ridiculous. I can't help laughing when I think of it. I—a small-sized cat—walking solemnly along the middle of the street, holding the piece of meat, and the huge dog stepping carefully after me.

When we got to Charles Street, I turned to the right. Then I suddenly sprang back, flew to the Common, and ran up the hill again.

I am a pretty swift runner, but that dreadful dog kept me in sight, and at last I stopped. I did not dare to go near the cat with this big creature in tow.

61

Opposite the house we both sat down on the gravel walk of the Common, and stared at each other. Mona was panting heavily. Her fur is so long and thick that she gets hot in a flash.

"You're up to some mischief," she said crossly. "Cats are sly anyway."

I laid the piece of mutton between my paws. "Cats are not sly. They are hunted and chased, and have to act sly—but in reality they are as open and honest as dogs."

"Very well," she said sarcastically, "it's a matter of opinion."

"Are you going to tag me all night?" I inquired teasingly.

"Yes, I am."

I repeated an aggravating rhyme I know.

"Tig-tag, rig-a-jag,  
Get your news and put in a bag.  
Watch your neighbor, spin a tale,  
You'll earn your name without any fail."

Mona didn't care for this, but merely went on licking her paws.

She looked very handsome, as she lay on the path in the electric light. She has a lovely yellow and white body, and big brown eyes. I gazed all round the Common, at the walks, and the people, and the trees, and the glitter of lights in the fine buildings on Tremont Street. It was a beautiful spring evening, and the air was like balm, but my heart was full of trouble. How was I to get rid of the big dog?

62

"Spy, spy, open your eye,  
Something nice is going by,"

I said tantalizingly.

Mona never looked at me. She has a great deal of dignity, and she just went on licking her paws. I could not insult her.

What should I do? Something flashed into my mind—a saying of my mother. "When you are in the midst of difficulties, Black-Face, and don't know which way to turn, nothing will help you like telling the truth to some kind friend."

"Mona," I said abruptly, "I want you to help me."

"That's what I'm doing," she said shortly.

"You're not," I said petulantly. "You're bothering me."

"I was told to watch you, foolish kitten," she said, "and I'm going to do it."

63

"You were told to watch me," I repeated in astonishment. "Who told you to do it?"

"Mr. Denville. He said, 'Mona, good dog, there is some mystery about that little cat's disappearance. Every evening when it gets dark, I want you to take up your position on the front door-step. See that no suspicious person gets in or out.'"

I was very much interested. "I suppose if any bad man stole me, and put me in his pocket, you would smell me."

"I'd smell one of your hairs," said Mona calmly. "What's a dog's scent for? You've got a nose of your own. You understand."

"Yes, I do," I said. Then I went on, "Mona, no one tried to steal me."

"I know that," she said coolly. "You're up to some mischief of your own, and I'm going to find out what it is."

"I'll tell you," I said, and I went close up to her, and sat between her great paws. "Don't touch that mutton, Mona; it's for my friend. Have you ever seen that poor homeless cat here on this Common?"

"Yes, I've seen her."

"You have never chased her?"

"When I chase sick cats I'll have less to do than I have now," said Mona contemptuously.

"Well," I went on, "she is dreadfully unhappy, and almost starved. Little Mary has worried so much about her, that I resolved to do something to ease her mind, and lately I've been running out with scraps for the homeless creature. Yesterday our little mistress caught sight of her from her window, and she was so pleased, for she noticed that the poor wretch did not look so thin. 'I do believe,' she said joyfully, 'that the Common cat has found a friend.'"

"Why don't you bring her to the house?" asked Mona suspiciously.

"She won't come. She is fearful of everything. If she saw you, she would be frightened to death."

"Why doesn't Miss Mary come out and coax her in?"

"She has tried, Mona. The cat is shy beyond description, and runs away from human beings, and all this time she is waiting for her supper," and I looked at the piece of mutton.

"I'm going to keep you in sight," said Mona doggedly.

I didn't know what to do, and had to stop and think for a while.

"Mona," I said at last, "I know you like to please our little mistress. Now, give me one chance. You go down to the corner of Charles Street, where the poor cat can't see you, or smell you, and I will go to her with this piece of meat. I will say, 'This is the last scrap I can bring you. I am watched, and after to-night I shall not be able to come out. I am deceiving my little mistress, and deception is hateful to me. If you won't follow me to the house, where I assure you you will meet with a warm welcome, I must leave you to your fate.'"

"I hate deception, too," said Mona getting up, "and in order to please you, I must disobey Mr. Denville, for he told me not to let you out of my sight. However, for this once I will give in, but mind, no cat tricks. If you come out one more night, I'll dog you wherever you go."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, Mona," I said, and I bounded away while she sauntered slowly down Beacon Street, went round the corner, and sat on Charles Street.

I knew she would keep her word, but I must not make her wait too long. If Mr. Denville came to the door, and found her away he would be annoyed, and Mona could not explain. If he should send Anthony in search of her, and she was discovered away down at the corner, she would be in disgrace. Mona was really doing a great deal for me, and Mr. Denville was doing a great deal for me in having Mona on the front steps. Usually she was strictly forbidden to go there, for she was so large that the Denvilles were afraid she would terrify callers. She was such a noble creature that Mr. Denville knew she understood perfectly well whatever he told her to do. Yes, Mona was very good, and I thought of her every minute as I rushed toward my poor friend's hiding-place. I did hope that Mr. Denville would have gentleman callers, so that he would not think about the task he had set his dog.

When I look back on this evening I wonder that my strength held out—my strength and my patience. I had a trying time with Mona. I had a worse one with the cat. In fact, I had a horrible time. Of course I could not get a word into her ear till she ate her meat. Her table manners were atrocious, and when she was eating she cracked her jaws and growled to herself, and was absolutely deaf and dumb to every sound but that of her own eating.

She knew I was on guard, so she did not listen for noises but gave herself up to enjoyment.

Well, when she finished, I began to speak hurriedly. At first she would not hear a word of my plan. No, no, she would stay on the Common and die.

"You'll miss your victuals," I said sharply.

Actually the only way to approach her was through her appetite. I drew glowing pictures of the Denvilles' table. She asked if they had any mice.

"No, no," I said, "not a mouse." Then I perceived I had offended her. She said she liked mice and rats better than anything else.

I shuddered, but I kept on with my coaxing. "I'll tell you what you can do," I said. "You can try it.

Keep in my shadow to-night, creep in the front door, come up-stairs, and get under the bed. If you don't like it, to-morrow night I'll get you out again."

"I'd rather try the yard," she said very unexpectedly.

I was so pleased that I did not know what to do. She was giving way. She was actually thinking about coming; but there were dogs in the yard, Mona and the spaniel slept there in beautiful kennels.

I paused a minute, and she said sharply, "Be there dogs there?"

Now, just here, I did a dreadful thing. I was so anxious to get her that I told a lie. If I had had time to think about it, I wouldn't have done it. But her question was sprung on me, and before I knew what I was saying my wicked little tongue had just tripped off the words, "No, we have no dogs."

I was punished though, and pretty quickly too. She looked dreadfully disappointed, and muttered, "Dogs is a purtection agin cats. Cats always licks me, an' you kin run from dogs, but cats is as quick as you be."

"Oh, forgive me, forgive me," I cried, "we have got dogs—two of the noblest creatures that ever lived."

She turned very quickly toward me—the ghostly-looking creature under the bench—"Then you've bin lyin'."

"I've only told one lie," I said pitifully, "only one little lie. I was so anxious to please you."

"Was that lies about what ye hev to eat?" she went on shrewdly.

"No, no," I repeated desperately; "everything was true, but the dog part. If you come, you'll see for yourself."

She still held out. She settled down under the seat as if she were going to stay there all night, and I grew desperate. Mona would get tired of her long wait.

"I'll have to go," I said. "Oh, do come, do come and see what a lovely little mistress I have. Why, she will pet you like a baby."

The strange cat said nothing. She just sat there, and with tears in my eyes I turned to leave her.

"If—if I possibly can," I said over my shoulder, "I'll try to come out to you occasionally and bring you something, but I may not be able to do so. Oh! how I hate to leave you."

I suppose she felt gratified at my reluctance to go, but she said nothing. Poor soul! I suppose her feelings are deadened.

I was creeping slowly and sadly away, when I heard just one tiny sound behind me. Something was touching the gravel softly.

I turned round. She was following me. I could have screamed at the top of my voice for joy, but I stifled the sound that was struggling to come up my throat. Something told me to go on and not notice her.

I did, and she kept on after me. I crept up the steps to the street and looked back—she was still behind. I waved my tail encouragingly, I did not dare to mew, for some people were coming up the sidewalk. I ran across the street to our own pavement, and she came stealing after me.

Then I hid down in the corner by the yard gate. I don't know where she went. I thought I had lost her, and my heart sank into my paws. I was perfectly exhausted, and I had had all my trouble for nothing.

I closed my tired eyes for an instant. I am only a kitten, and I had endured enough to tire an old cat.

Something glided near me. I started. There she was, not touching me, not speaking, but as far from me as she could get in the obscurity of the gate leading to the yard.

We sat there a long time, neither moving nor looking at each other. Every instant I was afraid that I should see Mona coming up the street, but the good old creature did not come. Finally, a carriage drove up to the door, and some ladies in evening dresses got out. I remembered now, hearing the servants say that there was to be a dinner-party this evening.

I glanced significantly at my poor friend. We two had a splendid chance to get in alongside of those light skirts. I went first, and the Common cat followed me. What nerve she had, when she once made up her mind to do a thing.

In two minutes we had glided up under little Mary's bed. "Lie down quickly," I said, "and by and by I will get you something more to eat."

Then I sprang out, for I could hear Mary calling, "Pussy, Pussy, come to bed. Pussy, where are you?"

She was not worried about me, for she knew that Mona was watching, and she felt sure that I was somewhere in the house. Then she had had a little friend in to spend the afternoon and part of the evening with her, so she had not missed me.

Now the little girl had gone, and Mary was getting ready for bed. I lay down on my chair. I was so tired that I did not know what to do, but I must not forget the poor thing under the bed. Her appetite was not satisfied yet.

After a while Mary went to sleep, and I crept down-stairs. The rooms were all lighted, and the doors were open, so I had no trouble in getting to the pantry. Later on, lovely things to eat were going to

be served. I stole a sandwich when no one was looking, and ran up-stairs with it.

"How are you?" I asked, after I had crept under the bed, and dropped it before the poor cat.

She did not reply till she had disposed of the sandwich, then she said sulkily, "It smarts me tongue—I want water."

"Come to Mary's bath-room," I said, "no one will see you."

"I ain't afraid," she said calmly. "There's no one goin' to bite here."

"Now," I said triumphantly, "aren't you glad you came?"

She gave me a queer look, and, without saying a word, lapped a little water, and went under the bed—and here I sit, dead tired, nearly asleep, but so happy that I don't know what to do. That poor dear, unmannerly thing is safe. Safe from dogs, and cats, and persecution, and hunger. No one will ever hurt her again. She will get sleek and fat in some good home. I hope she has no disease. Oh, dear! what a frightful thought—suppose I should bring anything dreadful home to my dear little mistress!

I will just crawl under the bed and ask her.

"Please, stranger, have you any disease?"

"No," she says grumpily, "I haven't been living with humans for a year."

"That is all right," and now I think of it I have never smelt any sickness about her. She is only thin and dirty. "Good night, pussy stranger. I hope you will sleep well."

She doesn't hear me. Perhaps she has already dropped off. Oh! I wonder what dear little Mary will say to her, and how I shall introduce them.



## CHAPTER VI

### MY FIRST FIGHT

75

Aren't things queer in this world? It seems as if cats can't plan ahead very much.

All night I dreamed of the poor Common cat. This morning when I woke up I began to worry about introducing her to little Mary. My head ached with the effort. I have never had any business to do in my life. My parents have always done everything for me. Actually, I have been started in the world with about only one instruction from my mother, and that is not to lie. Perhaps it is as good an equipment for the battle of life as a little cat could have. I don't know. I suppose I shall find out.

Well, I must bring my Common cat story up to date in my mind. I have been utterly astonished and confounded by her actions. Let me think over what happened this morning.

I woke up early. I find that a care in a cat's mind will send her to sleep late, and wake her up betimes. I had to think about getting my friend's breakfast before any one was astir, for I supposed she would be too terrified to come from under the bed.

76

I ran down to the basement. The cook was getting breakfast and there was plenty of food lying about. I found two nice little broiled kidneys. I just had to taste a little bit myself, it was so good. Then I ran like a fox up-stairs.

No one met me. The servants were all in the rooms, sweeping and dusting and getting things ready for the family. Soon the Denvilles would be coming down, for they are not lazy people.

I bounded in Mary's room. I went under the bed, the cat was not there. I dropped the kidneys in a terrible fright. I crept softly round the room. I ran out in the hall, I went up-stairs and down, and at intervals I kept coming back to the bedroom. Where was my poor friend?

At last, I pulled myself up short. I was getting dazed, and I was depending too much on my eyes, as a kitten is apt to do. I went back to the bed and smelt. She had been here recently. I lifted my head. The air was still full of Common cat suggestions. I followed my nose, and now just let me think of my utter surprise and consternation—There was the Common cat curled up on *my* chair, in the midst of *my* opera cloak.

77

I was very angry. I say it with shame. She was in my place—usurping the attention of my young mistress, for there lay little Mary, wide awake, her head resting on her arm, her face turned toward the cat on the chair, a smile of utter beatitude playing about her lips.

She was afraid of frightening the newcomer, but she need never be afraid of that. I have made a discovery. The Common cat is not shy—she is bold. That is, she is shy with enemies, but bold with friends. Or perhaps I should say, sneaky. She would not have jumped up on that chair, if I had been in the room. She took advantage of my absence.

Perhaps I did wrong to be angry, but it was an awful blow to find her on my soft bed. I sprang right up beside little Mary. I tucked my head under her arm, and she stroked and caressed me.

78

"Oh, you dear thing—you are so sweet and generous. You don't mind that strange cat being in your chair one bit."

"Meow! meow!" I cried angrily, "I do."

Mary was so taken up with the other cat that she never minded me, but went on absently patting my head, and looking at that creature that was pretending to be asleep.

"How did she get here, Black-Face—did you bring her in?—Oh! isn't it lovely. Why, I never heard of such a thing as that poor, shy cat coming right into a house. I would just like to hug her."

"You needn't be afraid," I growled, "she wouldn't mind. But still I hope you won't. I'm your cat," and I tried to get between her and the stranger.

Mary laughed, and rubbed her face against my fur. "You darling thing. Now I know you did lead her in, for you are trying to push me toward her, and you weren't a bit surprised to see her here."

79

I sprang off the bed. What was the use of being bad, when your little mistress was so good that she turned your worst actions into kind ones. With a very sad heart, I crept out in the hall—and, do you know, I had scarcely got out of sight, before I heard a deceitful "meow," from that creature by the bed.

She was trying to ingratiate herself with little Mary, and for a few minutes, I had the pleasure of hearing nothing but sweet pussy talk from them both.

"Poor pussy, pussy, pussy," Mary would say, then the Common cat would reply, "Meow! meow!" and then I knew Mary was scratching her head for her. In fact, I was mean enough to peep in through the crack of the door. It made me sick, and after a time I could not stand it, so I crept down-stairs.

One of the housemaids shook her broom at me, so I went down, down, till I got to the yard.

There was Mona sitting by her kennel, and looking as big and handsome as ever. "By the way," I said to myself, "I ought to thank her for her kindness to me last night," so I walked slowly up to her, and said, "Good morning, Mona."

80

"Good morning," she said kindly.

"I am ever so much obliged to you for what you did last night," I went on. "It was perfectly sweet of

you."

"You got your cat in," she remarked.

"Yes, I suppose you smelt our double tracks."

"How is she getting on?" Mona asked.

I looked over my shoulder. I didn't want any one to hear me, for Dolly, the other dog, was still in her kennel. So I jumped up on the top of Mona's kennel. That brought me into a little patch of sunlight, and also made me get a little nearer to her big head, for when I sat on the ground, she towered way above me.

"Mona," I said confidentially, "I am having a dreadful time."

"Are you?" she replied good-naturedly. "You do look rather worried."



"'MONA,' I SAID CONFIDENTIALLY, 'I AM HAVING  
A DREADFUL TIME.'"

"I just can't stand that cat," I went on.

"Can't stand her. That's pretty sudden. You loved her last night."

"Mona," I said, "think of her actions. She came into this house on my invitation, and now she has taken my chair, and is trying to wean dear Mary's affections away from me."

Mona grunted. "Now, how do you know that? You cats are always jumping at conclusions."

"I see her and hear her. I feel it, Mona. I can't explain to you but I just know it's true—and I hate her."

Mona didn't say anything, and I went on. "I planned to have her come here and stay a little while, then have a good home found for her. Now, something tells me that she will never leave here."

"Well, suppose she doesn't."

"Mona," I almost screamed, "suppose she doesn't! Do you imagine I could stand having that low-down cat take my place, sleep on my chair, eat from dear Mary's hand? No—I will run away before I will endure that."

"Hush! hush!" said the big dog commandingly. "You are waking up Dolly."

"Then don't be cruel," I said sulkily. "I believe you are on that cat's side."

"You are an excited kitten," said Mona kindly. "Jealousy always wakes cats up."

"I am dreadfully unhappy," I replied, with tears in my eyes. "I have half a mind to run away to Mrs.

Darley."

"You would find more cats there than here."

"But they are my own family cats. I love them."

"Yes, you love them," said Mona shrewdly, "but you have left home. If you go back, you will be twice the kitten you were before you saw something of the world."

"Do you mean to say that I would be jealous of my own dear parents and my brother and sister?"

"No, not jealous exactly, but you have an independent turn of mind, and you would not be willing to be as subject to them as you were before. You had better not go home, Black-Face." 83

"What shall I do then?" I asked pitifully. "I see my life is to be made miserable here."

"Your life will be what you make it yourself. You carry misery or joy inside you. No one can put it in you, if you are not willing."

"I don't understand you," I said stupidly.

Mona reflected for a few minutes, then she said, "When I first came here, I was the only dog. Then after a while, Dolly appeared. I was dreadfully jealous. I felt just as you are feeling. When Mr. and Mrs. Denville petted Dolly I was nearly crazy. I became sulky, and the consequence was that I was neglected. No one wants a cross dog about. Dolly was shown off to strangers, and taken for walks, and I was left at home. One day, when I was home here moping in my kennel, I began to reason the thing out. Dolly had as good a right to be here as I had. Mr. and Mrs. Denville had hearts large enough to hold two dogs, even though one was a pretty big creature. Why didn't I try to get on with Dolly, and, in that way, please my master and mistress. The thing was worth trying, so when Mr. Denville put Dolly in the yard an hour or two later, I ran up to meet her. The poor little thing was frightened, and crouched down, but I wagged my tail and licked her kindly. Mrs. Denville had come with her husband in the yard, and as she lifted her dog whip to strike me, he said, 'Don't, Maud—the St. Bernard is getting over her jealousy.'" 84

"And did you?" I asked. "Could you?"

"Of course I did," returned Mona coolly. "Make up your mind to do a thing, and you can do it. You know Mr. and Mrs. Denville go for a walk together nearly every afternoon after he leaves his bank. They go away out Commonwealth Avenue and into the Fens. I used to enjoy these walks so much, but after I quarrelled with Dolly, they would not take me, and I suffered from lack of exercise. However, after I made up with Dolly, the little creature would not go without me, and I assure you that we have lovely times together. I have never regretted my resolution not to indulge in jealousy." 85

"But Dolly has a sweet disposition," I said gloomily, "and this cat is a low-down thing."

"That's true," said Mona cheerily, "but you can try to improve her. Be kind to her, and she will be kind to you."

"Are you sure of that?" I asked.

Mona looked thoughtful. "I must say," she went on, "that there are some ungrateful natures in the world. I once knew a dog that no kindness would melt. Perhaps he was a little crazy. Perhaps he had had bad parents."

"This cat isn't crazy," I said with assurance, "she is a sneak."

"I don't like her getting in your bed when you were not in the room," continued Mona. "If I were you, I would not let her impose on me. I would make her find a bed elsewhere, but my advice to you is not to quarrel with her. Be very patient, and remember that it is better to be imposed upon than to impose on others; and my advice to you is not to run away and leave the field to her. Keep with your mistress. Demand your share of the petting. Don't let the new cat get ahead of you. You have the advantage, anyway. You are better bred, better looking and cleaner." 86

"Those are not advantages," I said sorrowfully; "those are disadvantages. The worse-looking a creature is, the better my dear Mary likes it."

"Then clean up the cat, lick her, get her to hold herself up, and not sneak along the way she does."

"Mona," I said, "you are a good dog. I am much obliged to you for your advice, and I will run right up-stairs and see what I can do," and I left her.

I did run up-stairs, but alas! I met Mary coming down to breakfast with the cat. She had a blue ribbon on her neck—the cat had—and her manner was enough to make one ill. The humility of it, and yet the sly pride—the look she gave me out of the corner of her eye. "Stand aside," it said, "I have got enough out of you. I have a friend at court now. I've ousted you." 87

I did stand aside, then I humbly followed them into the breakfast-room.

Oh! how careful human beings ought to be about new pets. I thought my heart would break as I sat under that table and watched little Mary's hand stealing down with scraps for that Common cat. Once, I used to get all the scraps.

After a while, Mr. and Mrs. Denville came to the table, and then I had to listen to the whole story of the saintly Common cat, how little Mary had just seen her skulking about the Common, and had pointed her out to me. That the poor creature had run when any one went near her, and that early this morning when Mary woke up, there she was in the chair by her bed. "It seems like a lovely miracle," concluded little Mary in a happy voice.

"How do you account for it, Harold, dear?" asked Mrs. Denville of her husband.

"This cat brought her in," he said shortly, and he looked under the table at me. "Come here, Black-Face."

I was terribly proud. Mr. Denville rarely noticed me. I jumped up on a chair beside him, and he looked in my face.

"You brought her in, didn't you?" he said with a twinkle in his eye.

"Oh, meow! meow!" I replied and I laid a paw on his coat sleeve.

"I've heard of such things before," he went on, still looking me in the eyes. "My mother had a very intelligent tabby cat that brought a sick friend to our barn and carried food out to it till it got well."

"How extraordinary," murmured Mrs. Denville.

"And you're a little bit jealous, aren't you?" said Mr. Denville suddenly to me.

I felt ashamed of myself. How had he known what was going on under the table?

"Come here," he said, and he took me on his knee, and fed me from his plate during the remainder of the meal.

"Mary," he said when he left the table, "don't neglect the old cat for the new one."

"Just as if I could neglect my Black-Face," said the little girl earnestly. "Come here, dear," and she opened her arms, and petted me till I was so proud and happy that I forgot all about the other cat.

She was watching me though, watching me from one sly eye, as she washed her face, and pretended to be admiring the flowers in the window. I understood her tricks.

After breakfast, Mary took me up-stairs in her arms, and the Common cat had to follow after. However, as if to get even with me for this attention, she sprang up on my chair as soon as we arrived in Mary's bedroom. There the little girl left us and went to clean her big canary cage, and I was about to follow her, when I thought I had better embrace the opportunity of having an explanation with my rival.

"Cat," I said, "I don't like your actions."

She gazed at me steadily, and I had a good chance to look into her eyes. They reminded me of the pond on the Common. They were muddy, and looked as if there were all kinds of queer things down at the bottom of them.

I said nothing, and she said nothing for a long time, then she murmured in her cracked voice, "What's frettin' you?"

I didn't know what to say. Finally, I thought of one of Serena's phrases, and replied grandly, "I don't like your mental attitude."

"What's that?" she said impudently.

"I don't suppose you know that you have a mind," I said patronizingly.

"I know I've got teeth and claws," she said with a grin. "You jest bet I do."

I am ashamed to say I forgot all about Mona's advice to love her, and lick her fur. Something rose inside me, some kind of a swelling, then I felt as if I had swallowed something very hot. It burnt so that I sprang up and just hissed, "Get off my bed, will you?"

"Come, put me off," she said maliciously, "I'm bigger 'n you."

I don't approve of fighting. I think it is wicked and vulgar, but at her words a fierce joy rose within me. I thought what a delight, what an ecstasy it would be to stick my claws in her, and drag her from that chair. Then I don't seem to remember anything more for a few minutes, but hissing and spitting and jumping and scratching and the most awful cat language that I ever heard. It was my first fight, and I didn't do any talking. I wanted all my breath for panting, for I was thumped and dragged and pounded and beaten and shaken till I was nearly dead.

Dear little Mary was in the bath-room, singing, and talking, and fussing with her canaries. She didn't hear us, and no one else was near enough, but presently there was a step. I didn't hear it. I was too far gone, but the sly cat must have heard it, for she dropped me like a shot, and flew up into my chair. I lay for one minute, then I dragged myself under the bed. I thought I was dying, but I didn't want any one to see me. My instinct was to keep out of sight.

The oldish woman who was Mary's nurse, came into the room. I heard her give an exclamation, then stop short. "Miss Mary," she called.

The dear child came running in.

"Just look at that cat," said the old woman.

