

Nesbit Edith

Pussy and Doggy Tales



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Too Clever by Half

"TELL us a story, mother," said the youngest kitten but three.

"You've heard all my stories," said the mother cat, sleepily turning over in the hay.

"Then make a new one," said the youngest kitten, so pertly that Mrs. Buff boxed her ears at once – but she laughed too. Did you ever hear a cat laugh? People say that cats often have occasion to do it.

"I do know one story," she said; "but I'm not sure that it's true, though it was told me by a most respectable brindled gentleman, a great friend of my dear mother's. He said he was a second cousin twenty-nine times removed of Mrs. Tabby White, the lady the story is about."

"Oh, do tell it," said all the kittens, sitting up very straight and looking at their mother with green anxious eyes.

"Very well," she said kindly; "only if you interrupt I shall leave off."

So there was silence in the barn, except for Mrs. Buff's voice and the soft sound of pleased purring which the kittens made as they listened to the enchanting tale.

"Mrs. Tabby White seems to have been as clever a cat as ever went rat-catching in a pair of soft-soled shoes. She always knew just where a mouse would peep out of the wainscot, and she had her soft-sharp paw on him before he had time to know that he was not alone in the room. She knew how to catch nice breakfasts for herself and her children, a trick I will teach you, my dears, when the spring comes; she used to lie quite quietly among the ivy on the wall, and then take the baby birds out of the nest when the grown-up birds had gone to the grub-shop. Mrs. Tabby White was very clever, as I said – so clever that presently she was not satisfied with being at the very top of the cat profession.

"'Cat-people have more sense than human people, of course,' she said to herself; 'but still there are some things one might learn from them. I must watch and see how they do things.'

"So next morning when the cook gave Mrs. Tabby White her breakfast, she noticed that cook poured the milk out of a jug into a saucer. That afternoon Tabby felt thirsty, but instead of putting her head into the jug and drinking in the usual way, – you know – she tilted up the jug to pour the milk out as she had seen the cook do. But cats' paws, though they are so strong to catch rats and mice and birds, are too weak to hold big brown jugs. The nasty deceitful jug fell off the dresser and broke itself. 'Just to spite me, I do believe,' said Mrs. Tabby. And the milk was all spilled.

"Now how on earth could that jug have been broken?' said cook, when she came in.

"'It must have been the cat,' said the kitchenmaid; and she was

quite right, but nobody believed her.

"Then Mrs. Tabby White noticed that human people slept in big soft-cushioned white beds, instead of sleeping on the kitchen hearth-rug, or in the barn, like cat people. So she said to her children one evening —

"My dears, we are going to move into a new house."

"And the kittens were delighted, and they all went upstairs very quietly, and crept into the very best human bed. But unfortunately that bed had been got ready for a human uncle to sleep in; and when he found the cats there he turned them out, not gently, and threw boots at them till they fled, pale with fright to the ends of their pretty tails. And next morning he told the Mistress of the house that horrid CATS had been in his bed, and he vowed that he would never pass another night under a roof where such things were possible. Mrs. Tabby White was very glad — because no lady can wish for the visits of a person who throws boots at her. But the Mistress of the house said sadly, 'Oh, Tabby! — you have lost us a fortune!' And Tabby for all her cleverness didn't understand what the Mistress meant, but went on purring proudly, and wondering what clever thing she could do next. And *I* don't know what it meant either, so don't you interrupt with silly questions.

"I think we ought to wear shoes," was the next thing Mrs. Tabby White said; but all the human shoes were too big for her. However, there was a nice pair of salmon-coloured kid shoes, quite new, belonging to the human child's big doll — and Mrs.

Tabby White put them on her eldest kitten's little brown feet.

"'Now, Brindle,' she said (he was named after the gentleman who told me the story), 'you are grander than any kitten ever was before.' And at first Brindle felt pleased – then he tried to feel pleased – then he knew he wasn't pleased at all. Then the shoes began to hurt him horribly, so he mewed sadly; and Mrs. Tabby White boxed his ears softly – as mother cats do; *you* know how I mean! But when she was asleep he took off the pink shoes and bit them to pieces. And Nurse slapped him for it. Poor Mrs. Tabby White was very miserable when she saw her son being slapped: for it is one thing to box your son's ears (softly, as mother cats do; *you* know how I mean), and quite another to see another person do it – heavily, as is the way with nursemaids.

"But the last and greatest effort Mrs. Tabby White made to imitate human manners was one Saturday night.

"She saw the human child have its bath before the nursery fire, with hot water, pink soap, dry towels, and much fussing, and she said to herself, 'Why should I waste hours every day in washing my children with my little white paws and my little pink tongue, when this human child can be made clean in ten minutes with this big bath. If I had more time I could learn to be cleverer, and I should end by being the most wonderful Cat in all the world.' So she sat, and watched, and waited.

"When the human child was in bed and asleep, Nurse went down to her supper, leaving the bath to be cleared away later, for it was a hot supper of baked onions and toasted cheese, and if

you don't go to that supper directly it is ready, you may as well not go at all, for it won't be worth eating – at least so I have heard the kitchenmaid say.

"Mrs. Tabby White waited till she heard the last of Nurse's steps on the stairs below, and then she put both her cat-children into the tub, and washed them with rose-scented soap and a Turkey sponge. At first they thought it very good fun, but presently the soap got in their eyes and they were frightened of the sponge, and they cried, mewling piteously, to be taken out. I don't know how she could have done it, I couldn't have treated a kitten of *mine* like that.

"When she took them out, Mrs. Tabby tried to dry them with the soft towel, but somehow catskin is not so easy to dry as child-skin, and the little cats began to shiver, and moan: 'Oh, mother, we were so nice and warm, and now we are so cold! Why is it? What have we done? Were we naughty?'

"'Drat the cats!' said Nurse, when she came up from supper, and found Mrs. Tabby White trying to warm her kittens against her own comfortable fur; 'if they haven't tumbled in the bath!'

"Nurse dried the poor, dear, cruelly-used kittens a little (her hands were bigger than Mrs. Tabby's, so she could do it better), and put them in a basket with flannel, and next day Tabby-Kit was quite well, though rather ragged looking; but Brindle had taken a chill, and for days he hung between life and death. Poor Mrs. Tabby was like a wild cat with anxiety, and when at last Brindle was well again (or nearly, for he always had a slight cough

after that), Mrs. Tabby White said to her children, 'My darlings, I was wrong, I was a silly old cat.'

"'No,' purred the cat-children, 'darling mother, you were always the best of cats.'

"Mrs. Tabby kissed them both, for of course any one would be pleased that her children should think her the best of cats, but in her heart she knew well enough how silly she had been.

"Then she set about washing the kittens, not with pink soap and white towel this time, but with white paws and pink tongue in the good old-fashioned way."

"Thank you, mother," said all the kittens; "what a nice horrible story."

"What is the moral?" asked the youngest kitten but three.

"The moral," said Mrs. Buffy, "is, 'There is such a thing as being too clever by half.' I'm not sure about the story being true, but I know the moral is. Why, it's nearly tea-time. Come along, children, and get your tea."

So they all crept quietly away to catch the necessary mice, and the youngest was so afraid of being too clever by half, that she would never have caught a mouse at all, if her mother had not boxed her ears – softly, as mother cats do; you know how I mean!

The White Persian

I WAS a handsome, discreet, middle-aged, respectable, responsible, domesticated tabby cat. I was humble. I knew my place, and kept it. My place was the place nearest the fire in winter, or close to the sunny window in summer. There was nothing to trouble me – not so much as a fly in the cream, or an error in the leaving of the cat's meat, until some thoughtless person gave my master the white Persian cat.

She was very beautiful in her soft, foolish, namby-pamby, blue-eyed way. Of course, she did not understand English, and when they called "Puss, puss," she only ran under the sofa, for she thought they were teasing her. She was mistress only of two languages – Persian and cat-talk.

My master did not think of this. He called her "Puss"; he called her "Pussy"; he called her "Tittums" and "Pussy then"; and a thousand endearments that had formerly been lavished on me were vainly showered on this unresponsive stranger. But when he found she was cold to all of them, my master sighed.

"Poor thing!" he said; "she is deaf."

I sat by the bright fender, and washed my face, and sleeked my pretty paws, and looked on. My master gave up taking very much notice of the new cat. But I had a fear that he might learn Persian or cat-talk, and make friends with her; so I resolved that the best thing for me would be a complete change in the Persian's

behaviour – such a change as should make it impossible for her ever to be friends with him again; so I said to her:

"You wonder that our master looks coldly at you. Perhaps you don't know that in England a white cat is supposed to mew twenty times longer and to purr twenty times louder than a cat of any other colour?"

"Oh, thank you so much for telling me," she said gratefully. "I didn't know. As it happens, I have a very good voice."

And the next time she wanted her milk, she mewed in a voice you could have heard twenty miles away. Poor master was so astonished that he nearly dropped the saucer. When she had finished the milk, she jumped upon his knee, and he began to stroke her. She nearly gave herself a fit in her efforts to purr loud enough to please him. At first he was pleased, but when the purring got louder and louder, the poor man put his hands to his ears and said, "Oh dear! oh dear! this is worse than a whole hive of bees."

Still he put her down gently, and I congratulated her on having done so well. She did better. She was an affectionate person, though foolish, and in her anxiety to do what was expected of a cat of her colour in England, she practised day and night.

Her purr was already the loudest I have heard from any cat, but she fancied she could improve her mewings; and she mewed in the garden, she mewed in the house, she mewed at meals, she mewed at prayers, she mewed when she was hungry to show that she wanted food, and she mewed when she had had it to show

her gratitude.

"Poor thing," said the master to a friend who had come to see him, "she is so deaf she can't hear the noise she makes."

Of course, I understood what he said, but she hadn't yet picked up a word of English; and if the master *had* begun to learn Persian, I don't suppose he had got much beyond the alphabet.

The Persian's mew was rather feebler that day, because she had a cold.