"Oh! oh!" cried my dear young mistress. "Why, her eyes are scratched, and her nose is torn—oh! my poor pussy," and she went down on her knees and began to dab at that Common cat's face with her handkerchief.

"Nurse, please get me a wet towel—oh! the poor cat. Who could have scratched her so?"

"Depend upon it, it's that kitten," said the old woman, "she's a high-strung little article."

"My dear Black-Face!" exclaimed Mary. "Oh! no, she is gentle."

"Who could have done it?" the nurse said grimly, "I didn't."

"Perhaps some bad cat ran in," said Mary.

The nurse shook her head, and then I stopped watching them. I was more dead than alive, and I never stirred, though I heard Mary calling me everywhere. She did not think of looking under her own bed, though I think she looked under all the other beds in the house.

Finally, her mamma made her go off to drive, and everything was quiet in the room. The bed had been made, so no one came near to disturb us, and I lay on the carpet and tried to recover myself, and the Common cat lay on the chair, and spat at me if I stirred.

After a few hours, I felt better. I could move my paws, and my body did not ache so much. I got up, tried to stretch, and could not, then not minding the hissing from the chair, I dragged myself out of the room, and down-stairs, a step at a time. There was a large mirror set into the wall at the head of the first staircase, and I had a look at myself as I went by. My fur was rumped badly, and I looked ill, but there was not a scratch nor a drop of blood visible. How strange—for from what Mary had said, I knew a good deal of blood had run out of the Common cat's wounds. How was it, that I, a kitten, had been able to scratch her, while she had not given me a cut? I would ask Mona about it, and I went on dragging myself painfully down the staircases, till I reached the yard, and saw the dear old dog sitting in front of her kennel.

"Well," she said getting up as I approached her, "what have you been doing to yourself? You look played out."

"Let me by," I said faintly. "I've had my first fight." She allowed me to crawl into her kennel, then she lay down and put her head in the doorway.

"Here," she said kindly, "let me lick you a bit. It will massage you."

"Oh! if you will be so kind," I said. "I feel as if I had been pounded all over."

"So you have," she replied, as her big tongue went over me very gently, but very firmly. "I can feel that you have had a mauling. Your new friend, I suppose."

"You told me to love her," I replied weakly, "but somehow or other, the first thing I knew, we were in the midst of a fight."

"That sometimes happens," said Mona philosophically, "if one loves too hard."

"I suppose I did not go about it in the right way, but, Mona, it makes me so mad to see her in my chair. I told her to get down, and she wouldn't, and then I sprang at her, and I wounded her. She has lots of scratches, and blood came out of them. Why haven't I any blood on me?"

"Because, kitten," returned Mona calmly, "she knows how to fight, and you don't. This isn't her first battle. Some dogs fight that way. They'll injure you inside, so that you will nearly die, while other dogs merely rip your skin a little."

"I think I'd rather be ripped than pounded on a marble hearth," I said miserably.

"So would I," said Mona. "You'll be a long time getting over this. However, you are a kitten and will recover more quickly than a cat would."

"Do you suppose she will be a long time getting over her scratches?" I asked. "I wouldn't like to injure her permanently."

"You couldn't, kitten," said Mona with a laugh. "She will be all right to-morrow. When you fight next, choose some cat your own size."

"But you don't advise fights," I remarked anxiously.

"No, never fight unless you are sure you can beat the other cat."

"But how can you be sure?"

"You can't be—now how do you feel?"

"Much better—ever so much. There is healing in your tongue."

"Now put your head down, and go to sleep," said Mona, "and I will watch, and see that no one disturbs you," and she lay down in front of the kennel.

It is wonderful what a nap will do. In about an hour I awoke very much refreshed.

"Can you walk?" inquired Mona.

"Yes, pretty well," I said, limping out of the kennel.

"Then creep up-stairs, see if the coast is clear to your room, and if the cat is still on your bed, come back and tell me."

I did as she requested, though I did not understand why I should do so. Painfully crawling up, and painfully crawling down-stairs, I, at last stood before her, and said that there was no one in the halls. The servants were busy with lunch.

"Then lead the way," she said.

I gazed at her in surprise, but she made no explanation, and I entered the house.

She followed me. We saw no one till we were opposite the big hall door. Then we heard the click of a latch key, and Mr. Denville threw open the door, and stood before us. He gave Mona a glance of surprise. She rarely came in the house. The good old dog walked up to him, and licked his hand. Then she put her noble, honest head on his arm.

"Oh, you want something, do you?" he said. "Well, go on."

She did go on, and after a look at me, Mr. Denville followed us.

It was such a funny procession I saw in the mirror as we went up-stairs. First I, a little cat with a black and white face, then a big dog, then a big man.

I went right to Mary's bedroom. Mona walked in with me. Mr. Denville stood in the doorway.

The Common cat lay on the opera cloak with a white bandage over her face. She was giving herself great airs on account of that bandage, but I think she was a little frightened when she heard Mona. However, you can't tell much from her mud-colored eyes when she doesn't want you to.

Mona slowly paced across the room, slowly took the Common cat by the neck, slowly carried her to the door, and set her outside in the hall.

Mr. Denville stood aside to let Mona pass. Then he smiled in a peculiar way. The Common cat gazed about her through the holes cut in the bandage for her eyes, as if uncertain what to do, then she walked toward a nice, sunny window that there was in the hall. Across it was a big sofa with cushions, near by was a bookcase. The cat went under the sofa, and Mona looked well pleased. The Common cat might sleep there. She was not to go in the bedroom.

What a happy cat I was! I gave Mona a grateful glance, then I went and sprang on my chair.

Mr. Denville laughed aloud, and calling to Mona, went down-stairs.

Later in the day I saw her, and she said Mr. Denville took her right to the pantry. He saw a big roasted chicken there on a platter, and seizing the chicken by the legs he gave it to her. Mona said that she passed the cook in the lower hall, and her face was something indescribable, but, of course, she didn't dare to say a word, as Mr. Denville was escorting the good old dog.

All day I have been so happy. The Common cat has not dared to once come in the bedroom. Little Mary understands the matter. At lunch time there was a great laughing at the table. I heard an echo of it up here, and dragged myself to the head of the stairs to listen. Mr. Denville was telling his wife and Mary about Mona and the Common cat.

When Mary came up-stairs, she made a nice bed on the hall sofa for "Slyboots," as her father calls the Common cat. There she has been all day, and Mary pets me in here, and then goes out in the hall and pets her. I think this is a very nice arrangement. Divided, we agree, united, we fight. Perhaps in time, Slyboots will get to like me better. I have no feeling of resentment against her. I only want her to keep out of my way.

I wonder what my family would say about this? I fear they would be shocked if they knew I had been quarrelling. All but Jimmy Dory. He loves a fight.

Well, I must go to sleep. I wonder how the new cat and I will get on to-morrow?

## CHAPTER VII

### A NEW SENSATION

101

For a week I haven't thought about anything but my lame back and my aching sides and my stiff legs. I have been unable to move without pain. Every day Mary has lifted me off my chair, and has encouraged me to move about the room, and even to go out on the balcony and sit in the sun a little while, lest I should get too stiff to move. However, the effort until to-day has been very painful to me, and I soon mewed to be lifted back to my soft opera cloak.

Mr. Denville had a cat doctor come to see me. She was a lovely woman with glasses on. She felt me all over, and looked at my tongue, and gave me some nice medicine to take, that had catnip in it.

To-day I have been ever so much better, and this morning and this afternoon I have had a new sensation that has taken my thoughts off myself.

102

It thrilled me at noon. Mary had carried me down-stairs to her papa's library, where he was sitting waiting for lunch to be served.

Mrs. Denville was with him. She sat in a big green chair by the window, and the sunshine was streaming all over her brown head, and her good face, and her pretty light dress.

"Harold," she was saying to her husband as Mary entered the room, "this is a lovely day—spring will soon yield to summer."

"Yes," he said, "it will. What arrangements do you wish to make for the summer?"

"I don't know," she said thoughtfully.

"Did you enjoy yourself last year?" he asked keenly.

Mrs. Denville smiled peculiarly, then she said, "I did, and I did not."

"It was sensible, wasn't it?" he said sarcastically. "That great hotel crammed with people. Everybody that we knew, and everybody that we didn't want to know. Every woman dressed to extravagance, and every man sulking in a stiff collar and tight fitting coat. Oh! those hotel verandas were bliss!"

103

His wife laughed merrily. "Harold, I think our summers lately have been too much a repetition of our winters. That is, as far as society goes. I wish we could do something different."

"Would you like to go to Europe?" he asked.

"And be seasick? No, thank you—but perhaps you would."

"Too far from business this year. Perhaps you would like to go yachting."

"Harold, I am getting to hate the water. There are so many accidents."

"What do you want to do, anyway?"

"I want to go somewhere where I can wear an old gown, and lie in a hammock all day."

Little Mary was listening very intently to this conversation, and seeing her interest, I listened too.

"I am tired from this winter's gaieties," Mrs. Denville was saying, "and, in addition to that, a quieter place will be better for Mary."

"We will go to my old home up in Maine," said Mr. Denville decidedly. "I have not spent a summer there since I was a boy, and you and Mary have never been there."

104

Mrs. Denville looked doubtful. "It is rather primitive, is it not?" she asked.

Little Mary let me slip to the floor and walked toward her father.

"Oh, dear papa, would you take us to the old farm-house?"

He nodded his head.

"And I could see the cows and the other things—I have never lived on a farm—oh, do let us go."

Just now the conversation began to appeal to me personally. This was talk about leaving Boston, the place I had been brought up in. What was going to become of me if the Denvilles went away?

"Meow! meow!" I cried suggestively, and I crawled slowly to Mary's feet.

She looked down at me. "If we go to the farm-house, I could take Black-Face, couldn't I?"

Her father nodded again.

"And Mona, and Slyboots, and Dolly, and the canaries?" pursued Mary in a delighted voice—"oh! how lovely. Hotel people are always so horrid about animals. Oh! Black-Face, what a lovely time we shall have," and she caught me up, and walked slowly about the room.

105

She never runs and skips as other little girls do. It hurts her back.

"Black-Face," she said suddenly, "wait here. I must, I just must go up-stairs, and tell nurse and Slyboots about this," and she went as quickly as she could out into the hall.

Mrs. Denville looked significantly at her husband. "Mary does not like hotel life."

He sighed heavily, and stared down at me, as I pressed up to his feet.

"I did not dream last year," Mrs. Denville went on in a low voice, "until the summer was over, what

the poor child was going through. The attention she excited as being set apart from other children, the sympathy from strangers, though grateful to her, was afflicting. You see, she is getting older and more self-conscious."

106

"I knew it," said Mr. Denville shortly.

"Why did you not tell me, Harold?" asked his wife gently.

"Why did not Mary tell you?" he asked.

"Because," she said earnestly, and the tears started in her eyes, "because she is so unselfish. Because you are both too mindful of my comfort. You make an egotist of me."

"Hush," he replied, "Mary is coming back."

"Black-Face," said Mary excitedly, when she reentered the room, "this is very wonderful news. I think I must go up and tell Mrs. Darley about it. Mamma, couldn't I be excused from lessons this afternoon? Really, I just feel boiling inside. If you knew how I have wanted to see the place where my papa was born! He has told me such lovely stories about it."

"Why did you not tell, me that you wished to go to Maine?" asked her mother reproachfully.

"Because, mamma dear, I thought I might make you feel sorry. You see, you had to be born in a city, so I asked papa to tell me those stories only when we were alone."

107

"And when have you been so much alone?" asked the lady sharply.

"When you were at teas, and lectures, and concerts, mamma, and making calls. You know you used to go more than you do now."

Mrs. Denville played with the rings on her fingers. I thought she looked sorry about something, so I went up to her, and crawling on the footstool beneath her feet, I managed to get on her lap.

She bent over and stroked me, and then I saw that there were tears in her eyes.

I licked her pretty fingers, but she found my tongue rough, and smiled and pushed me away.

"And may I be excused from lessons, mamma?" asked Mary coming up to her. "It isn't that I don't want to study," and my dear little mistress shook her head earnestly, "but really I feel so peculiar that I think if I don't get out somewhere I shall fly all to pieces."

"You are no shirk," said her mother gently, and she put her arm round her, "you are an honest child. You need not explain. Certainly, you are excused from lessons. I will telephone to Miss Roberts—I will take you wherever you wish to go."

108

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" said Mary, and she caught her mother's hand and pressed it to her lips.

At this moment Anthony appeared in the door announcing lunch, and they all went out together.

All through the meal the little girl chattered about the country, and it was beautiful to see her parents' eyes resting on her. They said very little, but they answered all her questions.

When we went up-stairs Mary had to go and lie down and not speak for one hour. This was her old nurse's decision, when she saw her flushed face.

I felt flushed myself, but there was no one to make me lie down, so I gave way to my excitement and crept out in the hall. I absolutely had to talk to some one, so I thought I would try that queer Slyboots.

Mary had made her a nice bed on the lounge, and she lay there looking like a gutter queen. She always wore a ribbon. Mary didn't put one on me, but she had to do something to give Slyboots distinction.

109

"This is great news," I said, going up to the head of the sofa.

Slyboots gave me a disdainful glance, as if to say, "It doesn't take much to excite you."

"Were you ever in the country?" I inquired.

"Nop," she replied briefly.

"Do you want to go?"

"Nop."

"Will you run away when the time comes for you to be packed?"

"Nop," she said again.

"Do you want to talk about it?" I went on eagerly.

"Nop."

"Do you want me to go away?"

"Yaw," she said rudely, so I went. I made my way down-stairs, and out in the yard. Mona and Dolly would like to hear the good news, but bless me, they knew it already. Human tongues, and dog tongues, and cat tongues carry news like the wind. Anthony had heard Mr. and Mrs. Denville talking, and the table-maid had heard, and they had told the house-maid, and the house-maid had told the cook, and the cook had told the kitchen-maid, and Mona had overheard, and so she knew, and Dolly knew. However, the dogs were glad to get further details from me.

110

Mona asked me first thing how I felt, and said that she had missed me during the last week. Then she wanted to know how Slyboots was behaving herself.



"Beautifully," I said. "She lets me alone, and I let her alone."

"That is the best way, when there is incompatibility of temper," said Mona. "You absolutely can't get on with some creatures without quarrelling."

"Well, this is great news about the country, isn't it?" I remarked.

"Glorious," said Mona heartily. "I love the country."

"I have heard of Maine," I said cautiously. "It is all country, isn't it? Now, what is the country like? You know I have never been off Beacon Hill." 111

"What do you imagine it is like?" she asked.

"Something like the Common?"

"Very like it. Suppose each house on Beacon Hill had a piece of land attached to it as large as the Common, and even much larger."

"Why, you couldn't see the cats in the next yard," I replied in surprise.

Mona opened her great mouth and laughed heartily. "Couldn't see them, nor hear them, nor the dogs either. But you'll have to go to the country, little cat, to see what it is like."

"What do you think about it, Dolly?" I asked, as she crept toward us.

Dolly is the meekest, gentlest, most timid, oddest dog I ever saw. She is afraid of everything and everybody, and she never was whipped in her life.

"Some ugly person must have spent all their time in beating her grandmother or grandfather," Mona said to me one day, "for she is the most scared thing that walks the streets of Boston. Why, when Mr. or Mrs. Denville want her to go to walk, they have to spend about five minutes coaxing her to come out of her kennel." 112

To-day, when I asked her what she thought about going to the country, she looked perfectly terrified, and crept up to Mona for protection.

"She is afraid of bears, and wolves, and foxes," said Mona kindly. "The dog next door heard that we were going to Maine, and he has been stuffing her. He told her he knew a spaniel who went up there and came home inside a wildcat that his master had shot."

"How cruel!" I said indignantly. "There aren't any wild animals in Maine, are there, Mona?"

"None to hurt—there now, Dolly, prick up your ears. See how brave this little cat is!"

Dolly's nerves were too shaken to raise her long, silky ears, and she retreated into Mona's kennel. 113

"She's got the quakes badly to-day," said good old Mona with a shake of her head. "I'll have to stand guard here, till she gets over them."

"And I must go back to my young mistress," I said, "for I think she will take me to see my parents to-day. Good-bye, Mona."

"Good-bye, Pussy," she said. "Keep away from Slyboots. She's a solitary cat."

Mary did take me with her when she went to drive. Oh! what a strange time I had with my family! Let me think over what they said and I said.

Slyboots did not drive with us. Mary wanted to take her, but she drew back. She had no reason to like the streets, and I was very glad to go without her.

As soon as our carriage drew up in front of Mrs. Darley's, Mrs. Denville and Mary found that she was not at home.

My heart sank, but to my great delight, little Mary said to her mother, "Mamma dear, let me leave Black-Face here with her parents, and we can call for her later. You will, won't you?" 114

Mrs. Denville smiled. "Certainly, if you wish it, though I think it is an excess of sentiment." Then she handed me to the foot-man, and he winked mischievously at Gerty who was holding the door open, and Gerty lifted me into the hall.

An excess of sentiment!—I wish Mrs. Denville could have seen my mother's face, as I slowly walked into the sitting-room.

Cat mothers can feel as well as human mothers, and wasn't my dear one glad to see her kitten come creeping toward her!

She met me half-way, she smelt me and licked me, and her soft, damp nose told a tale. She had heard of my troubles.

They had all heard, for they all got up to receive me. There was no sun in the window this afternoon, but still they were all lying on the broad seat on the cushions.

I was conducted to the place of honor in the middle, and then they all began to talk to me. Father, and Serena, and Jimmy Dory, but mother didn't talk. She just licked.

"How do you feel, eh?" said Jimmy Dory, giving me a rough pat with his paw. "Pretty sore, I guess." 115

"How did you hear?" I asked sharply.

"Well, you see," said Jimmy Dory, "since you went down to Beacon Street, daddy found that he has a cousin living in the house next door to you. She is a white Angora with blue eyes, and she came from Maine when he did. The dog in the house with her is a great gossip—a regular dickens of a fellow."

Just here Serena interrupted him, and begged him not to swear.

"'Dickens' isn't swearing, is it, daddy?" and my brother appealed to our father.

"It is rough and inelegant talk," said my parent grandly, "and that is next door to swearing."

Jimmy Dory, not a bit abashed, continued to talk to me. "This fox-terrier is a regular mischief anyway, and tells awful lies, but usually there is a little grain of truth wrapped up in his lies. We got the news the day after. Father's cousin—Angora Girl, they call her—heard faint cat screams from your house one day last week. She told the fox-terrier, and the fox-terrier asked your big dog Mona what had happened. Mona said it was none of his business—to attend to his own yard, and she would attend to hers. However, this fox-terrier, Smarty, wasn't to be put down that way; so the next time Mona's back was turned, he cornered the little dog. What do you call her?"

116

"Dolly," I said.

"Yes, Dolly. He told Dolly that he would chew her up and spit her out if she—"

At this point my sister Serena interrupted him again. "Father," she mewed piteously, "must I be forced to listen to this back-yard vulgarity?"

"No, you shall not," said my father, and he motioned with his paw for Jimmy Dory to stop. Jimmy had to, and then my father motioned for Serena to proceed with the news they had heard.

"It seems," began Serena grandly, "that your spaniel has been endowed with rather a pusillanimous disposition."

I tried not to laugh, for Jimmy Dory was saying, "Oh glory!" in my ear.

117

"Do you mean that she is a coward?" I asked.

"Certainly that is the signification of my definition."

"She is afraid of her own shadow," I said.

"Apparently so, for the fox-terrier cowed her—"

"Dogged her you mean," muttered Jimmy Dory.

"Cowed her into submission," went on Serena severely, "and Dolly had to relate the entire disgraceful occurrence. Afterward, the fox-terrier rehearsed the matter to the cat known as Angora Girl, and Angora Girl communicated the news to a cat who lives next door to us, and she gossiped over the wall with Jimmy Dory. The story, as it reached our ears, was to the effect that you had excited, braved, or, in some way, roused the indignation of the street cat, Slyboots. She had inflicted summary castigation on you, even to the extent of bruising, pounding and otherwise injuring your body," and Serena lifting her head, looked at me through her imaginary glasses as if to say, "I am sorry for you, but I fear it served you right."

118

"What kind of a cat is this Slyboots, anyway?" inquired Jimmy Dory.

"She is a poor outcast cat," I replied, "and I have tried to be kind to her."

"An elegant name," remarked Serena ironically.

"And she hurt you very much," murmured my mother in my ear.

"She gave me a fearful beating," I said frankly.

"You have not yet told us the occasion of the altercation," said my father.

I told all about Slyboots; then, with a humble air, I waited for the verdict of my family.

"Fighting," began my father solemnly, "is a low-down, vulgar way of settling disputes, and brings not only the participant, but also his or her family," and he stared significantly at Jimmy Dory, "into disagreeable and unendurable prominence."

"Just what I say," interposed Serena with a toss of her head. "Here am I being pointed out as the sister of the fighting cat on Beacon Street."

119

"It's fun, isn't it, when you get your blood up?" said Jimmy Dory to me in a low voice.

I shook my head. I had found no fun in fighting.

"I should advise you," continued my father, "not to let it happen again."

Well pleased to think that I had got off so cheaply, I yet plucked up courage enough to say meekly, "Suppose she takes my bed again?"

"Choose another," said my father decidedly. "You are only a kitten. You are not settled in your habits. Now, if it were a question of a cat of my age giving up his bed, it would be another matter."

"Suppose another cat should take your bed, father," I inquired humbly, "what would you do?"

He said nothing, but there was a dangerous glitter in his eye as he looked at me.

"I bet you'd wallop him till there wasn't a grain of sense left in him," exclaimed Jimmy Dory feelingly. Then he ran under a big chair, for my father's paw was uplifted threateningly.

120

This seemed a good time for me to throw my sensation in among them. "My dear family," I said impressively, "I have a tremendous piece of news for you. I am to be taken from Boston."

My mother stopped licking me, and put her head close to mine, as if to listen more attentively.

My father and Serena were immensely impressed, but tried not to show it, while Jimmy Dory took advantage of their abstraction, and crept from under the chair to his former position beside me.

"Go on," said my father commandingly.

"Well," I continued, "the Denvilles are going to the country for the summer. I am to be taken with them, also Slyboots, and the dogs, and the birds."

"What country—where is it?" inquired Jimmy Dory breathlessly.

"To Maine," I replied, then I was silent, for this was my great stroke.

Maine was the far-distant, fabled country that my father had come from. He had only alluded to it vaguely, for indeed I don't think he remembered much about it, having been only a kitten when he left it. But to us, his kittens, it was a land of dreams, of fair promise, of beauty—in fact, just the kind of place an adventurous little cat would like to visit. 121

"Oh, cracky!" muttered Jimmy Dory, "I wish I could go too."

"You would get lost in the woods," said Serena disdainfully, "and bears would eat you."

"You are not going alone," said my mother anxiously, "who will there be to protect you?"

"Oh, I shall keep close to Mona, I assure you, if there is any danger," I replied. "Do not be afraid, dear mother. Don't you remember that I said all the family are going, Mr. and Mrs. Denville, and their daughter?"

"Oh!" she replied in a calmer voice, but she was very uneasy. I could tell by her looks.

My father so far had not spoken. Now we saw him licking his lips, and we all watched him, to catch the words of wisdom that we knew he would let fall. 122

"The first question is," he said clearing his throat, "whether the kitten is to be allowed to go."

"Oh!" I said in my turn.

I am a pretty good-sized creature now, and being out in the world I am rather getting unused to parental control. However, I have been brought up to consider submission a necessary thing in kittens, so I listened respectfully.

"Let us hear the arguments for and against," he said, then he paused.

"I vote she goes," and Jimmy Dory, without waiting to let ladies speak first, plunged into a speech in defence of the free exercise of cat will.

My father listened with a disapproving air. When Jimmy Dory had finished, he said, "Young fellow, your words are only a wild chewing of the air in favor of individual cat rights. Now, tell us plainly, why you consider that Black-Face should be allowed to go to the country." 123

"Because she wants to," said my brother bluntly.

"No reason at all," replied my father promptly. "Rather a reason for her to stay at home. The young of any creature invariably wish to do what is not good for them."

"Father," said Jimmy Dory in a sudden rage, "you don't want to hear arguments for her going. You only want to hear arguments for her staying."

"Hush! my son," replied our parent authoritatively. "My eldest daughter will now state clearly and succinctly her reasons, or rather her views, on the subject of this far-away and doubtful trip for Black-Face."

## CHAPTER VIII

### SERENA ASTONISHES US

124

Serena stood up. She was addressing the audience, and her imaginary glasses were more in evidence than ever.

"Mr. Chairman, and ladies and gentlemen," she said with a slightly scornful dwelling on "gentlemen," as she turned for an instant toward Jimmy Dory, "the subject before us, as I look at it, is this. The family is a sacred, collective body of persons, or cats, who live in one house, and under one head or manager," and she gracefully bowed to our father. "Now, has one member of this body a right to violently and arrogantly detach itself, without the consent of the others?"

"Yes, it has," grumbled Jimmy Dory under his breath. "Oh, meow! meow! Come off the roof, pussy, and talk sense."

I don't think Serena heard him, for she drew a long breath and went on.

125

"If such a thing should happen, that one member of this sacred, collective body should wish to withdraw, or form outside connections of its own, methinks it would be most compatible with reason for that member to be one of the older members of this same sacred family."

"Oho!" purred Jimmy Dory in my ear. "The green-eyed monster has got our sister by the tail. She's jealous of the youngest member of the sacred collective body."

"To condescend to the present case," pursued Serena, steaming grandly along with her speech, "should a young kitten undertake all alone, a long and perilous journey into the wilds of an unknown land?"

Jimmy Dory clapped his paws together. "Yes, yes, she should."

Serena glared at him. "No, a thousand times no. Do not risk the Benjamin of the family in any wild and impracticable search for happiness. Rather let the young and frivolous creature remain within the circle of the sacred family. Let one of the older members heroically and generously offer herself on the altar of family affection. Let the kitten stay and comfort the declining years of its aged parents. Let the dear, sister cat go."

126

She had to stop here. No one could hear a word of what she was saying on account of Jimmy Dory's actions. He suddenly fell over on the heap of cushions. He just yelled with delight. Serena glared angrily at him for a few instants. Her speech was not half done. Then, as he did not recover, she took to slapping and pinching him. Finally, she pushed him on the floor.

Jimmy Dory rolled over and over, kicking enjoyably, and just shrieking with laughter and wickedness. He only controlled himself when my father joined Serena, and they both cuffed and beat him into submission.

I never saw my father, the Piebald Prince, in such an unprincelike rage. "Stand there, sir," he said, holding Jimmy Dory in a corner, "and explain yourself," and he gave him another whack to bring him to.

"Oh! spare your wrath for mercy's sake,  
And let me just a few breaths take,"

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gaspd Jimmy. "I will explain. I will electrify you, my revered and honored sire. You have been deluded, sir; basely deluded and humbugged."

"What do you mean, you young villain?" inquired our parent, still holding Jimmy in the corner, and gazing suspiciously over one shoulder toward the door, as if fearful that some wicked stranger had entered the room. "Nay, sir," panted Jimmy Dory, with a ludicrous imitation of Serena's grand manner, "the danger lies not without, 'tis within. We are all victims of a fraud, sir, a shameless, lying fraud."

My poor father was so bewildered that he did not know what to do, and yet he might have known that it was only some of Jimmy Dory's tricks.

"If you don't explain yourself," he said furiously, "I will give you the greatest mauling that you have ever had yet."

Jimmy Dory partly recovered himself. "Sir, I would not have you soil your paws with the fighting that you so much detest. Now, listen, and your wrath will be diverted from your hopeful kitten son, to your eldest hopeful kitten daughter. Our Serena, sir, our talented eldest sister, has ambitions outside this same sacred family."

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For answer, our father shook him.

Jimmy Dory went on unconcernedly. "You yourself, sir, have often pointed out to me the fact that cat nature is full of contradictions. Would you dream that cultured, domestic, home-loving, sister Serena has ambitions beyond our domestic hearth, that in cat spirit she daily and nightly roams the world, in search of adventure?"

"You are a story-teller," responded my father excitedly. "Stop these aspersions on your sister's character."

Jimmy Dory put up a protesting paw, and went on, "A long time I have suspected it. When sister Black-Face went out into the world, I fancied that sister Serena slightly envied her. Now my

suspicions are verified. Your eldest daughter, sir, is trying to pull the hair over your venerable eyes. She wants you to recall Black-Face, and let her take her place at the Denvilles'.

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My father was just about to shake him again, when Jimmy Dory dexterously wriggled himself away and cried, "Look at her! Is not guilt painted on her shameless face?"

We did look at her, and if ever a cat looked guilty Serena did. She stood with drooping head—no words came to her.

There was an awful silence, then my father said to her, "Serena, do you wish to go out into the world, and leave us?"

"Meow!" she said faintly.

"Then go!" he replied sternly, and he turned his back on her.

It was a fearful blow to my father. He had so prided himself on Serena's beauty, her accomplishments, her devotion to him, her love for her home. Now she not only had deceived and flattered him, but keenest pang of all, she wished to leave him, and go in search of those, as he calls them, vulgar adventures, such as I am having.

Serena felt dreadfully, and so did my mother. Jimmy Dory did too, for he suddenly stopped grinning, and making a goose of himself, and went and lay down in a corner.

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"Come," said Serena under her breath to me, "let us depart."

"Do you really intend going away with me?" I asked.

"Yes," she said sulkily and firmly.

"Are you going to the Denvilles'?"

"Of course," she replied snappishly; "where else should I go?"

"Oh, very well!" I returned, "just as you wish. Of course I have taken one cat there already. I suppose there is a limit—"

She pretended not to hear me, and walked slowly toward the doorway. When we got there, my mother stood in it. She gave Serena a dreadful look, then she put her paws round her neck.

"Oh, get away, mother," said Serena peevishly pushing her aside. "You have never understood me."

I went close up to my dear mother. I rubbed against her, I licked her sad face, then I said to Serena, "You go on—I am going to stay at home."

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"Do you suppose I will go to the Denvilles' without you?" she said angrily. "Come on, this very instant!" and she bit me on the neck.

"Go," purred my mother softly, then she turned her head away, and closed her eyes. The parting was too bitter for her.

We had all been so used to Serena's domination, that I stupidly followed her. When we got to the hall door I paused. "Serena," I said, "I must wait till little Mary comes for me."

"Goose," she replied, "and how am I to get to Beacon Street?"

"Perhaps they will take you."

"That would be very likely," she said ironically, then she just screamed for Gerty to come and open the hall door.

Soon we found ourselves on the sidewalk. Serena led the way. "Oh! isn't this glorious," she said, sniffing the fresh air. "How delightful is liberty! This is what I have been pining for in that dull house of ours. I have been longing for freedom, for an opportunity to preach the gospel of culture. How I shall astonish those Maine cats!"

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I was so puzzled that I did not know what to do. What would the Denvilles think of me? I was a regular cat agent.

"Don't go in the front door," commanded Serena when we got to the house. By the way, we had several frights going down—two dogs chased us, but as it was the middle of the afternoon, the streets were full of well-dressed people, and Serena and I were sharp enough to keep near them, and they soon drove the dogs away.

"Why don't you want to go in the front door?" I asked.

"Because I want to see the dogs. Haven't I had my curiosity excited on their subject?"

Stupidly forgetting that Mona and Dolly would be out for their daily walk with Mr. Denville, I conducted her to the kennels. Of course, they were vacant, so I led her in the house, through the wash-room, kitchen and store-rooms.

The cook met us in the lower hall. "Oh, what a beauty cat!" she exclaimed when she saw Serena. "I say, Rosy and Bridget, come here."

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Serena, in great gratification, purred round the three women, and held aloft her handsome tail.

"She beats the little fellow hollow," said the cook, staring at me; "yet there is a look of the beauty in the fright. Where do she come from, I wonder."

Rosy, the house-maid, was laughing. "She beats the Dutch—that little chappie Black-Face does. She is always bringin' cats home."

"Lead on to the upper regions," said Serena in my ear. "I am tired of this vulgar admiration."

I did lead on. Serena glanced approvingly in all the rooms as we passed. She liked the dining-room, and reception-room, but particularly the library.

"There is culture for you," she said surveying the books. "Mrs. Darley hasn't half as many tomes as these."

"What do you mean by tomes?" I inquired.

"A tome means as many writings as are bound in a volume, and a volume means a book, goosie—show me your bedroom."

To get to my room we had to pass Slyboots in the hall.

"Introduce me," said Serena imperiously.

Quaking on my velvet paws, I walked up to the big sofa by the window. "Slyboots," I said, "my sister Serena wishes to be introduced to you."

Slyboots shut her eyes, and pretended to go to sleep.

"What a charming vista," remarked Serena going close up, and peering out over her shoulder at the long avenue of trees on the Common.

Like a flash, Slyboots put up her paw and scratched her right down the nose.

"You rude thing!" gasped Serena, and she fell back.

"Come in here," I said, and rushed into Mary's bedroom. Of course, as Serena was my sister, I had to let her get up on my bed, and for an hour she made me sit and lick her nose. It was quite sore, but my licking kept it from swelling, and making her look ugly.

After a long time I heard the carriage stop before the house, then little Mary ran up-stairs. She caught me in her arms, and hugged me. "You darling thing, I was afraid you were lost. Why did you not wait for me?" Then her eye fell on Serena. "Why, pussy dear," she said, "how did you get here?—Mamma, Mamma," and she ran in the hall, and met Mrs. Denville who was just coming up-stairs. "Here is one of Mrs. Darley's pussies. We must send her right back."

Mrs. Denville looked puzzled. However, she rang the bell in Mary's room, and sent for Anthony. Serena did not resist. She knew that this would probably happen. She fawned on Mrs. Denville and Mary, and purred round them, but they did not understand her.

Anthony took her home, and in an hour she was back again.

Mrs. Denville returned her once more, and this time, Serena got back before Anthony did. Then Mrs. Denville began to comprehend the affair, and, smiling peculiarly, she called Serena, and went into her own room.

"Harold," she said, "are you here?"

Mr. Denville came out of his dressing-room in his shirt sleeves, and stopped rubbing his face with a towel to look at us as we stood there, his wife, Serena and I.

"Well!" he said expectantly, "do I see double, or have you another Black-Face there?"

"It is Black-Face's sister," replied Mrs. Denville, "and she is acting so strangely. She won't stay at home, and Anthony says that Mrs. Darley is very much amused, and sends word for us to keep her if we wish her. I thought cats liked their homes."

"So they do," said Mr. Denville, "as a general thing, but there are cat cranks as well as human cranks. Come here, runaway."

Serena glided up to him. Oh! the grace and elegance of her motions! "Dear me!" he said, "what style—what manners! We have something pretty high-toned here, Maud."

"But we don't want three cats," said his wife with a laugh.

"Ship them to Maine," he replied, and he laughed too, and went back into his room.

Serena was in an ecstasy. She posed, she swam through the air, she threw out her chest, she held up her head. She was addressing an audience of country cats. She was being hailed as the talented lecturer from Boston. I really thought she would expire from happiness.

When we came to bed she swelled so, or perhaps I should say, she expanded so enormously with happiness, and gratified conceit, that there was no room for me in the big chair beside her. I crept to the foot of Mary's bed, and here I lie, watching Serena's pretty chest rise and fall in a gleam of electric light that shines through the window.

It seems like a dream that she should be here, established in my bed. I am happy to have my sister with me, and to see her so happy, but I don't like her manner of leaving home.

Little Mary, by the way, does not seem to take to Serena. She is very kind to her, but she does not pet her as she does Slyboots and me.

I was thinking to-night as I lay here, that I had had one sensation to-day in the thought of going to Maine for the summer. I should rather say I have had two, for Serena's being here is just about as wonderful as my proposed journey. I suppose I am to be allowed to go. I know my father did not want me to, but now that he is so annoyed with Serena I have a feeling that he would not let either of us return home.

I am dreadfully sleepy. I wonder whether I shall dream of Maine or Serena.

## CHAPTER IX ON THE TRAIN

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I have not had a good long think for some time. In the first place, I have been turned out of my bed, and I find that nothing upsets a little cat like being deprived of her usual sleeping-place. Then I found myself in a place where it was too hot and stuffy to think. I became tired and irritable, and at night I could neither sleep nor meditate. After we left the stuffy place, I found myself in this home where everything is so quiet, that I could do nothing for two nights but lie awake and think of the stillness.

You listen *to* the noises in the city and in the country you listen *for* them.

Let me see—when was it that I had the last good, long think, and made a review of my own conduct, and that of my friends and family?

It was just after Serena had left Mrs. Darley, and had come to the Denvilles'. That was the beginning of a very upsetting time for me. Serena kept me on the go for a long time. She would not stir without me, then she got more independent, and I was left in peace.

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She never went home again before we came here, for we are now in lovely Maine. I did, several times. I got so bold that I would run up Joy Street quite by myself. My parents were always glad to see me, and Jimmy Dory regularly used to stand on his head for glee, when he saw me coming.

He missed Serena dreadfully, but he had no thought of running away himself. "The parents are a trifle dull for a young fellow like me," he said, "but that is all the more reason why I should stay with them. They took care of me, and amused me, when I was a young fellow, and I ought to take care of them, and make things a little lively now that they are getting old. Then sometimes I go down in the kitchen and play with Jane. She is getting quite civilized."

I approved of his sentiments, and told him so; then he used to ask me about Serena, and how she was getting on.

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"Serena is quite a belle," I said. "Cats come as far as from Arlington Street to call on her."

"Does any one pet her?" Jimmy Dory used to ask.

"Yes," I said, "but she doesn't care to be too much handled. A caress now and then is all that she wants. She likes Mrs. Denville better than any one. She sits in the drawing-room with her the greater part of the time."

This habit of Serena's of sitting in the drawing-room was rather a trial to me, for Mrs. Denville sat up late, and Serena never would come to bed until that lady did. She loved the pretty gowns of Mrs. Denville's friends, and the music and talk, and the sweet cakes and tea, and the admiration she excited.

I didn't mind that part of it, but what I did mind was having Serena come walking boldly to bed long after Mary and I were asleep. She always woke me up with a stroke of her paw, and made me run my tongue all over her body to compose her nerves for the night, she said. It was nice for her nerves, but discomposing for mine, and that is why the time of her coming to Beacon Street is rather confused in my mind. I had no chance to think it over properly, for she deprived me of my rest and made me sleepy all the time.

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I just forget how long Serena was there before we broke up. I think it was about a fortnight. Then a child next door had scarlet fever, and Mrs. Denville was in a great fright on account of her own daughter. She bundled little Mary right out of the house, and the child went in such a hurry that of all her pets she was only able to secure me. Her nurse went with her, and for some days we were with Mary's grandmother, a fashionable old lady who had a suite of rooms in a big hotel.

I don't know why old ladies like to live in hotels. I should think if the feeling of having so many people in a house was bad for a young cat, it would be worse for an old woman. However, Mary's grandmother liked it. Her name was Mrs. Ainslee.

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I was nearly crazy. There was no noise, no confusion, only a great many well-dressed people, but it seemed to me that I should suffocate. There were so many curtains and draperies, so many thick carpets, and so much dark wood, and such a smell of rich food. I don't think the human beings minded the food smell as much as I did. In the open air I should have liked it, but in this hotel it made me miserable. I could not eat well, nor sleep well. I was cross and disagreeable, and my tongue became coated. Mary never took me to drive here. Her grandmother would not let her, and the only outing I had was a short time every day, when I was allowed to go on a balcony and look out over the city. We were pretty high up, and it made me melancholy to see how far I would have to jump to get to the street. However, I had no thought of running away. I was not miserable enough for that, but how I did wish that Mary's grandmother was a poor woman, living in a house with a yard.

Well, an end came to it. One day there was a great talking between Mary and her nurse, and I caught the word "Maine" several times repeated. Then Mary came and caught me up.

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"To-morrow morning, darling Pussy," she said, "we are going to lovely Maine. We are all to meet at the station. Oh! how perfectly beautiful! I shall be with mamma and papa again!"

I was so pleased that I did not know what to do. When Mary put me down, I went and crowded myself against one of the closed windows, and looked at the busy street below. I could not think, for I had a dull headache. But I just felt happy. Mrs. Ainslee, being an old lady, hated the cold, and she

kept her rooms at a suffocating heat all the time.

Well, the next morning came. Very early I found myself aroused by Mary's nurse, old Hannah, who was stepping softly about the room. Then little Mary woke up, and hurrying out of bed as fast as she could, the child began to dress herself. In about an hour, Mary had gone to her grandmother's bed, and had said good-bye, and we were down in the big dining-room, getting an early breakfast.

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After that came a drive in a carriage, then a meeting in a big, big building with Mary's parents.

It was a very joyful time, but dreadfully confused. I stared in dismay at the groups of people. Some were standing quietly, other men and women were rushing to and fro as if they had just lost their pet cat, and were trying to find her. Fortunately, my dull eye wandering about in quest of more friends fell on Mona.

I slipped from Mary's arms, and ran up to her. "How do you do, dear Mona? I am so glad to see you. Do tell me what this great building is. Why, I should think it would cover the whole of Beacon Hill."

"This is a railway station, Black-Face," she said kindly. "See Anthony over there buying the tickets. Are you coming in the baggage car with me?"

"I don't know what a baggage car is," I replied.

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"Do you see those long things over there?"

"Those funny little houses on wheels?" I asked.

"Yes—those are railway cars. Some are for men and women, some for animals, some for other things. Here is Anthony."

The young man at this moment approached Mr. and Mrs. Denville. Touching his cap, he put some pieces of paper in their hands. Then he came up to Mona, and fastened something on her neck.

"What is that?" I mewed.

"My check," said Mona. "Mr. Denville has to pay for me."

At that moment, I heard Mary's voice in distress, "Black-Face, Black-Face, where are you?"

I ran back to her, and Mrs. Denville looked down at me. "You should have had your cat put in a box or basket, Mary."

"Oh, mamma, can't she go in the car with me?"

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"No, dear, it is breaking rules, and she will be happy in the baggage car with the other creatures. Serena is there, and Dolly, and the canaries, and Mona is just going. Anthony will ride with them."

She put up a finger, and Anthony who was now leading Mona by a chain, came near.

"Take this cat," said Mrs. Denville, "and put a collar and string of some kind on her."

I sprang into Anthony's arms. I did not wish to be tied.

"She is a good little thing, ma'am," said Anthony. "I don't think she would bolt."

"She might," said the lady decidedly. "Put a cord on her, in case of accidents."

Still holding me, Anthony went up to a kind of little shop on one side of the building, and bought a collar and chain. Then with me in his arms and leading Mona, he passed through some big gates, and we went alongside the rows of funny little houses on wheels.

I was so glad he had me in his arms. The people pressed and jostled us, but Mona was so big she did not seem to care.

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At last Anthony stopped, climbed up some steps, and entered one of the cars as Mona called them.

I saw an open door behind us. Inside, were lovely soft seats, and many persons seated on them; but we did not go in there. Right in front of us was a kind of store-room, or lumber-room, with old trunks and boxes, and some new ones. There were also some bicycles.

"Good-morning, baggage-master," I heard Anthony say, and a man in his shirt sleeves came toward us. "Where are the rest of our critters?"

The man pointed toward the other end of the car, so we walked on.

"Mew," said a cat's voice, and there, to my delight, was Serena looking at me through the slats of a box.

"Well, Serena," I said, "how do you do? I am glad to see a member of my own family again."

"I am very well," she replied calmly. "How are you?"

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"Oh! nicely. I am sorry to see you in that box."

"Sorry!" she repeated bridling unamiably, "Why, I was put in here for protection. They were afraid that something would happen to my lovely fur. I see you are not boxed."

I grinned from ear to ear. "No," I said, "I am not worth boxing. Where is Slyboots?"

"Here beside me in this other box."

I looked at it. Slyboots was curled all in a heap. She would hate this racketing place.

She wouldn't uncurl herself when I spoke to her, so I gazed round for Dolly.

She was flat on her face in a corner—a perfect heap of misery.

"She is used to the train, too," said Mona in her rumbling voice—"has often been on it before. Look



up, Dolly. I am here.”

Dolly raised her head, and as Mona's chain was fastened to a ring in the side of the car, she slipped between the big dog's front paws, and sat there cowering and trembling.

The canaries were in a cage hanging up on the side of the car. There was a thick cloth all over them, and perfect stillness inside. They did not like travelling any better than the rest of us.

I was sorry for Slyboots. I knew she was suffering, and I was pleased when Anthony tied me, so I could sit beside her box.

Pretty soon we started, and glad I was to get out of the dreadful noise and confusion of that building. Bells were ringing, smoke was puffing, men, women and children were still hurrying, and the air was full of distraction for cats.

The gliding motion was rather pleasant, until we began to go bumpety bump, and rattle rattle. I did not like that; however, I saw that there was no danger. Anthony did not look frightened, nor did the man with the funny cap on, so I plucked up courage and whispered to Slyboots:

“It is all right—you are quite safe, and we are on our way to lovely Maine.”



“SHE SLIPPED BETWEEN THE BIG DOG'S FRONT PAWS, AND SAT THERE COWERING AND TREMBLING.”

She never stirred, and I turned to Anthony. He had dragged a stool right in the midst of us, and sat there quietly looking at us from time to time. He was a kind-hearted young fellow, and if he had not been he would not have dared to neglect us, for I had heard the Denvilles talk of having discharged servant after servant for being unkind to animals.

Anthony did not love us as the Denvilles did. He rather made fun of us, but still he was kind to us, and that was good in him.

We soon rushed along at a fearful rate. I never dreamed that Boston was so large. I thought Beacon Hill was the most of it.

“Why, Mona,” I mewed at the top of my voice to make her hear, “where did all the houses come from?”

She smiled at me. “There are more houses in the world than you ever dreamed of, little cat.”

Suddenly we stopped with a great jerk. “What is this?” I asked curiously. “Is it to give the horses a rest?”

“The what?” inquired old Mona wrinkling her forehead.

"The horses who are dragging us. Have they stopped to take breath, and get a drink of water?"

Mona just roared with laughter. "Excuse me, Black-Face," she gasped, after a time, "but I cannot help it. You are so innocent. Our motive power does not consist of horses, but steam."

"Steam," I said in astonishment—"like the tea-kettle steam?"

"Yes, my kitten, yes."

"And how many kettles does it take?"

Mona at this laughed so uproariously that I paid no further attention to her, but looked at the man whom Anthony called the baggage-master. Had he gone crazy? The train had stopped, and he had pushed back further the big door in the side of the car, and was throwing all the boxes and trunks outside. Oh! how angry he was!

I was perfectly terrified. Soon he would get to our corner. Then would he throw us out? No, for there sat Anthony quite calm and collected, and reading a newspaper.

"Mona," I said timidly, for by this time she had calmed herself, and was only snickering occasionally. "You wouldn't let that man hurt me, would you?"

"That man—the baggage-master?"

"Yes, Mona."

"Don't be afraid. When your turn comes to be handled, he will be quite gentle. I saw Anthony giving him a good big tip."

"A tip?"

"Yes—money—to be good to us."

"Meow!" I screamed suddenly, for as the baggage-master stood panting and glaring after his fit of fury, some other crazy men outside began to fling back all that he had just put out. However, I did not need to be afraid, for now his rage was quite over, and he seized the things rapidly, and put them all neatly into the corner of the car furthest away from us.

"Mona," I said indignantly, "it was hardly safe to put us in with that violent creature. If Anthony should leave us, I am sure we would go out."

"Hush! Pussy," said the good dog authoritatively. "He is only doing what he is paid to do. At every station he must throw out passengers' luggage and take on more."

A sudden light broke over me. Was that what he was doing?

"See, there are the Denvilles' trunks behind us," continued Mona—"those big ones with M. D. and H. D. on them."

"Oh! thank you, thank you, Mona," I replied. "I am a very foolish cat. Let me know when we get to Maine. I am so confused with this racket that I am going to lie down and close my eyes," and I pressed close up to Slyboots' box.

Serena was gazing at everything with wide-open eyes. I don't think she understood things any better than I did, but she was too proud to ask questions. Before we went to sleep that night I would probably have to explain everything to her.

I lay down and got up again, and closed my eyes for hours, and then opened them. It seemed to me that our journey would never end.

"Are we going round the great, big world, Mona?" I asked wearily.

"No, no, Pussy," she replied gently, "only over a little bit of it."

I gazed out the large door in the side of the car, for it was a lovely day, and the baggage-master left it open a little bit. If he had closed it I should not have seen a thing, for the windows were high up in the sides of the car.

We were passing through another big city. Then came fewer houses, then green grass and trees like the Common.

"Is this the country?" I asked Mona.

"Yes, we are in the real country now."

"But not in Maine?"

"No, not yet. I will let you know when we reach Maine."

It was beautiful if it was not Maine, and the scenery kept changing. Not steady rows of trees like the Common, nor one little pond, but many trees set different ways and large ponds—"lakes," Mona called them, and rivers.

Just when we were getting weariest, we had a very pleasant diversion. Anthony picked up a basket from the floor, and gave us all something to eat. How good those sandwiches tasted! Then he gave us some milk which he poured from bottles into a pan. I considered it was very thoughtful in him to have provided this lunch and said so.

"It was Mrs. Denville," said Mona. "It would not have occurred to Anthony to do it."

In the bottom of the basket were some nicer sandwiches for Anthony. He gave some to the baggage-master, and they seemed to calm him still more.

I went to sleep after our lunch. I actually had a real nap, till I was awakened by some one saying in

my ear, "This is Maine, your lovely Maine."

My eyes just flew open—lovely Maine; why it was the dirty part of a city that we were passing through.

"But this is not the country," I said.

"No," replied Mona, "but we shall soon come to the country parts. Maine has some towns and villages, you know. It is not all fields and woods." 157

"I did not know," I said confusedly, then I began to watch—to watch just as an ordinary cat looks after a mouse. Our family was not much good at catching mice. My father is a little bit disinclined to exert himself, and Serena thinks mouse-catching vulgar.

"We must make some difference between ourselves and common cats," she often says, "so let it be as regards our table."