"I don't think it's so bad," said his friend. "If you really wanted to get rid of her, she is very handsome; she would take a prize anywhere."

"She is yours," said the master instantly; and the strange gentleman took her away in a basket.

That evening it was I who sat on my master's knee – I who superintended the writing of his letters on the green-covered writing table – I who had all the milk that was left over from his tea.

In a few days he had a letter. I read it when he laid it down; and if you don't believe cats can read, I can only say that it is just as easy to read a letter like the master's as it is to write a story like this. The letter begged my master to take back the fair Persian.

"Her howls," the letter went on, "become worse and worse. The poor creature is, as you say, too deaf to be tolerated."

My master wrote back instantly to say that he would rather be condemned to keep a dog than have the fair Persian within his doors again.

Then by return of post came a pitiful letter, begging for help and mercy, and the friend came again to tea. I trembled lest my foreign rival should come back to live with me. But she didn't. The next morning my master took me on his knee, and, stroking me gently, said —

"Ah, Tabbykins! no more Persians for us. I have sent her to my deaf aunt. She will be delighted with her — a most handsome present — and as they are both deaf, the fair Persian's shrieks will hurt nobody.

"But I will have no more prize cats," he said, pouring out some cream for me in his own saucer. "You know how to behave; I will never have any cat but you."

I do, and he never has.

A Powerful Friend

MY mother was the best of cats. She washed us kittens all over every morning, and at odd times during the day she would wash little bits of us, say an ear, or a paw, or a tail-tip, and she was very anxious about our education. I am afraid I gave her a great deal of trouble, for I was rather stout and heavy, and did not take a very active or graceful part in the exercises which she thought good for us.

Our gymnasium was the kitchen hearth-rug. There was always a good fire in the grate, and it seemed to me so much better to go to sleep in front of it than to run round after my own tail, or even my mother's, though, of course, that was a great honour.

As for running after the reel of cotton when the cook dropped it, or playing with the tassel of the blind-cord, or pretending that there were mice inside the paper bag which I knew to be empty, I confess that I had no heart or imagination for these diversions.

"Of course, you know best, mother," I used to say; "but it does seem to me a dreadful waste of time. We might be much better employed."

"How better employed?" asked my mother severely.

"Why," I answered, "in eating or sleeping."

At first my mother used to box my ears, and insist on my learning such little accomplishments as she thought necessary for my station in life.

"You see," she would say, "all this playing with tails and reels and balls of worsted is a preparation for the real business of life."

"What is that?" asked my sister.

"Mouse-catching," said my mother very earnestly.

"There are no mice here," I said, stretching myself.

"No, but you will not always be here; and if you practise the little tricks I show you now with the ball of worsted and the tips of our tails, then, when the great hour comes, and a career is open to you, and you see before you the glorious prize – the MOUSE – you will be quick enough and clever enough to satisfy the highest needs of your nature."

"And supposing we don't play with our tails and the balls of worsted?" I said.

"Then," said my mother bitterly, "you may as well lie down for the mice to run over you."

Thus at first she used to try to show me how foolish it was to think of nothing but eating and sleeping; but after a while she turned all her attention to teaching my brother and sister, and they were apt pupils. They despised nothing small enough to be moved by their paws, which could give them an opportunity of practising. They did not mind making themselves ridiculous – a thing which has been always impossible with me. I have seen Tabby, my sister, in the garden, playing with dead leaves, as excited and pleased as though they had been the birds which she foolishly pretended that they were.

I thought her very silly then, but I lived to wish that I had taken

half as much trouble with my lessons as she did with hers. My mother was very pleased with her, especially after she caught the starlings. This was a piece of cleverness which my sister invented and carried through entirely out of her own head. She made friends with one of the cows at the farm near us, and used to go into the cowhouse and jump on the cow's back. Then when the cow was sent out into the field to get her grassy breakfast, my sister used to go with her, riding on her back.

Now birds are always very much on the look-out for cats, and, if they can help it, never allow one of us to come within half-a-dozen yards of them without taking to those silly wings of theirs. I never could see why birds should have wings – so unnecessary.

But birds are not afraid of cows, for cows are very poor sportsmen, and never care to kill and eat anything.

Now the back of a cow is the last place where you would think of looking for a cat; so when the starlings saw the cow coming, they didn't think it worth while to use their wings, and when the cow was quite close to the birds – beautiful, fat, delightful birds – my sister used to pick out with her eye the fattest starling, and then leap suddenly from the cow's back on to her prey. She never missed.

"I have never known," said my poor mother with tears of pride in her green eyes – "I have never known a cat do anything so clever."

"It's all your doing, mother dear," said my sister prettily; "if you hadn't taught me so well when I was little, I should never

have thought of it." And they kissed each other affectionately.

I showed my claws and growled. My mother shook her tabby head.

"O Buff," she said, "if you had only been willing to learn when you were little, you might have been as clever as your sister, instead of being the great anxiety you are to me."

"And why am I an anxiety?" I said, ruffling up my fur and my tail, for I was very angry.