Well, I did not at first find Maine very different from Massachusetts. However, after a while there was more forest—wild-looking forest, and Mona told me that in those woods the gentlemen from Boston came to shoot deer.

"Now, Black-Face," she said at last, "be all alive. Anthony and the baggage-master have just been saying that we are near our destination."

I told Serena and Slyboots. Serena's eyes sparkled, but Slyboots never uncurled herself. Poor Dolly pricked up her ears just a little bit, and I stretched my neck to see all I could from the car door. 158

"This is the opening of the valley," said the baggage-master, "the Black River Valley. Those are the Purple Hills on the north, and the Green Hills on the south."

"Have you ever been here before?" I asked Mona.

"No, never, but I have been in other country places. This is very charming though!"

Charming!—it was exquisite, and quite took my breath away. "Serena," I said, "can you see?"

"Not a bit," she replied bitterly; "describe it to me. Is it like the Common?"

"Yes and no. There are huge green trees, and grass, and water, but the Common has no big things against the sky like great rows of houses with trees standing on the top of them."

"Be more explicit, I beg of you," she exclaimed irritably. "You are exceedingly confused in your statements."

"I will tell her, kitten," interposed Mona in her calm voice. "Serena, we are just entering a long, flat valley with low ranges of hills on each side. The train is gliding among beautiful fields and orchards. Farm-houses are scattered here and there. There are strips of forest land, and many little streams. We have not yet come to the Black River." 159

"Thank you," said Serena prettily. "Your description heightens my desire to escape from the protecting confines of this travelling cage."

Mona glanced at the grocer's soap box she was in, and grinned. Then her heavy nostrils moved delightedly, and she said, "Smell, kitten!"

My own little nose went like a rabbit's. "Oh! Mona," I said, "how perfectly delicious. What is it?"

"Apple orchards in bloom. The valley is sheltered, and the trees blossom earlier here than elsewhere."

Just then, we swept right by the front door of a large, old-fashioned house.

"Put here, of course, before the railway was built," said Mona. "Now look, kitten, we are entering the largest orchard yet." 160

I did look. I had never seen anything like this on the Common. I must say the shape of the apple trees seemed rather low and squatty; but the look of them!

"Oh! Serena," I screamed, "they are all dressed for a party—in pink and white. Oh! what beauty. They are not common trees. They must be Angora trees."

"I cannot see," mewed Serena excitedly, "but I can smell. What delectable odors! How I wish I were out of this box. That perfume exceeds and goes beyond the catnip."

"I don't know about that," I said doubtfully, "but it is very delicious. The water is running from my mouth."

"You vulgar thing," said Serena disdainfully, and she would not speak to me for a long time.

There were more farms and farm-houses, more meadows and patches of tall dark pine-woods.

"They seem to have every sort of scenery in this valley," said Anthony good-humoredly. Then he began looking round to see if we were all right. "How many minutes to Black River station, baggage-master?" 161

The man looked at his watch. "Five," he said.

I was greatly excited, and the five minutes seemed as long as an hour.

However, they passed, and at last the train stopped slowly, and Anthony got up, and leading Mona, hurried out the door at the end of the car.

The baggage-master handed the rest of us down very carefully to him through the big door at the side of the car. All the fierceness had gone out of him.

## CHAPTER X

### WE REACH THE COUNTRY

162

I found myself in the arms of a slight young man, who had blue eyes and yellow hair. He had slipped forward when the train stopped, and had taken me as I was handed out.

Cuddling me up to him quite nicely, he said slyly—"A kitty that looks as if she had been struck by lightning."

I suppose I was dreadfully rumped, still I didn't like to hear it, so I said "Meow!" in a loud voice, hoping that some of our own party would hear me. They did not, though I saw them in a great confusion of heads, and arms, and hurrying feet.

The train did make the people jump at this little station. For two or three minutes it was dreadful to see the crowding and pushing, and to hear the thumping of boxes. I thought that the Denvilles' trunks would be knocked all to pieces.

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Finally, when the trouble seemed at the very worst, the train gave a dreadful yelling and breathing and slowly dragged away.

"Where is my pussy?" I heard in Mary's dear voice. "Where is my Black-Face? Here are the others, but where is she?"

My captor slipped up to her and held me out.

"Oh! thank you," said Mary, and she took me in her arms.

This was the first really happy moment that I had known since leaving Boston. I snuggled down to her. I even began to purr.

Mr. and Mrs. Denville were standing talking to a tall, burly man in big top boots, homespun clothes, and a soft felt hat.

Mr. Denville called him Mr. Gleason, and I found that he was the farmer who had bought the old Denville homestead. I liked his face—it was so humorous. Sometimes his mouth stopped smiling, but his eyes never stopped. They were twinkling all the time, whether he was talking or keeping still.

He was a very big man, and he stood looking about at us all without a word, but with his eyes just dancing.

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"Now," said Mr. Denville at last, in his business-like way, "we are ready to start, Mr. Gleason."

The farmer pulled himself together, laughed "Ho! ho!" in a jolly voice, just as if Mr. Denville had made some good joke, then led the way to the back of the station house. There was a good-sized, double-seated carriage there, with a canopy top, and near it stood a large express wagon.

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the farmer again, as he gazed round on us all—Mr. and Mrs. Denville, Mary as she held me in her arms, Anthony, Mona, Slyboots and Serena in their boxes, nurse Hannah, and the big cage of canaries, and the heap of trunks—"Ho! ho! I guess I'll have to lay in some more cornmeal, and put another house on the top of the one I've got."

While the farmer stood laughing to himself, Mr. Denville calmly put his wife, Mary and me in the back seat of the carriage, and got in the front seat himself.

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Seeing this, the farmer stopped chuckling, and going up to the horses' heads, unfastened the rope that tied them.

"Denno," he said to the slight young man who had taken me from the train, "pack all you can in the express wagon, and make after me. Come back for what you have to leave."

Mary held me tightly in her lap, and I gazed curiously about me as the farmer got into the carriage, picked up the reins, and started away from the station. A number of little boys were on the ground staring up at me, but I did not pay much attention to them. I had seen boys before, and at present I was more interested in lovely Maine.

The canopy over our heads made a grateful shade, and I looked all about me. Back of the station on the railway track, were some big buildings that I heard the farmer tell Mr. Denville were a creamery, a canning factory, and a warehouse for apple barrels. As we turned up from the station to drive along a wide road, we passed a number of stores and houses. They made the station village of Black River. It was not very pretty just there. We had not yet come to the pretty part.

166

Mrs. Denville was looking about her very quietly, but very attentively as we passed beyond the stores and the houses, then entered on a long, country road.

"See there," she said to Mary, "look at those birds building nests in that bank of earth!"

As she spoke, Mr. Denville leaned over the back of the front seat. "I am very glad to have you here, Maud," he said in a deeply gratified voice. "I have often longed to revisit the haunts of my childhood with you."

"Why did you not tell me?" she said in a low voice. "I would have come long before!"

"Over there," he said with a sweep of his hand toward a grove of pines that we were passing, "rye grew when I was a boy. Just think of that."

Mrs. Denville looked at the sturdy trees, then at her husband. "And you are not so very old," she

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said.

"And yonder," he said with another gesture toward the fields and woods on the other side of the road, "I have hunted foxes and wildcats many a day."

"Oh, papa, are there any foxes here now?" asked Mary.

"Not about here," replied her father. "The land has been cleared so rapidly that they have retreated to other fastnesses."

I had noticed that the farmer had been occasionally throwing curious and sympathetic glances over his shoulder at little Mary, ever since we left the station. I knew by his eyes that he was a man that liked children, and soon he said kindly, "Would you like to see a fox, little sissy?"

"Oh, yes," she replied joyfully, "very much."

"Then you and I will take a gun some day and go up on the hills."

Mary shuddered, "Oh, not a gun, Mr. Farmer."

"Mr. Gleason," her mother corrected her.

"Mr. Gleason," the little girl repeated. "Oh, I would not like to shoot a fox. Little foxes like to live, Mr. Gleason."

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"Ho! ho!" he chuckled, "but foxes eat hens and chickens, little sissy."

"Then fasten up the hens, and put out some food for the foxes," said Mary gently.

The farmer nearly choked himself laughing. The idea of feeding foxes seemed to deprive him of every remnant of self-control. I thought myself it would be a nice plan to feed them, if they were hungry, but then I didn't know anything about the matter.

Mr. and Mrs. Denville were thoughtfully examining the beautiful country about us, and did not pay much attention to Mary and the farmer.

"Have you any children, Mr. Gleason?" Mary asked softly.

She did not mind his laughing. My little mistress is very clever, and knows quite well whether one is laughing with her, or at her.

"Children," he said, drawing a big blue and white handkerchief from his pocket, and wiping his eyes with it, "now, little sissy, just guess. Would you say I had, or I hadn't."

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"I should say you had," she replied firmly.

"Good again—you pulled up the right turnip that time. I've got three children, sissy."

"Oh! I am so glad," she replied. "I just wanted some little children to play with, and papa didn't know whether you had any or not."

"They're not at home now," he said. "They are up visiting their aunt on the hills yonder," and he pointed to the big swelling land against the sky in front of us.

We were going now directly toward the long range of the Green Hills, and away from the Purple Hills.

"Look about you, Black-Face," murmured Mary in my ear. "Stare your little city eyes out. Isn't this country delicious?"

I was amused at the remark about my eyes. They were delighted, but it was my nose just then that was giving me most pleasure. Animals like strong perfumes, but I never had felt anything as strong and sweet as this air. In the city of Boston of course I am very near the ground. Human beings can't realize how different is a cat's point of view, and point of smell, unless they will drop on all fours, and walk along close to the ground as we do.

170

I was about to speak of the Boston smells. They are very varied—some clean, but mostly dirty. You go a little way, and in addition to all the queer suggestions of the pavement and gutter, you get a puff of sewer gas. You go a little further, and get another. Here in the country there is a different class of smells. When Mary spoke to me it was apple-blossom mixed with wild flower perfume and coming in great waves of warm air. I was almost intoxicated, so much so that I closed my eyes, and gave myself up to the pleasure of smell. Oh, the delicious country! Why do not cats and people forsake the cities?

I had a dream of bringing all the Boston cats to Black River Valley, then curiosity made me open my eyes.

We were passing by scattering houses with small orchards about them. Then turning a corner, we found ourselves in a small village.

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Nobody spoke. It was lovely to look down that quiet village street in this June sunlight, to see the pretty white houses half hidden in shade trees, or in the exquisite pink and white blossoms of apple trees. There was just one store in the village. A buggy stood in front of it, and the old horse attached to it was meditatively chewing the top from his hitching post, and did not even glance at us as we went by. I saw one or two faces at the windows, but there was no noise. No one seemed to wish to disturb the beautiful stillness of the village, and we drove through it without a word being spoken.

After we left it and were going down a hill to an iron bridge over a small river, Mr. Denville said quietly, "This is old Black River Village—not a very lively place since the railway came, and persons began to build about the station."

"Oh, look at Mona!" said Mary suddenly.

The good old dog who had been following the carriage with Dolly close beside her, had plunged down the steep bank of the river, and rustling among the tall grasses and rushes, lapped eagerly at the water. 172

"She is almost overcome with the warmth of that thick coat of hers," remarked Mrs. Denville. "We must have her hair cut off before the really warm weather comes."

"Why, she is going to swim the river!" exclaimed Mary. "Just look at her!"

The river was not a very wide one, and she went boldly through it, with little, bedraggled Dolly paddling behind.

"Now she will be cooler," said Mary delightedly. "I am so glad she went in."

After leaving the little river, we went up a hill past more houses, and then to my surprise came another river, this one also with a pretty iron bridge over it.

Mona and Dolly went into this river too, and Mary and the farmer laughed heartily to see their two heads above the running stream.

I am trying to think how many rivers and streams we passed. I like to be a truthful little cat, even to myself. It was the same lovely thing, over and over—farm-houses, orchards, strips of woodland, streams, and beautiful green meadows. 173

"Do you like those meadows, sissy?" the farmer said to Mary.

"Oh! they are lovely," she replied in a low voice. "I am thinking of the Bible. Don't you remember where the Jews sat down by the rivers of Babylon, and hung their harps on the willow-trees?"

"And wept because they remembered Zion," said the farmer in his genial voice. "Yes, sissy, I remember. They wept because they were in a strange land, but we should weep if the Lord should take us away from our meadows. That rich low land is a great thing for our farms. It does not require fertilizing," and then he went on to explain how the streams and rivers brought down the fertile soil from the high Green Hills and deposited it on the valley.

"And the meadow grass makes hay for the horses, does it?" said Mary with interest. "That is nice to know; and now, Mr. Gleason, will you please tell me what you call these handsome horses of yours?" and she pointed to the fine pair of brown animals that were drawing us so swiftly along. 174

"I call them Glory and Dungeon," replied the farmer, and his eyes twinkled.

"Glory and Dungeon," she repeated in rather a mystified tone. "What queer names. What do they mean?"

"They don't mean anything," said the farmer with a burst of laughter. "When I get a new animal, a name for him crops right out of my mind. I don't know any reason for it."

Mary looked him up and down. Up his broad back, and shoulders, and his thick neck, and big hat. Then she peeped round, and tried to obtain a more satisfactory glimpse of his face that had for some time been half turned toward her.

He was shaking with amusement, but no one knew what it was about. I don't think he knew himself. I think he just laughs because he feels happy.

Mary did not speak, and after a few minutes he composed himself and turned to speak to Mrs. Denville. 175

"Now, ma'am, just as you're getting played out, I expect, here we are at the Black River," and he pulled up his big horses and made them stop short on the rustic wooden bridge.

## CHAPTER XI

### MAINE, LOVELY MAINE

176

Mona and Dolly came draggling along, paused at the brink of the river, then, as if to say, "You are too beautiful to be polluted by our muddy coats," they came up on the bridge, and lay down by the carriage.

"This here river," said Mr. Gleason warmly, "is to my mind, though one of the smallest, yet the prettiest we've got. Up there," and he pointed his whip to the Green Hills, "it rises among the woods, and comes rushing down the steep slopes. Then it creeps into yonder belt of trees and finally comes out here, quiet and tired, and kind of spreads itself about in these pools to think a bit."

No one spoke, and we all gazed earnestly at the lovely green pools fringed by the tall water grasses.

"And after its meditating is done," continued the farmer, "it gathers itself up, and meanders down through the meadows till it reaches our farm, which it just about cuts in two, or unites, whichever way you choose to take it. Our place wouldn't be much without the river—get up, Glory and Dungeon," and he urged on the big powerful horses.

177

I was very much interested, but how tired I was! My eyes ached from the bright sunshine and gazing at such far-away things. I rather longed for the cool, quiet streets, and the opposite houses of Beacon Hill. However, this was only my first day, and I felt that I should soon love this beautiful scenery. Cats are sensitive as well as human beings; they hate dull and sordid surroundings.

Up one more gentle hill, along a level road, and then the farmer spoke again. "Here is our young orchard, and there are the farm buildings."

Mary let me slip to the seat, and slowly but eagerly, raised herself to her feet. "Papa, papa, was this your very home?"

Mr. Denville nodded his head. "My very home, but I scarcely recognize it. This orchard land used to be covered with a spruce grove. The barn is new, and the house has been changed."

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At this moment, Mr. Gleason turned swiftly from the road to a short avenue of maple-trees, and drew up in front of a good-sized house with a green lawn before it.

Mrs. Denville put up her eyebrows. "This does not look like an old-fashioned farm-house, Harold," she remarked.

"No, it has been altered," he said, "the old house has been put on top of the new one."

"Why, I never heard of such a thing," said Mrs. Denville, and little Mary exclaimed, "But, papa, how could they do it?"

"After my father's death the place was sold," continued Mr. Denville, "and the new owner lifted the framework of the old house, and built under it. We will go over the house, and I will show you what is new and what is old. Let us get out now. There is Mrs. Gleason."

A white-faced, thin, quiet-looking woman with a blue apron on was standing on the veranda at the end of the house. She was smiling kindly, and stepping quietly forward, she shook hands with the Denvilles. Mrs. Denville and Mary went in the house with her, but I stayed to greet Serena and Slyboots. The express wagon was just turning in the avenue.

179

Serena's box was soon put on the veranda, and I found that she was in a fine rage because she had not been allowed to come in the carriage with us. "To think of putting me in with the servants," she said angrily, "and why am I not let out? Can't you get a hatchet?"

"I don't know where there is one," I said, "and if I did, I could not hold it in my paws."

"Well, do something," she said. "Sit down and mew."

I sat down beside her box, and screamed for help. Mary soon came running. "Anthony, Anthony," she called, "Black-Face wants you to let her sister out of the box."

The servant man came hurrying from the carriage-house, and soon Serena had her liberty.

180

"Now, Slyboots," said Mary, and the poor street cat was lifted out.

She went right back in the box again, and lay there till some one let out the farmer's big black and white dog. He had been shut up before we arrived lest he should molest us. Now he came bustling up, his tail in the air, his nose excited, as if to say, "Who are all these strange creatures that I smell?"

"Barlo," said Mr. Gleason coming out of the kitchen, "if you touch these cats, I shall whip you."

He stared up in his master's face, and wagged his tail. Oh! how he did want to chase us! Serena and I stood with our backs up. Slyboots slowly rose from the box that I fancy she thought would be her coffin, and slunk into the house.

At this instant fortunately, Barlo caught sight of Mona and Dolly who were lying panting under the trees. Here were two lady visitors. He could not be rude to them. In great delight he ran toward them, prostrated himself on the ground, begged them to play, but they would not. Then he ran like a fox to the orchard, and began to dig up buried bones from the ploughed land. These he brought and laid before Mona and Dolly.

181

They were not going to eat dirty bones when they had lately been having sandwiches, so they scorned them. Barlo was in a dreadful state of mind. He whimpered, and licked the air, and behaved

like a very silly dog.

"He is young," remarked Serena disdainfully. "Now, Black-Face, let us go in the house and investigate."

By this time it was getting to be late afternoon. The air was very chilly, and I was glad to go inside.

We entered a large kitchen. It had good-sized windows, and two tables, and a sink with a funny, big, red thing, that I afterward learned was a pump to bring in water from the well. There were also some rocking-chairs, and a big black stove which was throwing out a great heat.

Mrs. Denville was sitting in a chair with her feet against the oven to warm them, and Mary was not dancing about her as she would have done if she had not had a weak back, but she was slowly circling about on her toes, while she ate a slice of bread and molasses.

"Look under the stove, Black-Face," said Serena tragically, "and tell me what you see."

I stooped down. A big ugly, grizzled, tortoise-shell cat with glassy yellow eyes was staring in our direction.

"A grandmother cat you may be sure, and as ugly as sin," whispered Serena. "Now, come this way. I smell another."

She led me toward a deep box heaped with sticks of wood which the farmer's wife kept putting on the stove instead of coal.

"They must be rich to burn wood all the time," said Serena; "now, smell round here."

I did smell, and discovered a large, young cat—a queer-looking fellow, apparently all white, standing with one side pressed against the wall.

His eyes were shut, and his expression was most peculiar.

"He has probably never seen an Angora before," remarked Serena.

"If he is frightened of us, what would he do if he saw a thoroughbred, with still longer hair?" I replied.

"Hush, Black-Face," responded Serena, "up here where common country cats don't know much, I am going to be out and out thoroughbred."

"Are you?" I said. "Well, I am not."

"You shall be," she responded angrily.

"I shall not," I said firmly.

"Why not, dear?" she asked, suddenly growing calm.

"Because mother told me never to lie, and because I know if we do we are sure to be found out."

"Well, you may be whatever breed you like," said Serena with a toss of her head. "I am going to be Angora, pure and simple. I shall say we are only half-sisters."

"And I shall contradict you."

She paused for a few minutes, and surveyed me angrily. "Black-Face, you are a teasing little wretch. I wish I had left you at home."

"That cat behind the box is listening to all you say," I remarked. "You do not know how clear your voice is. Now, don't try that thoroughbred trick, or he will expose you, if I don't."

"I am sure he could not have heard us," replied Serena in a confident tone.

"Very well," I replied. "Suppose we speak kindly to this cat. He looks much disturbed."

"I would rather inspire respect than familiarity," replied Serena tossing her head. "I am going to cry for milk. Good-bye," and she walked away.

"How do you do?" I inquired going up to the box. "What is your name?"

"Whoop! Bang!" he exclaimed, suddenly opening his eyes and turning a flying somersault out into the room, "my name's Joker—what for the land's sake, is yours?"

I opened my eyes in undisguised astonishment. This cat was neither shy nor frightened. He was a huge, ungainly young fellow, most peculiarly marked, for one side was white, and the other was Maltese gray, and his manner was bold and assured.

"My name is Black-Face," I said quietly.

"What's that other cat's name that was with you," he went on; "that stuck-up thing?"

"Was there a stuck-up cat here?" I said innocently looking over my shoulder. "I was not aware of it."

"You know what I mean," he said with a grin, "that white-faced mule."

"Is that your grandmother under the stove?" I asked.

"No," he said, "I ain't got a relative here. Though I call her grandma and I call her daughter Aunt Tabby. Aunt Tabby's in under the settin'-room sofy."

I softly walked into the next room. There was a pleasant-faced, very respectable pussy under the sofa. "How do you do?" I said politely to her.

She bowed her head gravely, and threw me a kind glance.

"I hope you won't mind having so many strange cats come here," I continued.



"Everybody keeps a number of cats around here," she said simply. "There are so many mice."

"They steal the food, I suppose."

"They eat the grain," she said in mild surprise. "You know the farmers have corn, buckwheat, oats, wheat and other things in the bins in their grain-rooms. The mice make sad havoc in the bins, unless there are cats about. Up in the barn, there is a cat."

"Called Thummie," interposed the foolish, grinning Joker. "He's got double side claws on his paws. He's a sight."

The tabby cat listened patiently to Joker, then she continued, "I have charge of the carriage-house, and Joker here, looks after the house."

"Grandma being most as good as dead, does nothin'," interrupted that dreadful grinning Joker.

"Do you allow young cats here to make fun of old ones?" I said indignantly to the pleasant-faced tabby.

She seemed embarrassed, and Joker replied, "Course we do—this is a free country, ain't it?"

"Certainly, one is free to do anything," I replied, "but the question is, whether it is right and kind to do certain things."

"There you go preachin'," responded the irresponsible Joker. "Blizzard said that you Boston cats would make us most sick with your airs. Go 'long with you. Preach to the birds in the trees," and he skipped out the doorway.

"He is very young," said the tabby looking after him.

I did not reply. I had never seen a cat that affected me so disagreeably. Not even Slyboots, for there was some moderation and restraint about her. This creature was so forward, so unmannerly, so conceited, so rude—and then I paused. How wicked I was to take such a dislike to him.

"Would you like a little walk outside?" asked my new friend politely.

"No, thank you—I am dead tired. I believe I will go to bed. I wonder which room my little mistress is to have."

"I know," said the tabby politely. "I will show you."

She was just about leading me into the hall to go up-stairs when I heard a fearful shriek. "Meow! Wow! Black-Face!"

It was my sister's voice, and she was calling to me. I flew out of the sitting-room into the kitchen, and out on the veranda. Which way? Ah! there was the noise and there were the combatants.

Out on the ploughed land under the apple trees, a furry ball was rolling over and over. It did not seem to be two cats but one.

Aunt Tabby had not come with me, but another cat form was leaping along beside me, and a voice that I had heard before was saying in my ear, "That's Blizzard fast enough, that's the way he gets in his work."

I turned as I ran and saw Joker.

"We must separate them," he gurgled in his throat, as if this were something to be enjoyed and prolonged, "but go easy, strange cat, go easy."



“OUT ON THE PLOUGHED LAND UNDER THE APPLE TREES, A FURRY BALL WAS ROLLING OVER AND OVER.”

“She’s my sister,” I gasped indignantly, and I threw myself forward toward the part of the ball that was not Serena’s long hair. 189

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw other cats approaching. One from the road, one from the barn. The latter looked dishevelled. It was poor Slyboots, and as I afterward learned, she had been having trouble on her own account. However, she nobly came to our aid. The cat on the road I did not recognize, and of course, at this time, I did not know who Blizzard was.

Joker helped Slyboots and me. We seized the gray hair, and pulled. I got hold of the wicked Blizzard’s tail, and I can assure you, I nipped it. Of course they rolled over and over, but Joker, and I, and Slyboots hung on, and presently we dragged that gray beast off.

Then I had a look at him. He was a slight, slim, gray and white cat, with the meanest little head I ever saw—a regular sly, ugly little scamp, and under-sized. Why, he was not as large as I was!

Of course, I did not bestow much attention on him, but confined myself to Serena. I found that she was dreadfully shaky and frightened, but not much hurt. 190

“That’s the way Blizzard fights,” said Joker gleefully. “He doesn’t do much damage, ‘cause he doesn’t want to knock you out.”

“What!” I exclaimed, turning sharply to him.

Joker’s mouth was stretched from ear to ear, and he was pointing toward the little gray Blizzard who was being licked down by the cat in the road.

Joker coolly explained. “There ain’t many cats around here. Blizzard has got to fight. If he half killed you, you’d be laid up for a week, so he fights easy. Then you soon recover, and he can go at you again.”