"Because you are useless," she said, "and not particularly handsome; and when a cat is useless and not particularly handsome, they sometimes –"

"What?" I said, turning pale to the ends of my ears.

"They sometimes drown it, Buff," she said in a whisper, and turned away to hide her feelings.

Judge of my own next day when they came into the kitchen and took me up and put me into a basket. I knew all about drowning. These tales of horror are told at twilight time in all cat nurseries, and I knew that if three large stones were put into the basket with me, I might consider my fate sealed.

It was very uncomfortable in the basket. They carried me upside-down part of the way, and it was draughty and hard; but, so far, there were no stones. When they took off the lid of the basket, I found myself under the shade of a huge moving mountain, that seemed about to fall and crush me. It was an elephant.

I found that the people where my mother lived had given me to

the cook, who had given me to her cousin, who was engaged to be married to a young man whose brother-in-law was the elephant's keeper, and so I found myself in the elephant's house.

There was no milk for me – no heads and tails of fish – no scraps of meat – no delicious unforeseen morsels of butter.

The elephant was very kind to me. He had once had a friend exactly like me, he explained, but had unfortunately walked upon him, and now I had come to fill the vacant place in his large heart.

I resolved at once that he should not walk upon me; but in order to insure this, I was compelled to enter upon a more active existence than I had ever known.

When I asked what I was expected to eat, he said —

"Mice, I suppose; or you can have some of my buns if you like. You might like them at first, but you will soon get tired of them."

But I couldn't eat buns. I was never, from a kitten, fond of such things. I got very hungry. Again and again the mice rushed through the straw, and I, heavily, helplessly, in my unpractised way, rushed after them. At first the elephant laughed heartily at my inexpertness; but when he saw how hungry and wretched I was, he said —

"They won't give you any milk, and if they find you don't catch the mice they will take you away from me. Now you are a nice little cat, and I don't want to part with you. We must try and arrange something."

Then the great thought of my life came to me.

"You walked on the other cat," I said.

"What?" he trumpeted in a voice of thunder.

"I beg your pardon," I said hastily; "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings" – and, indeed, I could not have imagined that an elephant would have been so thin-skinned – "but a great idea has come to me. Why shouldn't you walk on mice – not too hard, but just so that I could eat them afterwards?"

"Well," said the elephant, showing his long tusks in a smile, "you are not very handsome, and you are not very brisk; but you certainly have brains, my dear."

He dropped his great foot as he spoke. When he lifted it, there lay a mouse. I had an excellent supper; and before the week's end I heard the keeper say, "This cat has certainly done the trick. She has kept the mice down. We must keep her."

They have kept me. They even go so far as to allow me to moisten my mice with milk.

There is no moral to this story, except that you should do as you are told, and learn everything you can while you are young. It is true that I get on very well without having done so, but then you may not have my good luck. It is not every cat who can get an elephant to catch her mice for her.

A Silly Question

"HOW do you come to be white, when all your brothers are tabby, my dear?" Dolly asked her kitten. As she spoke, she took it away from the ball it was playing with, and held it up and looked in its face as Alice did with the Red Queen.

"I'll tell you, if you'll keep it a secret, and not hold me so tight," the kitten answered.

Dolly was not surprised to hear the kitten speak, for she had read her fairy books, as all good children should, and she knew that all creatures answer if one only speaks to them properly. So she held the kitten more comfortably and the tale began.

"You must know, my dear Dolly," the kitten began – and Dolly thought it dreadfully familiar – "you must know that when we were very small we all set out to seek our fortunes."

"Why," interrupted Dolly, "you were all born and brought up in our barn! I used to see you every day."

"Quite so," said the kitten; "we sought our fortune every night, and it turned out to be mice, mostly. Well, one night I was seeking mine, when I came to a hole in the door that I had never noticed before. I crept through it, and found myself in a beautiful large room. It smelt delicious. There was cheese there, and fish, and cream, and mice, and milk. It was the most lovely room you can think of."

"There's no such room – " began Dolly.

"Did I say there was?" asked the kitten. "I only said I found myself there. Well, I stayed there some time. It was the happiest hour of my life. But, as I was washing my face after one of the most delicious herring's heads you ever tasted, I noticed that on nails all round the room were hung skins – and they were cat skins," it added slowly. "Well may you tremble!"

Dolly hadn't trembled. She had only shaken the kitten to make it speak faster.

"Well, I stood there rooted to the ground with horror; and then came a sort of horrible scramble-rush, and a barking and squeaking, and a terrible monster stood before me. It was something like a dog and something like a broom, something like being thrown out of the larder by cook – I can't describe it. It caught me up, and in less than a moment it had hung my tabby skin on a nail behind the door.

"I crept out of that lovely fairyland a cat without a skin. And that's how I came to be white."

"I don't quite see – " began Dolly.

"No? Why, what would your mother do if some one took off your dress, and hung it on a nail where she could not get it?"

"Buy me another, I suppose."

"Exactly. But when my mother took me to the cat-skin shop, they were, unfortunately, quite out of tabby dresses in my size, so I had to have a white one."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Dolly.

"No? Well, I'm sure it's as good a story as you could expect

in answer to such a silly question."

"But you were always – "

"Oh, well!" said the kitten, showing its claws, "if you know more about it than I do, of course there's no more to be said. Perhaps you could tell me why your hair is brown?"

"I was born so, I believe," said Dolly gently.

The kitten put its nose in the air.

"You've got no imagination," it said.

"But, Kitty, really and truly, without pretending, you *were* born white, you know."

"If you know all about it, why did you ask me? At any rate, you can't expect me to remember whether I was born white or not. I was too young to notice such things."

"Now you are in fun," said poor Dolly, bewildered.

The kitten bristled with indignation.

"What! you really don't believe me? I'll never speak to you again," it said. And it never has.

The Selfish Pussy

"YES," said the tortoiseshell cat to the grey one, as she thoughtfully washed her left ear, "I have lived in a great many families. You see, it's not every trade that deserves to have a cat about the place. My first master was a shoemaker, and I lived with him happily enough, until one morning in winter, when I found the wicked man sewing strips of – let me whisper —*cat's fur* on a pair of lady's slippers!

"I mewed as I saw it, and he, thinking I wanted milk, put down his work to get me some, for he was fond enough of me. I drank the milk, and then I ran away. I could not live with such a man.

"My next home was in a garret, with a half-starved musician who made violins. A violin is a musical instrument that miauls when you touch it just as we cats do, and it was amusing to live with a man who could make things with voices like my own. He was very poor, and often had not enough to eat, but he always got me my cat's-meat; and when there was no fire on, he nursed me to keep me warm. But one day I learned, from the talk of one of his friends (a man as lean as himself) who came to see him, that the strings of the violins were taken from the bodies of dead cats. No wonder the voices were like my brothers' voices, since they were stolen from my brothers' bodies. He might take my own voice some day.

"So next day, after the cat's-meat man had called, I walked

quietly out, and never saw that bad violin-maker again.

"I was picked up in the street by a child, who took me home to her mother's house. They were rich folk; they had curtains, and cushions, and couches, and they did very little but nurse me, or sometimes, not wishing to hurt his feelings, the Italian greyhound. But they liked *me* best, of course. They were a noble family; and I should have been living with them still, but one year, when they went to the seaside, they forgot to provide for my board and lodging, and I had to go into trade again.

"Milk ahoy! milk ahoy!" I heard that well-known music as I sat lonely on the doorstep of the deserted mansion in the Square. The milkman looked lonely too; so I thought it would be only kind to go home with him. I did. He was a very well-meaning man, but his tastes were low. He took skim milk in his tea, and gave me the same. Of course, after that, I could not stay another hour under his roof.

"I tried two or three other houses, and I could have been happy with a very nice butcher who kept a corner shop, but he kept a dog also, a dog that no cat in her senses would live in the same street with; so I came away – rather hurriedly, I remember – and the dog saw me off. Now I live with a worker in silver, and I have cream every day; and when he makes a cream-jug, and I remember what will be put in it some day, I lick my lips, and think what a happy cat I am to live with such a good man. Where do you live?"

"With a poor widow, in an attic. I never have enough to eat."

And, indeed, the grey cat was thin.

"Why do you stay with her?"

"Because I love her," said the grey cat.

"Love!" replied the tortoiseshell cat. "Nonsense! I never heard of such a thing."

"Poor puss!" said the parrot in the window. The grey cat thought it was speaking to the tortoiseshell, and the tortoiseshell was certain it meant the grey. Which do *you* think it meant?

Meddlesome Pussy

I WAS separated from my mother at a very early age, and sent out into the world alone, long before I had had time to learn to say "please" and "thank you," and to shut the door after me, and little things like that. One of the things I had not learned to understand was the difference between milk in a saucer on the floor, and milk in a jug on the table. Other cats tell me there is a difference, but I can't see it. The difference is not in the taste of the milk – that is precisely the same.

It is not so easy to get the milk out of a jug, and I should have thought some credit would attach to a cat who performed so clever a feat. The world, my dear, thinks otherwise. This difference of opinion has, through life, been a fruitful source of sorrow to me. I cannot tell you how much I have suffered for it. The first occasion I remember was a beautiful day in June, when the sun shone, and all the world looked fair. I was destined to remember that day.

The fishmonger (talk of statues to heroes! I would raise one to that noble man!) – the fishmonger, I say, brought his usual little present to *me*. I let the cook take it and prepare it for my eating. I am always generous enough to permit the family to be served first – and then I have my dinner quietly at the back door.

Well, he had brought the salmon, and I followed the cook in, to see that it wasn't put where those dogs could get it; and then,

the dining-room door being opened, I walked in. The breakfast things were lying littered about, and on the tea-tray was a jug.

Of course, I walked across the table, and looked into the jug; there was milk in it.

It was a sensible, wide-mouthed jug, and I should have been quite able to make a comfortable breakfast, if some clumsy, careless servant hadn't rushed into the room, crying "Shoo! scat!"