“Oh my!” gasped Serena who was listening to us. “I am all upset.”

“Lie down a while,” I said, “then we will go to the house.”

Slyboots stood near us never saying a word, but staring at Blizzard and his friend. At last she said to Joker, “Who is the second gray and white cat?”

“That’s Rosy,” he replied, “Blizzard’s wife. She always rubs him down, but never takes part in a fight. When she hears him yelling, she runs to be on the spot to help him afterward.” 191

“I feel faint,” murmured Serena, “I think I will go to the house.”

As our little procession formed, I happened to cast a look toward the barn. There sat another cat,

watching us with a smile on his face. This must be Thummie, but he was too far off for me to see his double claws.

We all went into the house, and up-stairs. The Denvilles and the Gleasons were having dinner or supper as they call it here, in the dining-room. There was a good deal of laughing and talking, and I glanced up at the table as we went by. It was drawn up near some big windows that overlooked the meadows at the back of the house, and the lovely Purple Hills beyond. Mr. Denville and the old farmer were talking about crops, and Mrs. Denville and Mrs. Gleason and Mary were chatting about fruit and vegetables.

There were some very nice things to eat on the table. I sprang up on a chair for a minute to look, for I do love to see any one enjoying good food. They had hot coffee, and a glass pitcher of cream, and cocoa, and strawberry preserves, and plum preserves, and white cake with raisins in it, and layer cake with jam in it, and boiled eggs, and cold ham, and hot rolls, and cheese and crullers.

"That's a good enough supper for any one," remarked Joker proudly, and I agreed with him.

When we got up-stairs we all went under Mary's bed, even Slyboots and Aunt Tabby joined us.

Then while I licked Serena and rubbed her down, Joker talked about the fight. For half an hour it was interesting, then it got to be monotonous. It hadn't been much of a fight, and Serena was more frightened than hurt, but Joker went over and over the particulars. How he had been under the Siberian crab-apple tree looking down the road, how he saw Blizzard slinking by but suspected nothing, how he had heard a yell in a voice that was unfamiliar—which voice was Serena's, and so on.

Serena went to sleep at last, but Slyboots sat like a statue staring at him and saying nothing.

Aunt Tabby did not speak either, but she was quietly excited. However, she seemed to realize that we were being bored to death, and she coaxed Joker out in the hall where we heard him going over the same old thing.

"Slyboots," I said suddenly, "are you hurt?"

"A little mite," she said calmly.

I went closer. "Why, the tip of your ear is bitten off," I said.

"It was Thummie the barn cat that did that," she remarked coolly.

"How did it happen?"

"I went in looking for mice, and he hopped at me."

"Have you any other injuries?"

"One of my legs is ripped."

"Lie right down," I said, "and I will attend to you. You can't reach your ear."

I smoothed the fur on her head, I cleaned her nicely all over as long as she would let me. At last she got up, and uttered a grave, "Thank you." Then she said quietly: "Some of these country cats be spiteful. We Boston cats must hang together," and with these words she crept away.

Serena soon came out from under the bed, and got on top of it, and I lay down beside her. I slept until little Mary came to bed, and then it was so still that I could not sleep. Beacon Hill is a quiet place, one does not hear the cars up there, but still there is something doing and breathing at night. Here, in lovely Maine, there is absolutely nothing. The quiet seems to press upon you. I didn't sleep night before last which was the first night we were here, and I did not sleep last night. To-night I think I shall have a good rest. All day yesterday we—that is, dogs and cats—lay about and rested. Animals always do that after a journey, or after any exertion, unless they are prevented.

I often watch Mona and Dolly when they come from a long tramp with Mr. Denville. They go in their kennels and sleep, but he begins to read or write, or do something that taxes his brain, and kitten as I may be, I am beginning to think that body fatigue isn't equal to head fatigue. Mr. Denville would do better to lie down and rest as the dogs do, after he has had a long tramp.

Well, I have had a good quiet think to-night, even if I don't sleep. To-morrow I want to go over the farm. Serena will be herself then. Her slight scratches have closed already. I wonder what to-morrow will bring forth; I do hope we shall have no more fights.

## CHAPTER XII

### MY HEADSTRONG SISTER

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I am very much disturbed about something to-night. However, what is the use of worrying? What will be, will be, and if you can't prevent a thing, don't vex your brains over it, but keep cool and calm, and reserve your strength to mend the mischief after it's done.

My dear sister is, I fancy, running her head into trouble. Slyboots and I both fear it, but we can't stop her. She has announced her intention of spending to-morrow night hunting in company with—well, I can hardly believe it possible—Blizzard and his wife Rosy.

It happened this way. Right after breakfast—and I am surprised to find out how early the farmer's family gets up—Joker bounded up-stairs, and said that Serena and I and Slyboots had callers.

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We were all three sleeping on an old feather bed in a big hall closet. Of course we got up and stretched ourselves, and went down the front staircase.

The Denvilles were all asleep, but in the kitchen the farmer's wife was frying eggs and making corncake for her husband and the young man Denno.

We cats went out on the veranda. No callers there. "They are in the orchard," exclaimed Joker, and he plunged on excitedly.

They were not in the young orchard where the fight had taken place, but in the old one, sitting demurely under the shade of some currant bushes.

I could hardly believe my eyes, when I saw who our callers were—that impudent Blizzard and his wife.

I drew back, and so did Serena and Slyboots, but Joker plowed on. We looked at each other. There is a perfect understanding between us three; that is, when Serena is not provoking. That is one good thing that came out of Serena's fight. It has drawn Slyboots closer to us.

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Well, we paused, and finally Joker paused, and looked expectantly at Blizzard. Then the sly, old, gray cat came forward, and bowing very low, addressed himself to Serena.

"Madam," he said, with what I thought a very exaggerated manner, "I have come to offer you an apology for yesterday. I did not dream, I assure you, that it was one of your exalted lineage that I was attacking."

Serena still looked doubtful.

Blizzard bowed again, yet more humbly. "Am I mistaken in supposing," he continued meekly, "that you are of pure Angora blood, and that your forebears probably came from the celebrated cat-farm not very far from us in this state?"

Serena glanced at me. "My father is a thoroughbred Angora," she said, "and he did come from Maine."

"Then it's just as I supposed," continued Blizzard. "Kneel down, Rosy," and the old hypocrite, for such I fear he is, made his wife kneel at Serena's feet.

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"Honor youth, and beauty, and high lineage, madam," he continued firmly, "and if you cannot look like this young cat, at least act like her."

This was the time for Serena to confess that she was only half Angora, that her mother was a backyard cat. However, she did not do it, and I did not feel called upon to put her to shame.

Blizzard went on blarneying her. He paid no attention to Slyboots and me, and we gazed irritably at each other.

"Madam," he said flatteringly, "the country is infested with tramp cats."

"It isn't," whispered Slyboots in my ear, "Aunt Tabby told me it isn't."

Blizzard went on. "And being one of the guardians of the peace about here, whenever I see a strange cat, I fly at it."

This was too much for Serena, and she said, "But are you not sometimes in danger of mauling the wrong cat? All cats are not bad."

"Maul first, and ask questions afterward," said Blizzard, "that's my motto. Strangers ought to stay at home."

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"But you would put a stop to travel, and improvement of the mind," replied Serena sweetly.

"Madam," and he bowed low, "if all strangers were like you, but they are not—and anyway, my own neighborhood is good enough for me. I don't want to travel."

"I dislike to criticise your words," remarked Serena politely, "but it seems to me they are just a little narrow-minded. We learn much by our contact with our fellow cats in foreign places."

Blizzard smiled sweetly, and showed a set of very bad teeth. "In time, I dare say you will bring me over to your opinion. At present, I should like to have a little further conversation with you. Will you walk with me and Rosy?"

All this time, he had never noticed Slyboots and me, beyond throwing us one shrewd glance. He saw that we did not approve of him, and he would not be bothered with us. His present plan was to get

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Serena out of our reach, so he could fool her to his heart's content.

"Don't go with them, Serena," and I stepped up, and whispered in her ear.

She tossed her head, then sauntered along with Blizzard and Rosy.

Joker followed them, grinning from ear to ear, and Slyboots and I returned slowly to the house.

The farmer's wife gave us a good breakfast, then we lay out on the veranda in the sun. When an hour had passed, after the Denvilles had had their breakfast, Serena and Joker reappeared. Serena was laughing and talking excitedly, and shaking her head, and seemed to be in high good humor with herself and all the cat world.

"Where have you been?" I inquired anxiously, as she passed me.

"Oh, having a walk on the meadow with those two delightful cats. I am going out again with them to-morrow evening," and she looked mysterious.

"Serena!" I exclaimed. Then after a while, I asked her why she was going with those strangers.

For a long time, she would not tell me. She said it was a secret.

"Have you promised not to tell?" I asked.

"Yes," she said she had.

"Then don't," I replied, but then she wanted to, and at last whispered that she was going on a mole-hunt.

I was not much enlightened. However, I said nothing more at the time. I just worried in secret. Serena and Joker disappeared in the house in search of something to eat, and I coiled myself up again on the veranda, for by this time the sun was further up in the sky, and the air felt quite warm.

After a time, Mary and her mother came out. They both had on big sun hats, and they stood for a few minutes looking silently at the lovely view out through the maples. The Green Hills were soft and hazy in the distance, and near at hand were the fine shade trees, and the shock-headed pink and white apple-trees.

"Glorious," murmured Mrs. Denville, "too glorious to linger indoors. Come, Mary, let us go over the farm."

My little mistress held out a hand to me, and being eager to follow, I sprang up and circled round her.

Stepping off the veranda to a gravel walk, they went round by the well to the carriage-house.

There was a huge door in front of it quite closed, and I wondered how Mrs. Denville would open it. She just laid a hand on it, and it slid back quite easily. "These doors are more convenient than the old-fashioned ones," she said to Mary.

I peeped in. This was very interesting. There were different kinds of wagons, and carriages, and queer sorts of machines that Mrs. Denville told Mary were for planting seed, and cutting, and raking hay. A wide stairway led to a loft above, and I went tripping up-stairs after Mrs. Denville and Mary. Here were sleighs covered with white cloths, a long carpenter's bench with pots of paint, and bottles of different kinds, several stoves and a lot of pipe, some old chairs and tables—it seemed to be a kind of lumber room.

"How did Farmer Gleason get these sleighs up here?" asked Mary with wide-open eyes.

"Sleighs can be taken apart," said her mother, "and even if they couldn't be, two strong, country men would think nothing of dragging a thing like a sleigh up that wide flight of steps. Now let us go down and visit the next building."

This one was not as large as the carriage-house, and Mrs. Denville and Mary did not go in, but contented themselves with looking in the doorway. It was piled high with wood, and Mrs. Denville asked her little daughter if she knew why there was so much wood there.

"No," said Mary, "I do not."

"It is a frugal way that farming people have," replied her mother. "Mr. Gleason was telling us about it last evening. The farmers cut their wood sometimes a year in advance, and pile it up under cover to dry thoroughly. It lasts longer, and is easier to burn than green wood. Now let us go on to the big barn."

We three sauntered along in the warm sunlight. Mary had her arm tucked through her mother's. The child was so happy that she did not know what to do. It seemed as if half the sunshine had caught in her face and stayed there.

"Oh! oh!" she murmured, when we reached the barn and went in through a little door that was set in a big door. "Oh! smell the hay, mamma."

I stared about me. Away up in the air was the top of the big building. There was hay up there—not very much of it, but enough to make a good smell.

"This is the hay that they cut from the meadow," said Mary. "Oh! I hope they will bring in some more to-day."

Mrs. Denville smiled at her. "Mary dear, I am not much of a farmer, but I know more than you do. That is last year's hay. The men have not begun to cut this year's grass. When they do, this big barn will be crammed with it, from the floor up to those little windows in the peak."

"Then I shall see them," remarked Mary in an ecstasy. "I shall be able to watch the men cutting the grass and putting it in the wagons, and perhaps I can ride on top. Oh! say I can, mamma."

"Certainly, dear, if your father consents. Now let us see what is in this room," and Mrs. Denville opened a door.

I drew back, for as she opened the door, the cat Thummie sprang out. However, I had no cause for fright, for Thummie went up a ladder like a flash, and disappeared among the hay.

"This is the granary," said Mrs. Denville, "how neat it is," and she glanced approvingly about her.

The floor was swept and clean, and there were rows of things like big boxes against the wall.

"These are bins," explained Mrs. Denville to Mary. "After the grain is thrashed it is put in here. See, this is some kind of coarse flour—I don't know the name," and as she lifted the cover of the big box she looked about her as if seeking information.

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"That is feeding flour, madam," said the hired man Denno, appearing just in the nick of time.

"And this is middlings," he went on, stepping forward, and putting down a pail of water that he held in his hand.

He lifted another lid and then another. "This is bran," he said, "and I am just going to mix some for the pigs."

He put his hand in a third box, took a tin dipper, and lifting it out full of bran, mixed it in the water with a stick.

"Oh! may we see the pigs?" cried Mary eagerly. "Come, mamma dear."

Mrs. Denville was going round the grain room, lifting more lids and murmuring to herself, "Cracked corn, buckwheat, oats, rye, wheat."

At Mary's request, she left the room, and followed Denno down a rather steep stairway.

"This is what we call the barn cellar down here, little miss," said the young man over his shoulder to Mary who was next him.

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"Why, it is lovely and light," exclaimed my little mistress. "I should think a barn cellar would be dark."

"Look at the windows," said her mother, "see the sun streaming in."

"It's as warm as toast here in winter, ma'am," said the young man. "Water never freezes here."

At this moment such a din arose that we could scarcely hear him. Mary in a great fright hid her face in her mother's arms, and I paused half-way down the steps to look about me.

## CHAPTER XIII

### PIGS, COWS AND CHICKENS

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There were several pig-pens. As the young man explained to us later, it does not do to put pigs of different sizes together. The big ones impose on the little ones, and push them away from the feeding-troughs, so all Farmer Gleason's pigs were in assorted sizes.

They were the rudest pigs I ever saw, but of course I have not seen many live ones. I have seen plenty of dead ones in Boston. Their manners had plenty of repose, but these creatures were yelling, jumping, pushing, snorting and charging each other as if they were crazy. Each pen wanted to be fed first.

Mary soon grew calm, then she began to laugh and scream, for the pigs excited her. She and her mother stood on one side, while Denno went up- and down-stairs with more feed. He got some milk from a hogshead—and the milk almost set them wild. They pushed and slobbered till each pig's head was covered with white, and even the man had to laugh, though he said he saw their greedy goings-on twice every day of his life.

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The man had to do his work, and could not stay in the barn cellar, so Mrs. Denville and Mary and I followed him up-stairs.

Little Mary was wiping her eyes, and I heard her promising herself many visits to the pigs in future.

When we got to the barn floor, Denno ran up the ladder where Thummie had gone, and began to throw down hay.

Mrs. Denville stepped along the floor, and called to Mary, "Come here, dear, and see the horses."

There were some fine box stalls there on the south side of the barn. Glory and Dungeon came forward, and put their heads out, expecting to receive a dainty of some kind.

"We have nothing now," said Mrs. Denville. "The next time we come, we will bring you some bread or lumps of sugar—what fine big creatures you are! Mary, here is a pony," and she passed to the next stall.

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"That is the children's pony," said Denno who at this moment came down from the ladder. "They call him Ponto."

The pony was very affectionate and gentle, and Mary could hardly bear to leave him. He was a dapper little fellow with a fine arched neck, and silky mane, and beautiful eyes.

"Come, I want to see the cows," said Mrs. Denville. "I wish to see the source of your excellent milk supply."

The cow stalls ran all along the other side of the barn. Denno took us in, for Mrs. Denville was rather nervous.

"They wouldn't hurt you, ma'am," he said; "still, if you're frightened, don't go too close."

"This is Miss Molly," he said, pointing to a fine red cow who had a chain round her neck, and was having a good feed of something from a box. "She is no particular breed, but a grand milker. This is a Jersey," and he passed to the next stall.

"Oh, what eyes, mamma," murmured Mary, "what eyes."

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The cow had eyes like big brown ponds. They were beautiful country eyes, and she turned them on us in a calm and deliberate way.

We were walking behind the cows, but this one seemed so gentle that Mrs. Denville stepped forward, and glanced in her manger. "What is she licking in there?"

"Rock salt, ma'am," said Denno. "They all have a big lump, and they set great store by it."

There were six or seven more cows, all sleek, fat and clean.

"Do you groom them the way you do the horses?" asked Mrs. Denville.

"Yes, ma'am, but not so much. We would if we had time, but this is the busy season, and we're just jumping."

Mary was giving one of her happy little shrieks. "Oh! mamma, see what I have found. I almost stepped on it."

I had seen it before she did. It was a pretty little red calf tied near one of the cows. Oh! how anxious that cow was about it.

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"Is it her baby?" asked Mary.

Denno told her that it was.

"Then why don't you put it in with her?" asked my little mistress.

"It wouldn't do, little miss. It would be taking milk all the time. We always keep the calves tied all day, except a little while night and morning when they can get all the milk they like from their mother. But I guess I'll begin pretty soon to let this calf out to pasture."

"Are these cows going out to-day?" inquired Mrs. Denville.

"Oh, yes, ma'am. I'm late getting them milked. A neighbor's son hurt his foot, and I had to go help attend to it. Usually I milk by daylight, and get the cows out of the stable. So-so, bossy," he went on.

Going in beside the cow he called Miss Molly, he unfastened her chain, and allowed her to leave her stall.

She immediately went to a kind of trough at one side of the stable, where there was running water. What a good long drink she had. Then she leisurely made her way toward a door in the north side of the barn, stood for a few seconds in the doorway, as if, Mrs. Denville said, she were admiring the magnificent view of the Purple Hills in the distance.

Denno was unloosing the other cows, and as Miss Molly heard them coming behind her, she stepped down a sloping walk, and entered a large green field that stretched away beyond the river.

"I suppose she won't come back till dark," said Mrs. Denville.

"No, ma'am," replied Denno, "but she'll be here then, waiting to get in that door, and all the other cows with her."

"Don't they ever run away like naughty children?" asked Mary.

"No," replied the man, "they don't run away, but sometimes if we are careless about our fences, they get into the neighbor's pastures. Usually though, they come right home. You see they love their stable. Mr. Gleason keeps them clean and comfortable, and gives them extra feed, and cows know when they are well off as well as human beings. They like to sleep in their own beds. Some of the neighbors have to run all over their pastures hunting cows at night but we never do."

"Mamma, what are you laughing at?" inquired Mary taking her hand.

Mrs. Denville's face was very much amused. "I was just thinking, Mary," she said, "how many points of similarity there are between human beings, and the lower order of animals. These cows are just like us in one respect. They like a quiet, happy home. You remember what an unhappy household there is next us in Boston. The mother delicate and fretful, the servants unruly, the master of the house a tyrant. Their sons hate to come home. I have seen them entering the front door late in the evening with a regretful air, as if they were saying, "I wish I did not have to spend the night here —""

"And papa just hurries home," concluded Mary, as her mother paused with a slight frown, as if to say, "I should not be talking about my neighbors."

"How large is the pasture?" asked Mrs. Denville hurriedly of the young man, and as she spoke, she walked to the open door.

"It goes across the river, and away back of that wood, ma'am. You can't see the cows when they are at the further end of it."

"I should like to walk back there," said Mrs. Denville. "Would it be too far for you, Mary?"

"Oh, no, mamma," said my little mistress, but just as we were about to step out through the doorway, Denno said, "Don't you want to look at the oxen, ma'am?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Mrs. Denville, and she went back into the stable.

Denno proudly opened a half-door that led into a very large stall. There were two enormous creatures in there, and I was quite frightened of them.

"Are they cows?" asked Mary in an awed voice.

"No, oxen," replied her mother. "They do the work of horses. Are you going to let them out, Denno?"

"Yes, ma'am. They go to pasture days that we are not working them."

Mrs. Denville and Mary drew up very close in one of the vacant cow stalls, and Denno let out the big animals.

They were beauties, dark red with fine large eyes and big horns. They gave us a calm, steady look as they passed by, then they too went on out into the sunshine.

As soon as they disappeared, Denno seized a big broom and began to sweep and tidy the stable, so that the cows would find it in order when they came home at night.

Mrs. Denville and Mary went out-of-doors, and I, of course, followed them.

Beyond the big barn was what Mr. Gleason called his young orchard. Young, I suppose, because the trees were small, and just on the edge of this orchard stood a red building having many windows.

"It looks like a hen-house," said Mrs. Denville, "let us go and see."

We walked toward it, found ourselves confronted by a wooden fence that bounded the pasture. I easily went under it, and after a little searching, Mrs. Denville found a gate. She and Mary went through, then we approached the little building and looked in.

The door was wide open. Inside, there were plastered walls and ceiling and a number of perches. It was as clean as wax, and if it had not been for the perches, if we had seen tables and chairs, I should have said it was some little house for human beings. I am sure many poor people in cities have not a home as snug as Farmer Gleason's hens have.

The windows were open, and the whole place was as quiet as—well, as quiet as the rest of the things in the country. The floor was covered with grass sods, and Mrs. Denville stepping softly in asked, "Is there any one at home?"

"Ka, ka, ka," said a demure voice.



"Oh! the nest boxes," remarked Mrs. Denville in a voice equally demure, and she approached the wall where there were fastened up some rows of things that I did not understand.

It seems they were nest boxes. I crept closely after Mrs. Denville, then, as I could not see, I sprang on the rack of perches.

Oh! how cunning! There in that nice roomy nest, on a clean straw bed, sat a fat gray hen with a red comb and the quaintest air in the world.

"She is likely sitting on eggs," said Mrs. Denville, "hens are shy at such times. We must not frighten her."

"Oh, mamma," exclaimed Mary, "I must stroke her," and she reached out one cautious finger.

"Be careful," said her mother, but her caution was not needed. The hen was evidently a great pet, for she only pecked kindly at Mary's finger, and said again gently, "Ka! Ka! Ka!"

"I wonder how many eggs she has," continued Mrs. Denville, and she gently pushed the hen on one side.

The gray biddy, far from resenting this familiarity, agreeably stepped off the nest, said very loudly a number of times, "Ka! Ka! Ka!" and went up to a dish of water where she took a great many drinks.

Little Mary was squealing with delight. There was one new-laid egg in the nest beside a china nest egg.

"May I have it? May I have it?" she cried, and Mrs. Denville said, "Certainly, if you will explain to Mrs. Gleason how you got it."

"Why, here are more nest eggs," said Mrs. Denville, and she examined the other boxes, "and quite a number of eggs. We must get a basket, and come up here for the fresh eggs every day. It will amuse you, Mary, and save Mrs. Gleason trouble."

The gray hen after drinking all she wished, had taken to cackling.

"Poor biddy, biddy," said Mrs. Denville in a clear voice, "Mary and I will bring you up some food."

The moment she made that promise, she had more claimants on her favor. I never saw anything more funny than the way in which more hens arrived after she raised her voice. They seemed actually to spring out of the earth, and little Mary squealed with delight.

First of all, a big, white rooster came running round the corner of the hen-house, his legs just sticking out behind him. He drew up quickly when he saw Mrs. Denville, as if to say, "Why, here is a stranger, what are you calling us for?" Then, as if persuaded that she had something for him, he glanced over his shoulder, and called to the hens, "Kut, kut, ka, da dee. Come on, girls, there is nothing to be afraid of."

The girls came cackling, running, complaining, and pushing for front places.

Mary was very much disappointed to think that she had nothing for them. Mrs. Denville, however, found a little mixed grain covered up in a box and this she gave to Mary.

Oh! how tame those hens were. They crowded round my little mistress, and ate from her hand, and I nearly collapsed with laughter as I listened to their talk. Mary and her mother could not understand them, but I did.

"Kut, kut, girls," said the rooster, "these strangers have good faces. Must be some relation to the Gleasons. Don't be frightened, girls. Stuff yourselves all you can. We don't get much grain these days since we are allowed to run in the orchard. A little corn sits well on the angleworms in the crop. Hurry up, girls, the sun is getting high, there are lots of eggs to be laid."

Then the hens would answer him. "Ka, ka, the Leghorn is pushing me. I can't get at the little girl's hand. It is a small hand anyway. That Plymouth Rock just pecked me—I've got a horse mane oat in my throat—it's stuck fast, let me to the water dish. I don't like these strangers much. I wish the children would come home. Some one pulled my tail—I say, it's mean to push."

Then the rooster would settle their differences, stepping very high and going gravely from one to another. I don't know much about hens. I never had any chance to study them in Boston, but I easily saw that this rooster was a good fowl. He was vain, that was his one fault. Mrs. Denville told Mary that he was a white Wyandotte, and a very handsome creature.

He understood her, and after that he was so proud that he could not eat. He just strutted. "Do they see my legs, girls?" he chuckled in his throat to the hens, "do they see my nice fine legs, and the big spurs just like a gamecock's? Oh, I hope they will notice my legs. It is all very well to praise my body, but I am very proud of these nice clean feet. Not a scale on them. Listen, girls, they're giving me more praise. Oh! isn't it lovely. I am so happy I can't eat. I wish my comb hadn't got frost-bitten last winter. It has marred its beauty just a little bit. Oh, girls, this is a proud day for your lord and master, when ladies from Boston give him such delicious taffy."

I had to laugh myself to hear him. Mary was perfectly convulsed, though she did not understand him as I did, and had to guess at his meaning.

He had a good business head too, for the instant that the grain was gone, he made his hens follow him to the orchard.

"Not the meadow, girls," he said sharply, as some of them seemed inclined to rebel and go down by the river. "Didn't I tell you you must give the grubs a rest there for a while? Follow me to the orchard," and he strutted along, and pecked, and clucked, and looked after them till they all went

meekly after him. Then we saw him in the distance, scratching for worms, calling his girls and giving them everything he found. I did not see him eat once while we were watching.

Oh! what a good walk we had, after the hens left us. Mrs. Denville with Mary hanging on her arm, sauntered down the gentle hillside to the meadow. There we came to the river, and Mary took time to strip off her shoes and stockings, and paddle in it.

There were willows and alders growing all along the edge of it. Mrs. Denville said the farmer had planted them there to keep the watercourse from changing, then there were small things, peppermint, spearmint, and goldenrod, which Mrs. Denville said would blossom toward autumn, and wild hop vines, and little Mary brushing in among them, bruised the leaves which filled the air with perfume. 225

After she had got tired of paddling in the water, she put on her shoes and stockings, and we went over a foot-bridge, and across another meadow, then up through an orchard of pear trees and across a field of winter rye, and then—then into the most beautiful wood I have ever seen.

It was not like the parks about Boston, lovely as they are. They have a calm, cultivated air. This wood in Farmer Gleason's land is wild. Things grow any way they like. First are the tall pine trees. I felt myself such a very little cat as I stared up at their long, straight trunks, and their green heads away up, up against the blue sky. What happy trees to be so very far up in the air! It must be the next best thing to flying.

Under the pines, were shorter trees, some with big leaves—hardwood trees, but mostly spruces and firs, shorter and more stubby growths. They were all lovely, anyway, then under them, spread huckleberry and blueberry bushes. What crops we shall have later, for we saw thousands and millions of little berries forming. 226

In one place, we saw a cranberry bog. I stepped on it, and found it very soft for my feet, softer than the softest carpet in the Denvilles' house in Boston. The earth seemed to be spongy underneath, then there was moss, and then the pretty trailing vines of cranberry.

I am very fond of turkey with a suspicion of cranberry sauce. I hope the farmer's wife will give us some.

Well, we stayed in that wood till dinner time, for here dinner is at twelve. Mrs. Denville and Mary took off their hats, and sat down with their backs against the same tree trunk, and they ate the strong, sweet wintergreen leaves and talked about the beauties of nature, and then they went to sleep, and only woke when a dismal sound came faintly to us.

Mrs. Denville sprang up. She said she thought she was in a steamer, and the foghorn was blowing. Then she remembered that country people blew a horn for meals, so she took her little daughter by the hand, and they both walked slowly back to the house. 227

We had a very odd dinner. "Pork and beans," Mrs. Gleason called it. It tasted very nice here, but I have a feeling that I wouldn't like it in the city. The farmer says it is very "hearty," and he has a good deal of it as the haying season approaches.

Well, I must go to sleep. I am tired of reviewing the events of this day, pleasant as they have mostly been. If it weren't for Serena, I should not have a worry to-night.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MY SISTER GIVES A LECTURE

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The mole-hunt is over, and Serena is an enlightened cat. She says she wants to go back to the city. I wish I could get her there, for these country cats have covered her with confusion and mortification.

That old Blizzard is a reprobate. He was the originator of the whole thing. Slyboots is an immensely clever cat. She sees through him—she says he has been ruler and dictator in this country district for years. He heard that a bevy of Boston cats was coming. Fearing lest we should snatch his empire from him, he determined to deal us a crushing blow at first.

Seizing upon Serena as the most gullible one of the party, he has made a fool of her. Now all the country cats are laughing at us, and our influence is gone.

I knew yesterday that Serena was going mole-hunting with him and Rosy, but I did not know that the mole-hunt was to be preceded by a lecture till this morning, when Joker went round to every cat in the house, even to old Grandma, and informed us with a grinning face, that as soon as it got dark this evening, a lecture on "Felines" would be delivered out behind the barn by the thoroughbred Angora, Serena of Boston.

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His grin, when he pronounced the word "thoroughbred," was so significant, that I at once jumped to the conclusion that he had heard Serena's remarks about herself on our day of arrival, and that he knew she was not pure bred. If he kept the knowledge to himself, all would be well. If he didn't, Serena's reputation for truthfulness was gone.

Well, I did not worry much about this, nor about the lecture. She could speak well enough, if she chose, but I did continue to worry about the mole-hunt.

The day passed somehow or other. Mary and her mother kept on exploring the farm. I went over the house with them. It *is* a queer house. The lower part is all new and fresh, but the upper part has odd little rooms and windows and dark closets, and funny wall-paper. A bat flew out of one dark closet. These rooms are about eighty years old, Mr. Gleason said. He took us over the house, and he laughed and chuckled when Mary shivered and grew pale in the attic, and kept close to her mother.

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"Why, there are no ghosts now, sissy," he said, "and all these things wouldn't hurt you," and he waved his hand about at the old-fashioned furniture and extraordinary clothes that fill the rooms in this old part.

Mary said she did not like them, and she was glad when we came down from the attic and Mr. Gleason locked the door behind us.

Through the day a great many men drove up under the trees and up by the carriage-house, or out by the barn to see Mr. Gleason. I heard some of their talk. They were selling horses and cows and all kinds of machines, and they wanted to borrow money or have a talk—no one seemed in a hurry, and Mr. Gleason stood about and talked while they were there, but when they left the work went right on. He had another man working with Denno, and they were very busy, hoeing, and pulling up weeds from the long rows of potatoes and turnips and carrots and all kinds of vegetables in the big field on the south side of the barn.

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The veranda was a very pleasant place to lie. No one hurt us cats, and we could see all that was going on. However, Slyboots found a better place, and at dinner time she introduced me to it.

It was an upper veranda over the lower one. Here we could see just as well when we lay on the chairs and looked through the railing, and we were absolutely out of the way, for no one sat on this veranda.

Slyboots liked this, and here I sat all the afternoon with her, while Mary and her mother went driving. Mr. Denville took them, and Mona, and Dolly, and Barlo followed after the carriage. They took Mona somewhere to have her hair cut, and when they came home I laughed so heartily at her appearance that I rolled right over on the veranda.

Her magnificent coat was all gone, except a ruff round her neck, and a little tuft on the end of her tail. It was too ludicrous to see her. She seemed shorn of her glory, but, of course, she could not see how ridiculous she looked, and she acted just the same as ever.

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I ran down to see her just before supper, and had a long talk with her. She was lying out under one of the trees on the lawn, and I crept up beside her and purred all my troubles in her sympathetic ear.

"You can't do anything with Serena," she said, "let her go on and learn her lesson. I fancy, from what you tell me, that Blizzard, is going to play her some trick. He won't hurt her, don't you be afraid. She is too conceited. She wants taking down."

"But she is my sister!" I said.

"Well, you stand ready to comfort her after her pride has had a fall. Blizzard and Rosy don't like her, and I don't think they have any idea of hurting anything but her self-conceit."

"That is all very well," I replied, "but I should like to know what they are planning."

Mona looked round her in a puzzled way. "I don't know what I can do to help you, unless I could make some cat confess what is going on. There is Joker. Just you step out of sight."

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I did as she told me, and then watched her as she slowly sauntered out toward the road *via* the

orchard. She was sniffing at the ground as if in search of bones that had been buried, and Joker coming deliberately home from Blizzard's farm, had no suspicion that Mona had designs upon him.

He knew perfectly well that Mona was used to cats, and had no idea of hurting them, so I fancy he was a pretty surprised young fellow, when Mona gave one bound, and laid her great paw on him.

She put her head right down beside him, and kept him crouching for a few minutes. Then she let him go, and he went leaping toward the house while Mona came toward me.

She was grinning almost as badly as Joker does, but there was more sense in her face than there is in his silly one.

"I've found out everything," she said, sinking on the ground, for she was tired after her long run behind the carriage, "and you need not be uneasy. The secret of the mole-hunt is a very simple one."

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"Can't you tell me, Mona?" I asked anxiously.

"No, Pussy. I promised Joker not to give him away. But you need not worry. These country cats are only going to have a little fun with your sister. They won't hurt her."

My heart felt very much lighter, and I went in the house and up to the veranda to tell Slyboots.

This was late in the afternoon. After supper Aunt Tabby came quietly creeping out from the house, and asked me if I were going to the lecture.

"Oh, yes," I said uneasily.

"Perhaps you would like to go along with me," she said. "I can tell you who the strangers are."

She was such a quiet, respectable cat that I gladly embraced her offer. It was not yet nearly dark, but she said we had better go early, so we could get a good seat, and see what fun might be going on.

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I asked what she meant by "fun," and she said that when there was any kind of a public gathering, the young cats would often have wrestling matches.

So Slyboots, Aunt Tabby, and I, crept quietly away from the house, and trotted up behind the barn. Mona saw us going, and gave me an intelligent look, but she did not offer to follow us.

I did not think the back of the barn a very good place for a gathering, but Aunt Tabby pointed out to me the piles of old boards near by, where the cats could take shelter in case of fright.

I wanted to get up on the top of a hogshead that was standing there, but Aunt Tabby would not let me, for she said that place was reserved for the lecturer. She guided me to a nice spot, where a plank had been laid across some fence posts. We three sat on it near the hogshead, and there was, of course, room for many more cats beside us.

Soon they came trooping along. My! what a number of cats. I soon got confused among so many, and asked Aunt Tabby why the neighborhood was so alive with cats.

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"There is a great deal of grain raised in this valley," she said, "and the mice bother the farmers almost to death. In summer it is not quite so bad, for the mice take to the fields, but in winter it is dreadful. The barns are alive with them and sparrows, and we cats have to work pretty hard, not to clear out the mice and sparrows altogether, for we can't do that, but to keep them down." Then she added, after a time: "These are not all neighborhood cats. Some have come as far as three miles. You see, we don't often have a chance to hear a lecturer from Boston."

"Who is that big white cat with a yellow patch over his eye?" I asked, "that one who is coming along under the apple trees quite alone?"

"That is old Circumnavigation," she replied, "a cat belonging to a retired sea-captain who lives a quarter of a mile from here. He has been round the world six times with his master and is a fine cat. Those Tibbetsets I don't like quite as much. See, they are walking behind him, two twin Tippet cats. Neighbors of his, but low-down creatures. We don't associate with them."

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I looked at Aunt Tabby in surprise. I had never heard her speak so sharply about any cat before.

It was getting dusk now, but, of course, we could all see quite well. The arriving cats were arranging themselves in groups or rows on the piles of boards. Soon one young Maltese cat sprang down to the square of grass in front of the hogshead, and began to walk up and down, and lash his tail.

"He is daring some one to come and wrestle with him," Aunt Tabby informed us.

His challenge was soon answered. Another young cat, this one gray in color, sprang down from the boards to meet him.

They closed with each other, and began to wrestle and tumble about. It was very funny to see them, until they grew angry, and began to pull hair.

"That is nearly always the way," sighed Aunt Tabby, "a wrestle ends in a fight. There goes the Maltese cat's father. Why doesn't he keep out of it?"

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A very spiteful-looking old Maltese cat, seeing that his son was under the gray, took it upon himself to interfere, whereupon another big cat who was, Aunt Tabby said, an uncle to the gray, also took it upon himself to interfere.

The two big old cats, and the two young ones, had a regular mix-up. They were pommelling each other in grand style, when a shriek was heard from the orchard.

The Maltese cat's mother was just arriving, and hearing that her son and husband were fighting, she threw herself upon their opponents, and being promptly seized by the old gray cat, got her ears boxed for interfering.

She was in a fearful temper. Standing a little aside, she just yelled to all her friends and relatives for help. There was a dreadful scene after that. Reserved seats, and other seats were vacated, and the conflict became general. Only Aunt Tabby, Slyboots and I sat on the fence.

"Oh! this is awful!" I said. "Never in Boston, where cats are supposed to have such powerful voices, have I heard such yelling and caterwauling."

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"They had better look out," remarked Aunt Tabby, "or the dogs will hear them. They are too near the house for such a racket."

"Will any one come out alive?" I gasped. "Oh! this is terrible! Surely half will be crippled for life," and I gazed in fascinated terror at the big, whirling, moving, hairy bunch of cat figures leaping, vaulting, yelling and spitting like furies.

Slyboots was grinning. "I see mother cats pitchin' into their own young ones," she said sarcastically. "I guess they don't know what they're about."

Aunt Tabby was not nearly as concerned as we were. "Cats round here often have such bouts," she said, "when they come together. You see our lives are quiet, and we like a little excitement occasionally."

"But don't they kill each other?" I mewed at the top of my voice, in order to make myself heard above the tumult about me.

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"When this scrimmage is over," replied Aunt Tabby, "there won't be a bunch of hair the size of your head on the ground. It's mostly fuss and fury—It's a pity Blizzard isn't here. He would enjoy this. He gets round on such occasions, and nips every cat he has a grudge against. It's a great chance to pay off any old scores."

"There's Blizzard," she cried, "and your sister, and Joker, and Rosy."

Sure enough, four cat figures were coming hurriedly round the corner of the barn. I learned afterward that Blizzard and Joker had attempted a dignified escort of Serena to the lecturer's hogshead, but on hearing the tumult, and making the discovery that the dogs were after us, they broke into a run.

Joker stood on his hind legs, and sprang in the air just yelling, "Dogs!" and old Blizzard leaping in among the combatants, dealt a cuff here, and a kick and bite there, and shrieked at the top of his voice, "Dogs!—take to the cranberry bog."

Aunt Tabby understood. "Come," she said, and we were the first to leave the scene of action.

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Springing off the fence, she ran like the wind across the now dark pasture, where little Mary had walked so gaily this morning.

It was, and still is, a lovely night, for I am only thinking over the events of a few hours ago. The sky was a dark blue, the stars were shining, the air was sweet and redolent with wild flower blossoms, the grass was dewy beneath our feet.

Aunt Tabby went like a shot down to the meadow, over the foot-bridge, and across the ploughed land to the big pine wood.

She knew her way to the cranberry swamp, and when we got there, she quickly chose the best place for us to sit.

"That old stump in the middle will be your sister's place," she said to me.

We were on a little moss-covered hillock, close to it. Really, we did have about the best place there.

Soon other cats arrived, mostly out of breath and excited. They seemed to be enjoying themselves, and showed every emotion much more plainly than city cats do.

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Serena, Rosy, Blizzard and Joker were the last to arrive. They came slowly and tried to make a dignified entrance. Passing in a grand way between the groups and rows of cats almost covering the little bog, Blizzard led the way to the big stump.

There was only room for two cats to sit comfortably on it, so he scowled at Rosy and Joker, and made them go elsewhere. They promptly came and crowded on the hillock beside us, and for the rest of the time we were nearly squeezed to death. However, I did not think about my own discomfort, in my intense interest to know how Serena would act and what she would say.

I really wished that my parents could see her. She sat demurely on the dark stump, while Blizzard made the opening speech. She had groomed herself well, and she looked a very handsome and aristocratic figure of a cat, compared with the plebeian-looking Blizzard.

He introduced her in a flourishing way, "Cats and kittens, we have this evening a great and unexpected pleasure. Fresh from the haunts of culture, reeking with the emanations of art, bubbling over with the essence of criticism, a fair and gentle Boston cat has come to enlighten our dark minds."

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"He's makin' game of her," whispered Slyboots in my ear.

"Of course he is," I returned, "but hush! listen."

"For you know, cats and kittens," continued Blizzard persuasively, "we know nothing in the country, we are sunk in ignorance, our minds are low and degraded, our manners are repulsive and vulgar."

A groan rose from the assembly of cats, but he motioned with his paw and it subsided.

"Now, friends, listen attentively to this ladylike cat, this thoroughbred, pure-bred Angora—"

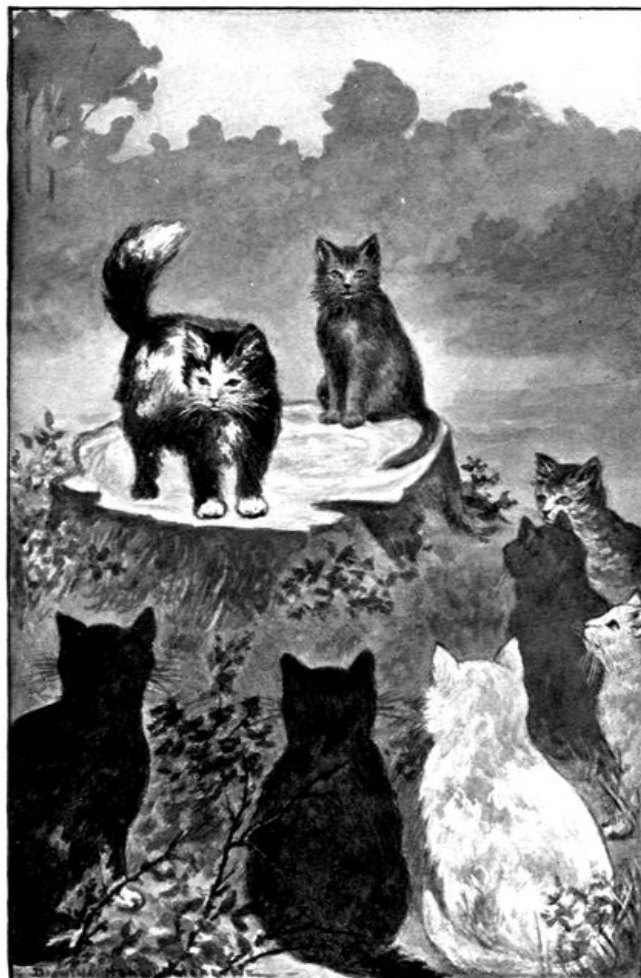
I groaned myself here, for the exquisite sarcasm of his tone told me that Joker had informed him that Serena was only half-bred.

"Try to remember what she says," pursued Blizzard, "try to live up to it—in short, try to be more like city cats, less like vulgar, countrified felines—and now, without further preamble, I will introduce to you the learned lecturer and exponent of cat rights and cat culture, Miss Serena Angora Maybelle Prince, of Boston."

I gasped at the long name. My sister had probably improvised it for the occasion.

She certainly was a very ladylike-looking cat as she gracefully bowed to Blizzard, who was retiring with a grin to the back of the stump, and then with equal grace bowed to her attentive audience.

"My friends," she said in a very sweet voice, "I stand before you this evening quite unprepared. I have only a few hastily thrown-together notes on cat-life and cat-character, which I beg your indulgence to receive," and then she proceeded to give a most elaborate and carefully thought-out address on cats.



"MY FRIENDS, ... I STAND BEFORE YOU THIS EVENING QUITE UNPREPARED."

She began with the cats of ancient times—the wildcat inhabiting the mountains—then she got to Egypt and told us of the sacred awe in which the cat was held there, of the temples raised and sacrifices offered in its honor. Finally she proceeded to Europe, and was on her way to America, but long before she got there I became tired, although she was my sister, and began to look about me.

Half the cats in her audience were asleep, many were yawning, and wishing they could sleep. A few had stolen away, a few looked mad. I did wish she would stop, but she had her head in the air, she saw only her own glorified self, and sailed on and on, till I thought I should scream from nervousness.

Blizzard sat behind her with the most inscrutable look on his face, and yet I felt that the longer she lectured the better he was pleased.

Presently I got up. I could stand it no longer. Creeping cautiously round the edge of the bog, I came up to the back of the stump where Serena stood. Reaching up, I stuck my claws in the end of her tail and gave it a slight pull.

She started irritably, and turned round.

"Oh, do stop," I said; "can't you see that you are tiring everybody to death?"

"I see nothing," she said blissfully, and she shut her eyes.

Blizzard snickered beside me. Oh! how pleased he was—the malicious fellow.

"Do wind up, Serena," I went on desperately, "everybody is sneering at you."

She pulled her tail away from me, and went on with her lecture, but I noticed that she did wind it up in about five minutes. I think her mind misgave her after all.

As soon as she concluded, Blizzard got up and moved a vote of thanks. Then as no one responded, everybody being too sleepy or too cross, he cleared the stump at a bound, and running down among the cats, went from one to another, whispering something in their ears.

An extraordinary animation took possession of them. They sprang up, ran to Serena almost in a body, and began saying the most extravagant and flattering things to her.

She immediately began to swim in another sea of glory, and darted occasional furious glances at me, as if to say, "Why did you interrupt me? See how my effort was appreciated."

That old scamp Blizzard! He had her completely under his influence. I was longing to get her to go home with me, but she would not do so. I knew it was of no use to ask her, so I waited. After the congratulations were over, the cats in a body began to leave the bog.

Blizzard, Rosy, Serena and Joker were at the head of the procession, and there was a great laughing and mewling going on.

"Let us follow," I said to Slyboots. Aunt Tabby had left us, and with a curious shake of the head when I asked her what was going to happen, had run back to the house. She said she had had excitement enough for one evening.

"This is the beginning of the mole-hunt," I whispered to Slyboots, and she nodded her head.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE MOLE-HUNT

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The cats ahead of us were leaving the pine wood, and were filing out between the big trees to the ploughed land. When we reached it, they went skipping and prancing over it to the meadow. Arriving there, the cats all stopped, and we heard Blizzard's upraised voice.

"Friends—all who are invited to be present at the mole-hunt, follow me. All others, go home."

This last command was meant for Slyboots and me, but we didn't wish to obey it.

"Come on," whispered Slyboots in my ear, "we'll fool him."

I ran after her. We two cats were the only ones to leave, and as we rushed along over the cool, dewy grass, Slyboots said to me, "Let's hide down here. They're coming this way."

I did not think it was quite an honest thing to do, however, I followed her. We pretended to go over the foot-bridge, but instead of that we turned aside, and went in among the alders. Here we found a great clump of ferns, and nestling down among them listened.

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I could not help thinking what a lovely night it was, as I lay there. The air seemed so soft against our bodies, and the freshness and the smell of it were so delightful to breathe. The air just felt as if no cats had ever breathed it before. In Boston, one often has a feeling that the air entering one's lungs has been breathed over and over again, till it is quite tired out, and has no life left in it.

It was not a very dark night, and having cats' eyes, we could see plainly the crowd that we had left behind us. Soon they came toward us, just as Slyboots had prophesied. We could hear Joker's loud, silly voice, and Blizzard's crafty one, with an occasional remark in Serena's clear, high-pitched one.

Slyboots and I were just crazy to fathom the mystery of the mole-hunt, so we listened most attentively.

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"We don't usually have such a gathering for a mole-hunt," Blizzard was saying, "but it was so kind and condescending in you to afford us the pleasure of hearing a lecture from you, that every cat in the neighborhood and beyond it wished to honor you."

As Slyboots said, the army of cats was coming toward us, and every word fell distinctly on our ears in the clear night air.

"Let me recapitulate," Serena remarked: "This mole-hunt is to be ushered in by a grand *battue*, which, of course, you understand is the act of beating woods and bushes for game."

"Exactly," we heard Blizzard exclaim in a kind of ecstasy, "how you understand things, Miss Serena! How you dive into the heart of an affair," and I could just imagine him turning round with a rapt grin to the cats behind him.

Slyboots, too, was disgusted, and grunted as Serena went on.

"I, as a guest you are delighted to honor, am placed by you at the entrance to a mole-hill. You retire with the other cats, and surrounding the game, drive it toward me. I catch it as it is about to enter its domicile," and here Serena paused, and I could fancy her shudder, for she does not like catching things.

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"Yes, yes," vociferated Blizzard, "true, true—I wish these country cats to have an exhibition of your physical ability. They already know your mental equipment—they have had a sample of your powers of mind. Now I wish them to benefit by that grace of movement, that agility without awkwardness, which to such a high degree, distinguishes the city cat from the country cat."

There was quite a round of applause and cat-yells at this, and I could imagine Serena's scruples giving away.

"I have never cared for catching mice," she said in an easy voice, "but you say a mole-hunt is quite different."

"Oh, yes," responded Blizzard, "a mole is an exquisite little animal, far softer, far prettier than a mouse; it has a shorter tail, a pointed nose, and cunning pink claws. Its eyes are hardly to be seen. I assure you, you will not mind clasping its little body in your claws."

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"And when do we come to the mole-hills?" inquired Serena.

"Right here," responded Blizzard, and the old rascal stopped at a few paces from us. "Get to work, cats and kittens, find the mole-hills, choose the best, then we will have the hunt."

The cats broke ranks and scattered hither and thither. It was a regular frolic for them, and I don't think any of them did much work, but Blizzard and Rosy. Joker just stood and grinned at Serena. If I had been in her place that idiotic, tell-tale face of his would have warned me, but there was a mist before the eyes of my poor, deluded sister. She saw only what she wanted to see.

In a few minutes Blizzard and Rosy had fixed upon a place, and the mischievous old cat raised his voice, "Cats and kittens!"