This startled me, of course. I am very sensitive. I started, the jug went over, and the milk ran on to the cloth, and down on the new carpet. You will hardly believe it, but that servant, to conceal her own carelessness, beat me with a feather brush, and threw me out of the back door; and cook, who was always a heartless person, though stout, gave me no dinner. Ah! if my fishmonger had only known that I never tasted his beautiful present, after all!

But though I admired him so much, I could not talk to him. I never, from a kitten, could speak any foreign language fluently. So he never knew.

My next misadventure was on an afternoon when the family expected company, and the best china was set out. Why "best"? Why should a saucer, all blue and gold and red, with a crown on the back, be better than a white one with mauve blobs on it? I never could see. Milk tastes equally well from both.

I went into the drawing-room before the guests arrived – just to be sure that everything was as I could wish – and, seeing the tea set out, I got on the table, as usual, to see whether there was anything in the saucers. There was not, but in the best milk-jug

there was – CREAM!

The neck of the best milk-jug was narrow. I could not get my head in, so I turned it over with my paw. It fell with a crash, and I paused a moment – these little shocks always upset me. All was still – I began to lap. Oh! that cream! I shall never forget it!

Then came a rush, and the fatal cry of "Shoo! scat!" – always presaging disaster. I saw the door open, and, by an instinct I cannot explain, I leaped from the table. In my hurry, my foot caught in the handle of the silver tray. We fell together – neither the tray nor I was hurt – but the best china!!!

I picked myself up, and looked about me. The family had come in. I read in their faces that their servant's unlucky interruption of my meal had destroyed what was dearer to them than life – than *my* life, at any rate. I fled. I went out homeless and hopeless into the golden afternoon.

I live now with a Saint – a maiden lady, who takes condensed milk in her own tea, and buys me two-pennyworth of cream night and morning.

And cat's meat, too!

And the glorious fishmonger still leaves his offerings at my door.

Nine Lives

"MOTHER," said the yellow kitten, "is it true that we cats have nine lives?"

"Quite, my dear," the brindled cat replied. She was a very handsome cat, and in very comfortable circumstances. She sat on a warm Turkey carpet, and wore a blue satin ribbon round her neck. "I am in the ninth life myself," she said.

"Have you lived all your lives here?"

"Oh dear, no!"

"Were you here," the white kitten asked, in a sleepy voice, "when the Turkey carpet was born? Rover says it is only a few months old."

"No," said the mother, "I was not. Indeed, it was partly the softness of that carpet that made me come and live here."

"Where did you live before?" the black kitten said.

A dreamy look came into the brindled cat's eyes.

"In many strange places," she answered slowly; adding more briskly, "and if you will be good kittens, I will tell you all about them. Goldie! come down from that stool, and sit down like a good kitten. Sweep! leave off sharpening your claws on the furniture; *that* always ends in trouble and punishment. Snowball! you're asleep again! Oh, well; if you'd rather sleep than hear a story – "

Snowball shook herself awake, and the others sat down close

to their mother with their tails arranged neatly beside them, and waited for the story.

"I was born," said the brindled cat, "in a barn."

"What is a barn?" asked the black kitten.

"A barn is like a house, but there is only one room, and no carpets, only straw."

"I should like that," said the yellow kitten, who often played among the straw in the big box which brought groceries from the Stores.

"I liked it well enough when I was your age," said the mother indulgently, "but a barn is not at all a genteel place to be born in. My mother had had a little unpleasantness with the family she lived with, and, of course, she was too proud to stay on after that. And so she left them, and went to live in the barn. It wasn't at all the sort of life she had been accustomed to."

"What was the unpleasantness?" Sweep asked.

"Well, it was about some cream which the woman of the house wanted for her tea. She should have said so. Of course, my mother would not have taken it if she had had any idea that any one else wanted it. She was always most unselfish."

"What is tea?"

"A kind of brown milk – very nasty indeed, and very bad for you. Well, I lived with my brothers and sisters very happily for some months, for I was too young to know how vulgar it was to live in a barn and play with straw."

"What is vulgar, mother?"

"Dear, dear; how you do ask questions," said the brindled cat, beginning to look worried. "Vulgar is being like everybody else."

"But does everybody else live in a barn?"

"No; nobody does who is respectable. Vulgar really means – not like respectable cats."

"Oh!" said the black kitten and the yellow, trying to look as if they understood. But the white one did not say anything, because it had gone to sleep again.

"Well," the mother went on, "after a while they took me to live in the farm-house. And I should have liked it well enough, only they had a low habit of locking up the dairy and the pantry. Well, it would be tiresome to go into the whole story; however, I soon finished my life at the farm-house and went to live in the stable. It was very pleasant there. Horses are excellent company. That was my third life. My fourth was at the miller's. He came one day to buy some corn; he saw me, and admired me – as, indeed, every one has always done. He and the farmer were disputing about the price of the corn, and at last the miller said —

"'Look' here; you shall have your price if you'll throw me that cat into the bargain.'"

The kittens all shuddered. "What is a bargain? Is it like a pond? And were you thrown in?"

"I was thrown in, I believe. But a bargain is not like a pond; though I heard the two men talk of 'wetting' the bargain. But I suppose they did not do it, for I arrived at the mill quite dry. That was a very pleasant life – full of mice!"

"Who was full of mice?" asked the white kitten, waking up for a moment.

"I was," said the mother sharply; "and I should have stayed in the mill for ever, but the miller had another cat sent him by his sister.

"However, he gave me away to a man who worked a barge up and down the river. I suppose he thought he should like to see me again sometimes as the barge passed by.

"Life in a barge is very exciting. There are such lots of rats, some of them as big as you kittens. I got quite clever at catching them, though sometimes they made a very good fight for it. I used to have plenty of milk, and I slept with the bargee in his warm little bunk, and of nights I sat and toasted myself in front of his fire in the small, cosy cabin. He was very fond of me, and used to talk to me a great deal. It is so lonely on a barge that you are glad of a little conversation. He was very kind to me, and I was very grieved when he married a lady who didn't like cats, and who chased me out of the barge with a barge-pole."

"What is a barge-pole?" the yellow kitten asked lazily.

"The only leg a barge has. I ran away into the woods, and there I lived on birds and rabbits."

"What are rabbits?"

"Something like cats with long ears; very wholesome and nutritious. And I should have liked my sixth life very much, but for the keeper. No, don't interrupt to ask what a keeper is. He is a man who, when he meets a cat or a rabbit, points a gun at it,

and says 'Bang!' so loud that you die of fright."

"How horrible!" said all the kittens.

"I was looking out for my seventh life, and also for the gamekeeper, and was sitting by the river with both eyes and both ears open, when a little girl came by – a nice little girl in a checked pinafore.

"She stopped when she saw me, and called – 'Pussy! pussy!' So I went very slowly to her, and rubbed myself against her legs. Then she picked me up and carried me home in the checked pinafore. My seventh life was spent in a clean little cottage with this little girl and her mother. She was very fond of me, and I was as fond of her as a cat can be of a human being. Of course, we are never so *unreasonably* fond of them as they are of us."

"Why not?" asked the yellow kitten, who was young and affectionate.

"Because they're only human beings, and we are Cats," returned the mother, turning her large, calm green eyes on Goldie, who said, "Oh!" and no more.

"Well, what happened then?" asked the black kitten, catching its mother's eye.

"Well, one day the little girl put me into a basket, and carried me out. I was always a fine figure of a cat, and I must have been a good weight to carry. Several times she opened the basket to kiss and stroke me. The last time she did it we were in a room where a sick girl lay on a bed.

"'I did not know what to bring you for your birthday,' said my

little girl, 'so I've brought you my dear pussy.'

"The sick girl's eyes sparkled with delight. She took me in her arms and stroked me. And though I do not like sick people, I felt flattered and pleased. But I only stayed a very little time with her."

"Why?" asked all the kittens at once.

"Because – but no; that story's too sad for you children; I will tell it you when you're older."

"But that only makes eight lives," said Sweep, who had been counting on his claws, "and you said you had nine. Which was the ninth?"

"Why, *this*, you silly child," said the brindled pussy, sitting up, and beginning to wash the kitten's face very hard indeed. "And as it's my last life, I must be very careful of it. That's why I'm so particular about what I eat and drink, and why I make a point of sleeping so many hours a-day. But it's your *first* life, Snowball, and I can't have you wasting it all in sleep. Go and catch a mouse at once."

"Yes, mamma," said Snowball, and went to sleep again immediately.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Brindle, "I'll wash you next. That'll make you wake up, my dear."

"Snowball's always sleepy," said the yellow kitten, stretching itself. "But, mamma dear, she doesn't care for history, and yours was a very long tale."

"You can't have too much of a good thing," said the mother,

looking down at her long brindled tail. "If it's a good tail, the longer it is the better."

Doggy Tales

Tinker

MY name is Stumps, and my mistress is rather a nice little girl; but she has her faults, like most people. I myself, as it happens, am wonderfully free from faults. Among my mistress's faults is what I may call a lack of dignity, joined to a desire to make other people undignified too.

You will hardly believe that, before I had belonged to her a month, she had made me learn to dance and to jump. I am a very respectable dachshund, of cobby build, and jumping is the very last exercise I should have taken to of my own accord. But when Miss Daisy said, "Now jump, Stumps; there's a darling!" and held out her little arms, I could not well refuse. For, after all, the child is my mistress.

I never could understand why the cat was not taught to dance. It seemed to me very hard that, when I was having those long, miserable lessons, the cat should be allowed to sit down doing nothing but smile at my misfortunes. Trap always said we ought to feel honoured by being taught, and the reason why Pussy wasn't asked to learn was because she was so dreadfully stupid, and had no brains for anything but the pleasures of the chase and the cares of a family; but I didn't think that could be the reason, because the doll was *taught* to dance, though she never *learned*, and I am sure *she* was stupid enough.