Immediately all the cats stopped their nonsense, and gathered round him.

"I have found three mole-hills, quite near each other," he said. "Now, Miss Serena, come near. Stand with your eyes fixed on these three small holes in the ground. The moles being night workers, are off for food. We will form a ring, surround them, and drive them toward home. Be all ready to spring as they arrive. Lay the dead in a little pile, then when we think all the moles have been

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driven from the surrounding fields, we will come back, and have a celebration over your victory. Now cats—away, follow me,” and the old fellow bounded off, as nimbly as a kitten.

Slyboots began to chuckle in a slow, enjoyable way. “I see their little game,” she said. “I track 'em.” “What is it?” I whispered eagerly. “I am all in the dark.”

She kept on chuckling, till the last shadowy cat form was out of sight. Then speaking very low, so that Serena would not hear her, for she was sitting quite near us on a little mound in the meadow, she murmured, “This is a put-up job. There ain't no moles near. They're foolin' Serena. She'll sit there a month afore a mole comes.”

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“Slyboots,” I gasped, “it is all a trick.”

“Jest so. Blizzard and all them cats has gone home laughin' like to kill themselves at the way they're foolin' your sister.”

“I'll go tell her,” I exclaimed, indignantly starting up.

“Hush—she'll ketch on,” and Slyboots laid a detaining paw on my shoulder. “There's no use in tellin' her now. She'd scoff at ye. Wait a bit, till she gets tired.”

I trembled with anger. Oh, how I wanted to bite Blizzard. Poor Serena! what a blow to her pride! The whole aim and object of the gathering this evening, had been to make a simpleton of her. My dear sister!

After a long time I said to Slyboots, “I should think if Blizzard is so desirous of humbling her, that he would want to wait and see her discomfiture when she finds that she has been deceived.”

“He may do that,” said Slyboots. “I should not wonder if he is in hiding somewhere watching, or else he may slip back.”

“How I would like to find him,” I said revengefully, “and beat him.”

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“You'd better let him alone,” remarked Slyboots warningly. “He'd dress you down in five minutes. Then don't forgit that your sister goes out of her way to show off.”

“I know she has brought it on herself,” I groaned. “Why did she not stay in the city, where affectation is more pardonable?”

Slyboots laughed softly. “You can put on airs in Boston, but don't ye try it in the country. It don't go down.”

Well, I don't know how long we sat there. It seemed to me half the night, but I suppose it was only an hour or two. At last Slyboots rose, stretched herself, yawned, and said, “I'm goin' home.”

“Let us go speak to Serena now,” I said eagerly. “Perhaps she will listen.”

Slyboots shook her head. However, she followed me, and we both crept over the dark cold meadow toward Serena. “Sister,” I said, “it's late. Come home with me.”

She gave me a dreamy glance, and then without speaking turned her head again. She was crouched in a graceful attitude near a tiny mound of earth.

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“The cats are deceiving you,” I continued, “they are not coming back.”

She gave me another peculiar glance. She seemed sunk in a doze of ecstasy, and my words fell on dull ears.

“They are fooling you, Serena,” I went on excitedly, “there are no moles to be driven in. I expect they are snugly down below you in the earth. Blizzard wishes to make a simpleton of you.”

Serena roused herself slightly at this. “Go away, you jealous kitten,” she said haughtily. “Blizzard told me that you were eaten up with jealousy of me, because I am handsomer and cleverer than you.”

I felt like a simpleton, and I suppose I looked like one, as I stared helplessly at Slyboots. Jealous of her! I had never thought of such a thing. However, I could not persuade her of it, and I had better not try.

“Come home,” whispered Slyboots in my ear, and throwing Serena one contemptuous glance, she walked away.

I followed her for a short distance. I was amazed at the cleverness and cunning of that wicked Blizzard. Suddenly I stopped short. “Slyboots,” I said, “it does not matter what Serena thinks of me. I am not going to leave her alone on that meadow to-night. I will creep back among the alders and watch.”

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Slyboots hesitated, and looked in the direction of the house, where we could see some lights twinkling, and then back at the dark meadow. I knew she wanted to go home, and lie on the feather bed; however, she kindly turned back with me, and we once more went to our old place among the ferns.

I soon went to sleep, and I think Slyboots did, too. I was awakened by a push from Slyboots. Sleepily opening my eyes, I heard a malicious voice speaking, squealing, laughing.

It was Blizzard, and he had come back to torture my sister. “Go home now, idiot,” he was saying, “go back to your prig of a sister, and tell her how we have fooled you. Oh, what a sweet morsel you are! How tender, how juicy! If I hadn't more sap than you, I wouldn't leave my mammy's side. How did you ever grow up with so little mind? What balderdash you gave us this evening! Cats of ancient times! Cats of fiddlesticks!”

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All the time he was speaking, he danced and pranced about my poor sister. He was so full of evil that he could not keep still. Rosy, sitting at a little distance, seemed to be listening approvingly to what he was saying.

Poor Serena! If ever I saw a crestfallen cat, she was the one. What a fearful fall her pride had had! She looked as if she could never hold her head up again.

Occasionally she gave him a bewildered glance, as if to say, "Are you really speaking the truth? Surely this is some game. In a few minutes you will be yourself again, and you will begin to praise me as you did formerly."

No, it was no game, and that conviction at last entered poor Serena's soul. She got up, turned sadly from him, and with drooping head and dejected limbs began to make her way to the foot-bridge. 259

Her attendant imp or demon seemed itching to get his paws on her. He ran close beside her, he taunted her shamefully, he advised her to go back to Boston, and let country cats run their own show, and at last, getting bold, he began to give her an occasional tap on the head.

My heart-broken sister resented nothing. She travelled slowly on. I think Blizzard could have killed her if he had wished to do so. Now was the time for us to show that she had friends. Without a word, Slyboots and I stepped from the alders and placed ourselves by her side.

Blizzard had begun to smell us, so we had no chance to surprise him, nor did we wish to do so. We were not hankering for a fight.

He fell back pretty quick, and we three went slowly up the path toward the barn, round the building where the dry wood is stored, and the carriage-house, and toward the back door which was wide open, for the Gleasons never close doors or windows at night. In the first place, there are no tramps here, and in the second, they could not get in if they came, on account of the dog Barlo. 260

As we come into the house from the east side next the barn, there is a small wood-house and then the kitchen. As we were about to go up the steps leading to the wood-house, there appeared the figure of a cat in the doorway.

It was Joker, and running to meet us he began to prance round us in an extravagant manner, and to taunt Serena. "Where is your mole—didn't you catch one? I expected to see you come home with half a dozen hanging from your mouth. You a thoroughbred! The cats are all bursting laughing at you. You're a half-breed!"

I looked at Slyboots. It did seem too bad that one of the conspirators should have been under our roof.

"Did you ever hear of the laws of hospitality, Joker?" I asked sternly.

"Laws—no," he said grinning idiotically, "but I know what claws be," and he pointed to Serena. "To catch moles—te, he, he," and he giggled in a most aggravating way. 261

We were all tired and sleepy, and had stood about all we could. Slyboots particularly was in a most irritable mood, and without one preliminary, such as a growl or grimace, she sprang at Joker, and didn't she drag him over that door-yard!

He made a fearful wailing, and heads began to come out of the open windows on this side of the house.

Denno threw down several pairs of boots, and at last a lot of water from a pitcher. That stopped the fight, or rather the attack, for Joker did not fight. He just yelled. Slyboots is a master-hand at fighting, as I very well knew. Joker will be sore for many a day. I am sorry to have him punished, and yet he has done very wrong and deserves all he got.

Well, after a time, we again started on our way up-stairs. Joker had run off somewhere, and Serena, Slyboots and I lie here on our feather bed.

I cannot sleep, for Serena needs comforting. She is perfectly crushed. She keeps moaning that she wants to go back to the city. She can't get there now. She will have to wait, but oh! how sorry I am for her. Her summer here is spoiled. She is so ashamed of herself that she does not know what to do. She has prided herself so much on her cleverness. She thought that these country cats were going to look up to her, and admire her, and have her for a leader, and now she sees that they despise her and make fun of her, and don't want to have anything to do with anything or any creature from Boston—and they have found out that she told a lie about being a pure-bred Angora. That is about the worst cut of all. 262

Well, I hope she will soon go to sleep. It is not interesting to think things over when such disagreeable things happen. It would be vastly more agreeable to sink into a sound, sweet sleep.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE RETURN OF THE CHILDREN

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We had a great surprise this morning. I can't help thinking it over as I sit here this evening on the feather bed, my body half asleep, but my mind awake and lively.

It was just about dinner time—that is, the early, noon dinner of the Gleasons—Slyboots and I were on the upper veranda. Serena was in here in this closet on the feather bed. She feels so terribly about her experiences of last night at the mole-hunt that I have not been able to get her to budge out of the house all day.

Well, Slyboots and I heard carriage wheels and looked down. There was a stout-looking woman driving a big horse harnessed to a double-seated express wagon in which sat beside herself three children. I knew that they must be the Gleason children coming home, so I got up and looked curiously through the veranda railing.

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Yes, there they were, the two little boys, and the little girl and their aunt. Mrs. Gleason ran out of the house and kissed her children, and Mary and her mother came out too.

My dear little mistress was greatly excited. I knew that she was, by the way she looked from her mother to the children. She was longing to go and speak to them, and presently Mrs. Denville took her hand, and led her forward.

The two boys were the queerest little fellows I ever saw. There is only a year's difference between their ages, and they look almost like twins. Timothy and Robert are their names. The girl is a little witch. Her name is Della. The two boys are prim and proper like two little old men. They keep together nearly all the time. The girl is flying about by herself all over the place. I fancied at first that Mary would like the little boys better than the little girl, but now I am beginning to think I was mistaken.

As soon as the aunt arrived this morning, her sister-in-law, Mrs. Gleason, said: "You will, of course, put your horse out."

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The fat woman nodded, and Mrs. Gleason went in the house and blew the dinner horn twice. That meant Denno, and he soon came running to take the aunt's horse to the stable. Then all the grown people went inside, and Mary and the little Gleasons stood staring at each other.

"Those your dogs?" inquired the little girl, pointing to Mona and Dolly.

Mary nodded her head.

"Got any more animals?" inquired Della.

"Yes, some cats and birds," replied Mary.

"Let's see 'em," returned Della with a commanding air, and Mary led the way up-stairs.

"I'm not going to be mauled by strange children," said Slyboots, and she fled. I stood my ground, and presently they all trooped out on the veranda.

The little girl gave a squeal when she saw my long hair. The boys said never a word, but they both stroked me gently.

"Say," remarked Della, "let's go see our own critters."

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Forgetting all about the birds, for which the canaries would be truly thankful, for they hate strangers, the children rushed down-stairs, and I came more slowly behind with Mary.

"Why don't you go faster?" inquired Della rebukingly, as she waited for us in the kitchen doorway.

Mary blushed furiously. "I can't," she said. "I have a weak back."

"Turn round," said the little girl peremptorily, "let me see it!"

Oh! how angry I was. I could have scratched her. Her request, or command, seemed so brutal when I thought of the sensitiveness of my dear little mistress.

I heard Mary making a choking sound in her throat. However, she did as she was told, and then Della who, if rough, is at heart a very kind child, did a very nice thing.

She passed her hand swiftly but gently up and down Mary's back, then she turned her round again and throwing her arms about her neck she kissed her heartily and said, "I'm sorry."

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The two boys stared hard at the girls, then, by common consent, they all walked slowly instead of running to the barn. Della put her arm round Mary's waist. It had not taken them long to get acquainted. My dear little mistress' face just beamed, and I saw that she would like these children.

When we reached the barn, Della went straight to the grain room. There she filled the pockets of her blue cotton dress with oats and cracked corn. Then she led the way to the horse stalls. Oh! how glad the horses were to see those children. They stretched their heads over the door and neighed and whinnied and Della and the boys rubbed and hugged them. As for the pony, he almost went crazy, and coolly opening the door of his stall, Della let him out. He followed her just like a dog, occasionally putting his nose over her shoulder to sniff at the oats in her hand.

The cows were all out to pasture. Della unfastened the calves, and let them play a little about the barn floor. I never saw such extraordinary antics in any young creatures. They were so awkward with their legs and heads—Mary laughed till the tears came in her eyes. After a while Della fastened

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up the calves, said, "Come on!" and, going out-of-doors, led the way round to the back of the barn, where a big door opened into the barn cellar. She would not go down the staircase, because the pony wanted to go with her.

Mary and the boys followed meekly behind. Della went up to the first pig-pen. The pigs knew her, and began to squeal. She had no food for them, so she got a stick and scratched their backs.

"What dirty creatures pigs are," remarked Mary with a shudder.

"They ain't dirty," said Della reprovingly. "Pigs are clean. Men are dirty, 'cause they don't give them clean bedding."

"But they are playing in such black stuff," said Mary.

"That stuff is nice sods from the meadow," said Della. "They have to work it over. Don't you know 'Root hog or die?'"

Mary said she did not, and Della went on. "Pigs like to play in the dirt, but my pa says a pig always wants a clean bed. Sometimes we keep pigs out in the pasture, and they make lovely clean beds for themselves of leaves and grass."

"How do they do that?" asked Mary.

"They carry the stuff in their mouths," replied Della, "and when it's going to rain they run fast and hurry to make a fresh bed. You can always tell when a storm is coming by the pigs."

Mary looked doubtfully at the boys, but they nodded their heads as if to say, "Our sister is right."

Della went from one pen to another. I looked through the cracks in the board fence about the pens. The pigs were nice-looking, and although each one was playing in the black earth, there was a clean bed of straw in the corner for them.

At the last pen Della opened the little gate leading to it and let a pig out. He was a pet pig called Bobby, and he was as pleased to see her as a dog would have been. He grunted with delight, and tried to rub himself against her, and she leaped and danced to get out of his way, for he was all covered with mud, and the more she sprang in the air the harder the boys and Mary laughed.

Finally they all went out in the sunshine again, the pig and pony following. "Now for the hens," said Della, and she lifted up her voice, "Bidly, bidly, bidly—chickie, chickie, chickie."

"Have you chickens?" inquired Mary eagerly. "I haven't seen any yet."

"Yes, two broods," said Della, "but the hens stole their nests away, and are pretty shy. However, I think I can get them. You and the boys stand here," and she went on a little way.

The pony and the pig followed her, but she did not seem to mind them. "Bidly, bidly, bidly," she called again, and then the hens came running from the meadow, the orchard, and one old hen, with a following of lovely yellow chickens, came out of the barn cellar behind us, and hurried toward Della.

The little girl sat down on the ground, and it was most amusing to see the hens gather round her. Some even got on her lap, and looked in her pockets for the grain that they knew she had. One old thing gave her a loving peck on the neck that made Della squeal.

"What friends!" exclaimed Mary admiringly. "How they love her!"

"She's always fussing round them," said Timothy, the elder of the two boys, "they ought to like her—Come on, Robert, let's go down to the river and have a swim."

Mary looked at them curiously. She could have stayed here all day watching the hens. Then she said, "Don't you like animals?"

Timothy looked at Robert, and Robert looked at Timothy, and finally the elder one said, "Yes, but we don't want to live and die with them the way Della does."

Just then the dinner-horn sounded, and without waiting for the girls, the two boys ran like the wind toward the house.

Della dismissed the hens, put the pig back in the pen, took the pony to his stall, then, accompanied by Mary, went to the house.

Her father made a great fuss about her. "Ho, ho!" he laughed catching her up in his arms, big girl though she was, "ho, ho! I'm glad to have my tomboy back, and my little sissies," and he winked at the two demure little boys.

Della wriggled away from him, and went to her mother's bedroom to tidy herself. The farmer and his men always washed their faces and hands and brushed their hair in a little wash-room off the kitchen.

In a few minutes every one was ready for dinner. Mr. Gleason sat at the foot of the table, his wife at the head, then there were the four children, the two men, and Mr. Gleason's sister. Mr. and Mrs. Denville, not caring for such an early dinner, were going to have theirs later.

The food smelt very nice and hot. They had beef and potatoes, turnips and lettuce, and a big plum pudding with a nice sauce. I sat under the table, and listened to all that was said. It was pleasant to have every one so happy. There was a good deal of laughing and joking, and no cross words.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MISCHIEVOUS GUINEA-HEN

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After dinner Della and Mary went out on the front veranda, and after Mrs. Gleason had given me something to eat, I trotted after them.

There were two hammocks on the veranda, and Mary was swinging in one, and Della in the other.

"How old are you?" the farmer's little girl was asking as I arrived.

"Twelve," said Mary.

"And I'm thirteen," returned Della. "I'm going to tell you a secret—just between you and me, and Pussy there," she added, looking down at me as I walked under her hammock.

"Very well," said Mary excitedly. "What is it?"

"You're going to be my second-best friend. I've got a best one, but I guess I can pass her on to another girl, then I'll have you for first best."

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"That's lovely," said Mary. "I'll be true to you, and you'll be true to me."

"We'll have to write our names in gore," murmured Della in a blood-curdling voice.

"In gore?" repeated Mary. "Whose gore?"

"Yours and mine. You take a pin and scratch your arm, then when the blood comes, you get a pen, and write your name and your best friend's name on a piece of paper. Then you fold it, and wear it in a little silk bag round your neck next your heart."

"We never do that in Boston," said Mary in dismay. "And I wouldn't scratch anybody's arm with a pin for the world. Why, you might get a germ in it."

"What's that?" inquired Della.

"A germ is a microbe, I think," replied Mary.

"And what's a microbe?"

"I fancy it's a bacillus."

"And what's a bacillus?"

"I don't know," said Mary frankly; "only it's something that might give you scarlet fever, or small-pox, or diphtheria, or measles, or lots of diseases. No, Della, you must never scratch yourself with a pin. If you just have to take a splinter out of your hand, hold a needle point in the flame of a candle before you stick it in you. That kills the disease germs."

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"Why, I must be full of diseases," said Della in a queer voice. "I stick a pin in myself every day of my life."

"Of course there are little healthy germs in us," pursued Mary, "that fight the unhealthy ones. There's always a battle going on, or else we'd all die right off, of some disease."

"Is that why I feel so queer sometimes inside of me?" continued Della.

"I don't know. I dare say it is," replied Mary. "I'm not much of a doctor. I hear mamma and papa talking about these things."

Della looked thoughtful, but made no answer, as she was watching a man drive into the yard. After jumping from his wagon he lifted out a box and put it on the back door-step.

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"That's Bill Seaforth," said Della. "He wants to see daddy, I guess," and she sprang out of the hammock and ran to the kitchen door.

Mary and I followed more slowly.

"Hello, Mr. Seaforth," said Della. "How are you?"

"Oh! I'm whippin' the cat," he said easily. "How's all your care?"

"Whipping the cat," I repeated in a shocked voice to Aunt Tabby, who was sitting on the door-step. "What does he mean?"

"It's just a country expression," she said. "He's always saying something queer."

But it was Della who was saying the queer thing now. "We're all stubbin' along," she said cheerfully. I could not help smiling. It sounded like tight shoes.

"Is your pa above ground?" pursued the man.

"No, he's in the barn cellar," said Della, "beddin' the pigs."

"I'll resurrect him," said Mr. Seaforth. "He owes me two dollars for them two hawk guards."

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"Oh! the guinea-hens," said the sharp, young Della, who seemed to know all her father's business. "Do you s'pose, Bill Seaforth, that they'll actshually scare the hawks?"

"Well, if we ain't all black liars up on the Little Purple Hill, they do," drawled the man.

"Denno says it's all bosh," remarked Della, "however, I'll tell pa."

The man did not seem at all offended with her, and she hurried to the barn.

In a few minutes Mr. Gleason appeared, and seizing the box and followed by the man, he made his way to the hen-house.

Mary who was delighted with this new happening, followed closely behind, and I kept at the heels of her pretty Boston shoes. Della wore brass-toed ones.

Arrived at the hen-house, the farmer called us all in, closed the door, and let the guinea-hens out. Mary was convulsed with amusement. It seemed she had never seen any creatures like this before, and her fascinated eyes followed them, as they went round and round the hen-house uttering plaintive, little cries, and walking with mincing steps like two little old women.

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"They look as if they had little gray shawls on," said Mary. "Oh! how queer they are—what tiny heads."

"Ain't as brainy as hens," said the man who had brought them, "and they wander powerful. You'll have to keep 'em in limbo for a while."

They all stood for a long time watching the guinea-hens. I used to marvel at the amount of time everybody had in the country. Nobody hurried, and yet they worked for a longer time each day than the people in Boston.

Finally the man got his two dollars and went away, and Mary, Della and I went back to the hammocks.

Serena was very much interested in my account of the guinea-hens. She wasn't going out much those days. She kept indoors, except at night when she took a little walk all about the barn. This particular evening she stole up to the hen-house to see the guinea-hens, and when the time came for them to be let out, as they had become "wonted" to the place, she used to lie under a clump of rose-bushes and watch them. Their actions interested her very much. They trotted all round the house, the barn, and the carriage-house, only stopping occasionally to eat.

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"They're humbugs," said Serena. "I've seen a swift hawk take two chickens to-day, when the guinea-hens were only a few feet away from him. They never opened their beaks, and he wasn't a bit afraid of them. There he is coming back."

"Meow, meow," I said loudly, and I ran toward Mary who had thrown herself on the grass at the side of the house, and was reading a book.

She looked up. The bird soaring overhead appeared in the distance like one of Della's blue homing pigeons that nested in the loft of the carriage-house. When it came near, we saw it was larger than a pigeon. Like a bullet it dropped over an unsuspecting mother hen, seized one of her baby chickens, and bore the dear little thing up in the air with its legs dangling helplessly.

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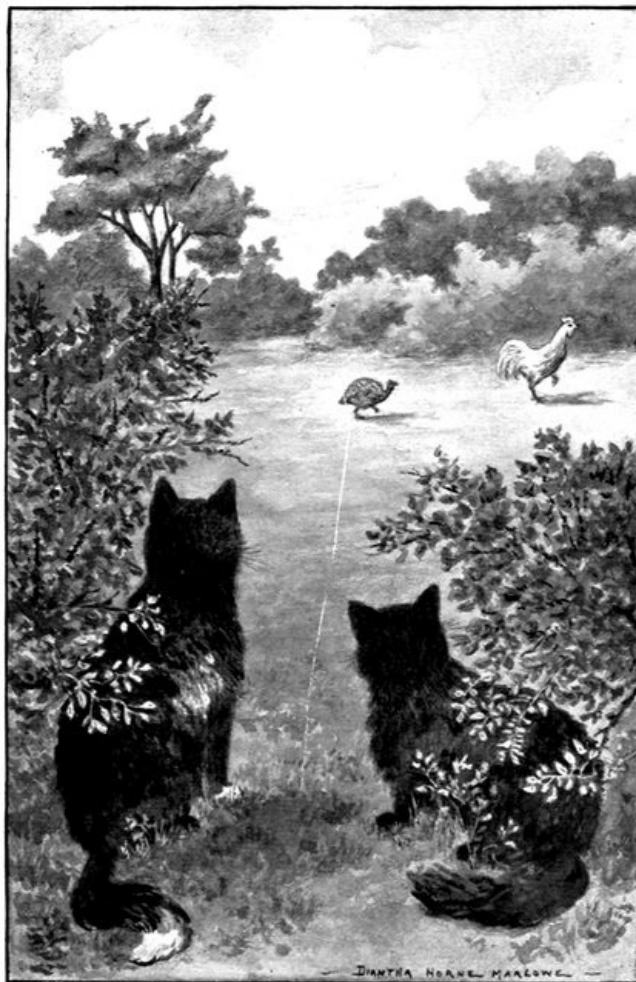
Mary burst into tears, and tried to find Della.

"I hate those guinea-hens," said Serena contemptuously. "You just lie down here beside me, sister, and watch. You have seen one of their sins of omission, now find out one of commission."

I didn't know what she meant, but I crouched down beside her. She was much nicer to me since the downfall of her pride, and I really enjoyed being with her.

"Now," she went on, "keep your eyes on the smaller of those old maids."

I always laughed when she called the guinea-hens the old maids, for with their little, prim ways, and gray tippet-like feathers, they certainly did look like bachelor hen girls.



“THE ROOSTER KEPT SO FAR AHEAD THAT NO ONE BUT OURSELVES SUSPECTED THE MISCHIEF SHE WAS DOING.”

“Just see how one of the little wretches is persecuting that lovely big rooster,” said Serena viciously. I could not help smiling. “Dear Serena,” I said, “it is impossible that that small hen should worry that huge Wyandotte.”

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“You just observe,” she said decidedly, and I did observe. The hen, apparently trotting aimlessly round the back-yard and the wood-house, and the young orchard, was really all the time in pursuit of the Wyandotte. The rooster kept so far ahead that no one but ourselves suspected the mischief she was doing.

“I’ve watched her for two days,” said Serena, “she just trots after him. It makes him nervous, and he keeps going. Sometimes he gets so exhausted that he lies down. She’ll kill him if some one doesn’t notice.”

“What makes her do it?” I asked of my wise sister.

“I don’t know,” she said in a puzzled voice. “Just mischief, I fancy.”

“Why doesn’t he stop and beat her?” I went on. “He could do it in a minute.”

“She has got more brains than he has,” said Serena. “I don’t care if her head is small, she is his master.”

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“I’d like to punish her,” I said angrily. “I love that big Wyandotte. He is so noble and generous about the hens.”

“He hasn’t talked to them for two days,” said Serena. “I too liked to hear him say, ‘Come, girls,’ as he led them down to the meadow for worms. I can tell you how to get ahead of her, Black-Face, if you will. I’d do it myself, only I don’t want to attract attention.”

“How?” I asked eagerly.

“Get up and travel after her, till some one notices you. If you take to chasing, you’ll be remarked.”

My blood was boiling at the meanness of the guinea-hen. Why didn’t she go play with her sister, instead of chasing the poor Wyandotte! So I gladly adopted Serena’s suggestion, and started in pursuit of the little miscreant, keeping about three feet behind her. She didn’t like it, and kept looking over her shoulder, but I didn’t care. I kept on trotting, but I got terribly tired, for we went for an hour before any one but Serena noticed us. My sister lay under the bushes, encouraging me by kind glances whenever we went near her, but the poor Wyandotte in his despair led us a dance all over the place, and we seldom got near the rose-bushes.

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Strange to say, the first one to notice us was Mr. Denville. Like most men brought up in the

country, he was a very shrewd observer. About the middle of the afternoon he came out of the house to get a drink from the old well, where he said a moss-covered bucket had hung when he was a lad on the farm. There was a fine pump in the kitchen now, but he always came for his drinks to the well that he had had cleaned out, and equipped with a sanitary drinking fountain.

After he had satisfied his thirst, his eyes roamed over the meadows, and the pasture, and the hills in the distance, all of which were visible from the high land at the back of the house.

I saw his lips form the word "Beautiful!" The Wyandotte was just sprinting down from the barn to the chip yard. Mr. Denville barely noticed the three of us as we tailed by, but when, after leading us round the house, and the old orchard, back to the side door, the Wyandotte made again for the well, Mr. Denville gave us a puzzled glance.

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I threw him an appeal over my shoulder as we went travelling up to the spring where the trout lived. It was not a very hot day, but there is no fun in running when you don't want to, and I was getting tired.

Mr. Denville took the hint and followed us. When we got back of the barn the Wyandotte flopped and lay with his beak open and his eyes shut. Guinea stood patiently watching him. I hissed at her, but she didn't care. Just as the poor rooster was rousing himself, preparatory to a fresh start, Mr. Denville arrived on the scene.

When we started again he joined us, and calling to Mary and Della, he had them come too.

Serena hasn't much sense of humor, but I could see she was nearly killing herself laughing under the rose-bushes. Della understood almost as quickly as Mr. Denville had done. Mary was mystified. Della and Mr. Denville put their heads together, and soon the chase was over. Guinea was caught and held firmly, while Della went to rummage in her mother's workbasket.

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Mr. Denville took the empty spool and made a little clog. This he fastened to guinea's leg. Then he set her down. The poor rooster who was thankfully reposing under a tree, started up as soon as he saw her coming, but she did not pursue. Every step she took, the little clog flapped against her leg. She would stop to look at it and the rooster would stop to see why she wasn't coming.

Dear little Mary just shrieked at the guinea-hen's foolish actions. She was so boisterous in her mirth that soon she had all the family out in the back-yard. The men were coming home from work, and I think guinea was well paid for her unkindness. Everybody made fun of her, and finally she slunk away very quietly, and climbed to the top of an apple-tree. There is a wild streak in guinea-hens, and they hate hen-houses.

Della petted the rooster and gave him a special supper from the farm table. Next day he came out of the hen-house refreshed from a good night's sleep, and led his girls gaily down to the meadow. His head was up, he stepped high. Guinea was so taken up with her clog that she never noticed him. She had something to do now that kept her active mind out of mischief, and later on, when I got acquainted with her, I found she was quite a nice sort of a creature, as fowls go. There is good in every created thing, even mischievous guinea-hens.

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE OWL AND THE CHICKENS

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Serena liked me to go with her when she took her walks about the farm at night. At first I was flattered at her preference for me, then I was interested, and finally I was responsive. Serena was really getting fond of me, and she was becoming unselfish and companionable. She knew that I admired her, and she was so clever that when she set about trying to make me love her she succeeded easily.

"We're sisters," she said gently. "We ought to be great friends."

"Chums," I said.

"Chums, if you like," she responded graciously. "The older I grow the more I recognize the tie of blood between relatives—and you are really quite nice-looking at times, Black-Face. Just lower your head a little, till I lick your fur into shape between your ears where you can't reach it with your tongue."

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"Thank you," I replied. "The tongue can dress things down much better than damp paws."

Serena attended to my toilet beautifully. That was last night. Then we sallied forth for a moonlight walk. It was a beautiful night. There were a few other cats about, but we stepped into the bushes till they passed by. We saw a weasel down near the river, smelt a skunk, listened to the deep breathing of the young cattle and the horses sleeping out in the pasture, and saw with regret that the lovely white woolly sheep had broken into the meadow.

"We can't do anything about it," said Serena. "The farmer will turn them out in the morning. Meantime they're having a fine feed of rich meadow grass, and they won't get whipped for it."

"No, Farmer Gleason never whips anything," I said. "I wish he owned all the dogs and cats and horses in the world."

"What is that?" said Serena excitedly, as we came up the sloping road leading from the meadow to the barn.

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I looked at the top of the carriage-house. There, perched on the ridge-pole where the pigeons loved to sit in the daytime, was a funny square-looking creature that never moved.

"Is it a bird?" I asked.

"I think from what I have heard," said Serena, "that it is a big owl. Keep close to the fence, sister. If he sees our fur, he may seize us. Tabby says Joker was nearly caught once by a big owl. Oh!" and Serena gave a gasp.

With her native caution, as soon as she saw the owl, she had led me under the snake fence. Fortunately a few poles had fallen out and had made a rough shelter, under which we crept. I hadn't turned my eyes from the owl but for a second when I felt something strike the poles above us, and saw the flash of two balls of fire, which were eyes. Then I lay gasping with fright.

"He struck me," moaned Serena—"what claws—they felt red hot."

"Oh! the wicked creature," I whispered, then my conscience pricked me. I had just been looking for a nice, sweet, little meadow mouse down by the river.

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Serena, who never ate mice, was following the workings of my mind. "My back smarts terribly where he ripped it," she sighed. "I am very sorry for every creature that suffers."

"Wait till we get out of this," I said comfortingly, "and I will give your back a good licking."

"Thank you," she murmured, then she said, "Alas! poor Beauty."

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

"Beauty and her chickens are sleeping in that apple-tree to-night," said Serena, nodding toward the young orchard. "She wouldn't go in the hen-house, and Della laughed at her and said she could sleep out. Every chick skipped up the branches after her. That wretch hears them. Chickens move about in their sleep sometimes, the way human babies nestle."

"Mona is sleeping up by the barn door to-night," I said. "She likes to be there because it is high, and she can see all over the farm. I wish she were here."

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"She can't fly," said Serena.

"No, but she could bark and rouse the farmer. I'm going to call her," and I mewed loudly, "Mona, Mona."

The good old dog, who does not sleep as soundly as when she was young, heard me and came running to us.

I soon told her the trouble. The owl, of course, knew all about it, but he was a very bold fellow and evidently scorned us all. While Mona was staring and sniffing the air in his direction, the great creature made another swoop. Not a sound was audible. Owls are very sneaky creatures. He hovered over the apple-tree nearest the carriage-house—there was a loud cackle from Beauty, and a spluttering from the chickens. We could hear some of them fluttering to the ground.

Mona bounded away.

"She can't fly," I said, "but that owl will be smart if he gets any of the chickens while they are near

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her on the ground.”

The owl knew better than to descend too low, but the bold fellow made one more dash at the apple-tree.

More chickens cried and flounced wildly about in the darkness. Mona just yelled with rage, and in a jiffy Barlo was leaping and barking beside her. Mr. Gleason was at the window sending up a rocket that made Mr. Owl vanish like a ghost.

I laughed the most delicious cat laugh that I ever enjoyed. I just fancied that owl's astonishment when the rocket went flying through the air in his direction. I don't think he will ever come back to the farm.

“Let him hunt mice and vermin in the meadow,” said Serena, “and leave our chickens alone.”

Part of the family was at the windows, the rest was out-of-doors. Serena and I advanced to the side of Mr. Denville. He ran his hand over my back, then over Serena's. “This cat is bleeding,” he said.

“And some of the chickens are gone,” said Mr. Gleason, “look at these feathers.” He whirled his lantern round under the trees where the moonbeams did not penetrate, and showed what he had picked up. 293

“There isn't one gone,” said Mona to me. “When the owl flew away, he carried nothing with him.”

“Count your chickens,” said Mr. Denville.

“Can't,” said the farmer, “they're scattered.”

“Do you find any large feathers?” asked Mr. Denville.

“No,” said the farmer, “not one. I guess you're right. Morning will tell, anyway. Mona and Barlo will keep the old fellow from making any more visits.”

Morning did tell the same story. The owl had pulled a number of feathers out of the chickens, but he had not got one of the little creatures. They were wiser chickens after that, and Beauty was a wiser mother. Every night we saw her going to bed nice and early in the hen-house with her fine brood behind her. She told Serena that it was a dreadful thing for a mother hen to lead her chickens into such danger, and she said that they suffered more during the long night when they crouched in the grass, and behind the woodpile, and under the veranda, than when the owl was attacking them. They were a scattered family. Beauty was a very young hen. Everybody called her old, but she really had not had much experience in bringing up chickens. 294

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE CLOSE OF THE SUMMER

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I am ashamed to say that weeks and weeks have gone by since I have sat down at night and had a good think over things that are going on about me.

I have been happy and busy. All day long something was happening on the farm to keep us interested, and nearly every night Serena and I would run about and play, till we were so tired that we just tumbled into our nice beds.

It seems impossible to think that the summer is about gone. "Why, Aunt Tabby," I said to her just now, "surely it was only yesterday that I asked you why Farmer Gleason made nice little beds for the seeds to go to sleep, and then kept fussing with them till I was sure he would wake them up."

Aunt Tabby smiled. "You were a very ignorant little city cat. Now you know something about grubs and worms, and the constant care a farmer has to put forth to keep his crops from being eaten up."

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"The haying was beautiful," I murmured. "I wish the sweet smelling days could come again."

"A pity Thummie has hay-fever," said Aunt Tabby. "He is glad when the haying is over. It was pitiful to hear him sneezing when the men were unloading the hay-carts."

"I admire Thummie," I said warmly. "He is a brave cat not to desert his post when it becomes unpleasant."

"He's all right in winter," said Aunt Tabby. "He is out a great deal, and then when he is cold he sits on a cow's back."

"Bessie is his friend, isn't she?" I said.

"Yes, the Jersey. She loves Thummie."

"Here comes Joker," I said, as he walked down from the barn and sat beside us.

I said nothing aloud, but I thought to myself how much Joker has improved since we came to the farm. Aunt Tabby says it is because he has been much with Serena and me, and less with the untrained Blizzard and the slippery Rosy.

297

I think he is better because Slyboots gave him such a beating for taunting poor Serena, however, I don't like to say this to Aunt Tabby. These country cats all stand by each other.

"I've got some news for you," said Joker to me. "I'm afraid you're soon going away."

"From the farm?" I said in dismay.

"Yes, I just heard Farmer Gleason tell one of the men that soon you'll all be going back to Boston."

"Why, the summer has passed like a dream," I said.

"Perhaps you'll come back next summer," said Aunt Tabby.

"Oh! I hope so," I said. "I just love this place."

"Slyboots is a lot better for her visit," said Aunt Tabby. "Her eyes look quite strong now."

"She strained them trying to see mice and rats in the Boston streets when she was cold and hungry," I said. "She was all run down."

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"We are just like human beings in that way," said Aunt Tabby. "If we're not properly fed and housed, all our bodily functions suffer."

"What's a function?" asked Joker slyly. "You're trying to talk Bostonese, like Serena, Aunt Tab."

Aunt Tabby thoughtfully licked her paw and said nothing.

"Where is Serena?" asked Joker looking round.

"On the upper veranda," I said.

"She never got over that mole-hunt, did she?" he went on.

"A cat that never has trouble doesn't amount to much," said Aunt Tabby. "You know that, Joker."

He hung his head, then his eyes twinkled, and he looked at me. "We ought to weigh Black-Face before she goes back to the city. She's gained about three pounds since she came!"

I gave a little sigh. My appetite is my weak point. Then I said, "Your cream here is so delicious, and I have never tasted such bread and butter in Boston, nor such savory meat."

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"Put a rein on your appetite, Black-Face," said Joker, "or you'll have kitten's gout."

"There are the Denvilles coming up from the meadow," said Aunt Tabby, "and little Mary with them."

"All as brown as berries," said Joker. "That child ought to live in the country."

There was certainly an immense change in our dear little Mary, and just now a wonderful thing happened. Her parents came up the hill, went to the barn, then began to descend the slope to the carriage-house. Little Mary left her parents and ran ahead—actually ran—a thing I had never seen her do before, though she could walk very fast.

I saw Mrs. Denville stop and snatch at her husband's arm as if she were going to fall. One hand pointed to Mary. Her lips were moving. We cats knew that she was saying—"My little girl can run—"

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she is stronger than when she came. What wonders the country has done for her."

"You'll come next summer fast enough," said Aunt Tabby.

"Oh, I wish we could stay till apple-picking!" I said, casting a glance at the old orchard where each tree was a perfect sight with its load of red fruit.

"You might be cold," said Aunt Tabby cautiously. "Up here in Maine cool winds sometimes blow, and the farmers get their fingers nipped while they are picking the apples. Often Mrs. Gleason sends out hot drinks to the orchard to keep the men warm while they are up on the ladders at work."

"Well, we have had a lovely summer," I said. "We shall have very pleasant things to think over during the long winter."

"I liked that picnic down by the river about as well as anything," said Joker licking his lips. "I've often heard folks talk about picnics but they always went so far off that cats couldn't go. Now, when Farmer Gleason had that one right here at home after haying, and had all the men who helped him and their families, I thought it was fine."

"I liked the big evening party," I said, "when people drove in from miles round, and they had speeches and singing."

"And I liked the school children's parade on the Fourth of July," said Aunt Tabby, "when they all marched up from the schoolhouse with banners, and had that play-acting on the front lawn and the feast afterwards, and nobody got hurt at fireworks."

"It was all good," I said—"all this last part of the visit has been lovely. I think it must be easier to have happy times in the country than in Boston."

Aunt Tabby smiled. "You are young, Black-Face. When you are older, you will know that whether you are happy or unhappy depends on the kind of cat you are."

Before I could answer her Slyboots came trotting up. She seemed unusually excited for her. "What's this I hear about going back to Boston?" she said.

We told her what we had heard, and I said, "Don't you want to go?"

She shuddered as she said, "I hate the train."

"Do you want to stay here?" asked Joker.

"Wouldn't be square," she said firmly. "I'm the Denvilles' cat and I've got to stick it out with them."

"They'll always be good to you," said Aunt Tabby. "You can trust those people."

Slyboots looked at me. "Is Serena going to live with us?" she said.

"I suppose so," I replied in surprise. "I have never asked her."

"You just go find out," she said. "I guess she'll jar you."

I fled up-stairs to the veranda. Serena was lying with half-shut eyes, and occasionally glancing up into the blue sky seen through the tree-tops.

Something told her I was coming, and without turning her head she said, "The hawk is around. Go warn Mona."

I flew down-stairs. There was great talk on the farm of the intelligence of the St. Bernard, whereas we cats told her when the hawk was coming, and the birds told us.

As I ran up to the barn I threw swift glances about me. The little birds knew. Wild sparrows, swallows, goldfinches, purple finches, robins, and ever so many other birds were all flying toward the west. The pigeons saw them, and they were high up in the air circling as swiftly as they could round and round the carriage-house, so the hawk could not drop on them from above. The hens didn't know yet, for Beauty and her brood were following Bobby, the tame pig, up and down the young orchard where he was rooting up worms. He wouldn't let any other hen and chickens get near him.

"Mona, Mona," I mewed as I ran to the barn floor, "hawk! hawk!"

Mona opened her great jaws and bellowed, "Bow! Wow!" as she ran from the barn to the house and then to the orchard.

Every creature understood her warning note, and she was not the only enemy the hawk had. There was a furious scolding and chattering from the pine trees beyond the orchard where a pair of crows had had a nest during the summer. They had seen the hawk, and they worried him till he passed by the front door of their nest where the young ones used to be.

He had a hard flight that morning. By the time he reached the farm, every chicken was hiding under bushes, or in the buckwheat, or under the veranda, or on the woodpile, and a pair of king-birds were nearly driving him crazy.

Aunt Tabby had explained to me when I first came to the farm about these brave little birds, who are never frightened of a hawk and who do no harm, though they are often accused of eating too many bees. Aunt Tabby, who has watched them closely, says they kill a thousand noxious insects for every bee they eat.

Mr. Hawk flew away to the westward, but the little frightened birds were all scurrying ahead of him, and he would not be able to do much damage in that direction. As soon as I saw the last beat of his powerful wings, I ran back to Serena.

"Oh, sister!" I said, "have you heard that we are soon going back to Boston?"

She turned her handsome eyes on me. "No, but I imagined the subject would soon be under discussion."

"And are you going to live with the Denvilles?" I blurted out.

She smiled half sadly. "No, Black-Face, I am going back to our parents."

"Oh, Serena!" I said, "I am much disappointed."

"That is nice in you, Black-Face, but I must do my duty. Our father and mother have missed me, and in thinking things over lately, I know I did wrong to leave them."

I was so surprised that I did not say anything for a long time. Then I murmured, "You will come to see us sometimes."

"Oh! yes," said Serena brightly. "We are close by."

"Serena," I said, "are you going back home because you want to, or because you ought to?"

"The latter first, but I'll make it the former, before I'm done with it," she said with a laugh.

## CHAPTER XX

### IN THE CITY AGAIN

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Weeks more have passed, and now we are in the city. Life is so quiet and happy that I don't seem to have much to think over! We eat, sleep, have a good time, and, looking out the window at the snow and ice, pity the poor cats who have no comfortable homes. That is our only trouble—Slyboots and mine. She stood the journey back to the city remarkably well, and as the days go by we become firmer friends than ever. I even proposed a while ago to have her sleep in my bed, but she said, "Black-Face, you aren't half grown up. Us cats want our own bed and our own food-dish. Don't mix too much, or you'll fight. We're better friends apart."

Mona laughed when I told her this, and said there was much truth in it. She and Dolly are both well, and enjoy long walks every day with Mr. and Mrs. Denville. Mona says it is all nonsense to say a dog can not be kept healthy in a city. Good food and plenty of exercise will keep animals in condition anywhere, unless the air is poisonous, and she says Boston air is as good as any air.

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Little Mary is much brighter and better for her visit to the country; and her parents are planning to take her to the country again quite early next spring. Mr. Denville is going to have a furnace put into the farm-house, so that they won't feel the cold. Just now Mary and her mother are very busy getting a Christmas box ready for the farm.

Della and the boys almost broke their hearts when little Mary left them, and Slyboots and I are lost in admiration of the beautiful and useful presents that are going into the box for those children.

With all their care for the human beings, for the Denvilles do much for the poor children in Boston, they do not forget the animals. The animal refuge where I was taken when I was a lost pussy, is to have a joyous Christmas. Mary is going to help decorate a Christmas tree for the cats, and the dogs are to have some new drinking-fountains, and a sum of money which will go to the rescue of suffering creatures who would otherwise perish in the streets.

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Mrs. Denville says that if boys and girls are kind to cats and dogs and other creatures, they will be kinder to each other. She says we should all protect something weaker than ourselves.

As I lie on my cushion on the window-seat I watch the crowds hurrying across the Common and think this over. Suppose all the people were kind to each other, suppose all the cats, and dogs, and sparrows, and pigeons and squirrels on the Common were well-fed and happy, what a beautiful spot this Beacon Hill would be. Those people are not all kind. I can tell by their faces. If I were a human being, I would try to do something to make them smile on each other.

I am only a little cat, and all I can do is to be nice to Slyboots and the dogs, and the dear family in this house, and in my parents' house. Serena is the light of that home now. She is more beautiful than ever, and more dignified. No one here knows of her troubles in the country, and she is a leader in cat society on the Hill. My mother and father are so proud of her. She never tries them now by being affected or conceited. She says she doesn't want to go to the country again, but she is glad that she went this time.

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The Denvilles had a great joke about her when she left them for her old home. They did not understand. Many things in the cat world are hidden from human beings. We suffer, and rejoice, and scheme and plan pretty much as the higher order of creation does. If only more people would take the trouble to study us. Serena says there is a whole book of cat psychology waiting for some one to open it and read aloud. Her theory is that all created things should work together, from kings to earth-worms. She says they were started to accomplish great things in unison, but some wicked people threw things out of joint. She is preparing a lecture on the subject for the Beacon Hill Angora Club. I am to have a ticket.

I hope everybody in Boston is going to have a pleasant Christmas. That is a foolish wish, Slyboots says, for everybody can't—Well, then everybody that can, just as many as possible. Some day, I may have some more adventures to think out. Just now there's nothing to tell except that we haven't anything to tell, and we're all very happy and wish the whole world were the same.

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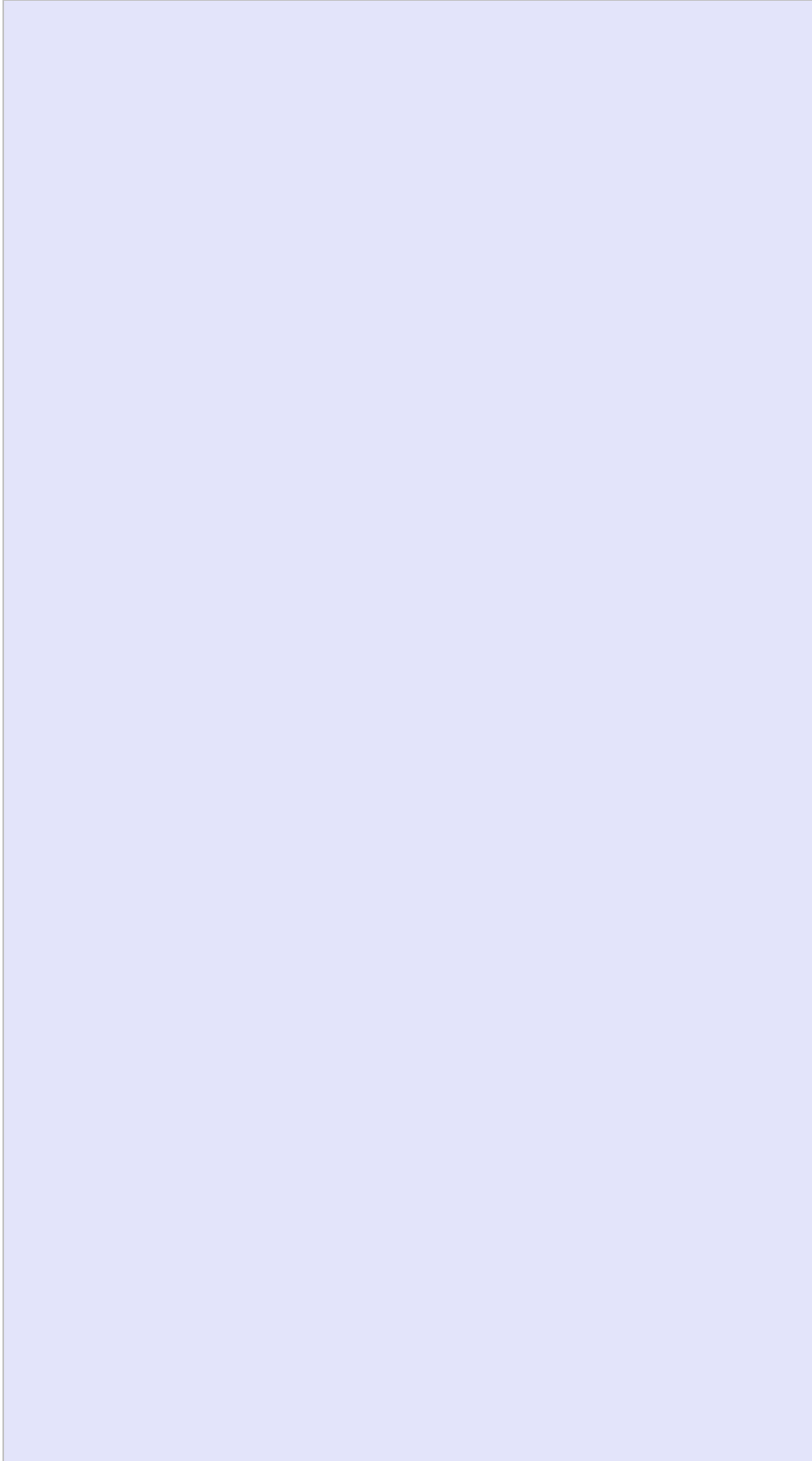
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