Another thing which Miss Daisy taught me to do was to beg;

and the action fills me with shame and pain every time I perform it, and as the years go on I hate it more and more.

For a stout, middle-aged dog, the action is absurd and degrading. Yet, such is the force of habit, that I go through the performance now quite naturally whenever I want anything. Trap does it too, and says what does it matter? but then he has no judgment, and, besides, he's thin.

But one of the most thoughtless things my little mistress ever did was one day last summer when she was out without me. I chose to stay at home because it was very hot, and I knew that the roads would be dusty; and she was only going down to the village shop, where no one ever thinks of offering a dog anything to drink. If she had been going to the farm, I should, have gone with her, because the lady there shows proper attention to visitors, and always sets down a nice dish of milk for us dogs. Besides, I was a little unwell just then; the family had had duck for dinner, and I always feel a little faint after duck. All our family do. So I stayed at home. Well, Miss Daisy had gone out with only Trap and her hoop. I wish I had been there, for Trap is far too easy-going, and a hoop never gives any advice worth listening to. Trap told me all about it as well as he could. Trap can't tell a story very well, poor fellow!

It seems that, as Miss Daisy went across the village green, she saw a crowd of children running after a dog with – I hardly like to mention such a thing – a tin saucepan tied to his tail! The dog bolted into the empty dog-kennel by the blacksmith's shop, and

stayed there, growling.

"Go away, bad children," said Miss Daisy; "how dare you treat a poor dear doggie so?"

The children wouldn't go away at first. "Very well," said Miss Daisy; "I shall tell Trap what I think of you all."

Then she whispered to Trap, and he began to growl so fiercely that the children dared not come nearer. Any one can growl. Presently the children got tired of listening to him, and went away. Then Miss Daisy coaxed the unpleasant, tin-tailed creature out of the kennel, and untied the string, and took off the pan. Then, if you'll believe a dog of my character (and of course you must), she carried that low dog home in her arms, and washed him, and set him down to eat out of the same plate as Trap and myself! Trap was friends with him directly – some people have no spirit – but I hope I know my duty to myself too well for that. I snarled at the base intruder till he was quite ashamed of himself. I knew from the first that he'd be taught jumping and begging, and things like that. I hate those things myself, but that's no reason why every low dog should be taught them. Miss Daisy called him Tinker, because he once carried a tin pan about with him, and she tried very hard to make me friendly to him; but I can choose my own friends, I hope.

Every one made a great fuss about one thing he did, but actually it was nothing but biting; and if biting isn't natural to a dog, I should like to know what is; and why people should be praised and petted, and have new collars, and everybody else's

share of the bones, only for doing what is quite natural to them, I have never been able to comprehend. Besides, barking is as good as biting, any day, and I'm sure I barked enough, though it wasn't my business.

Miss Daisy had gone away to stay with her cousins in London, and she had taken Trap with her. Why she should have taken him instead of me is a matter on which I can offer no opinion. If my opinion had been asked, I should have said that I thought it more suitable for her to have a heavy middle-aged dog of good manners than a harum-scarum young stripling like Trap. Trap told me afterwards that he thought the reason he was taken was because Miss Daisy would have had more to pay for the dog-ticket of such a heavy dog as I am; but I can't believe that dogs are charged for by the weight, like butter. As I was saying, Miss Daisy took Trap with her, and also her father and mother; and Tinker and I were left to take care of the servants. We had a very agreeable time, though I confess that I missed Miss Daisy more than I would have believed possible. But there was more to eat in the kitchen than usual, and the servants often left things on the table when they went out to take in the milk or to chat with the gardeners; and if people leave things on tables, they have only themselves to thank for whatever happens.

There was a young man who wore a fur cap, and who used to call with fish; and I was more surprised than I care to own when I met him walking out with cook one Sunday afternoon, for I thought she had a soul above fish; yet when the servants began

to ask this young man to tea in the kitchen, I thought, of course, it must be all right, but Tinker would do nothing but growl the whole time the young man was there; so that at last cook had to lock us up in the butler's pantry till the young man was gone. *I* had not growled, but I was locked in too. The world is full of injustice and ingratitude.

Now one night, when the servants went to bed, Tinker and I lay down in our baskets under the hall table as usual; but Tinker was dreadfully restless, which must have been only an accident, because he said himself he didn't know what was the matter with him; and he would not go to sleep, but kept walking up and down as if he were going to hide a bone and couldn't find a good place for it.

"Do lie down, for goodness' sake, Tinker," I said, "and go to sleep. Any one can see you have not been brought up in a house where regular hours are kept."

"I can't go to sleep; I don't know what's the matter with me," he said gloomily.

Well, I tried to go to sleep myself, and I think I must almost have dropped off, when I heard a scrape-scraping from the butler's pantry. I wasn't going to bark. It wasn't my business. I have often heard Miss Daisy's relations say that I was no house-dog. Still, I think Tinker ought to have barked then, but he didn't: only just pricked his ears and his tail; and he waited, and the scraping went on.

Then Tinker said to me – "Don't you make a noise, for your

life; I am going to see what it is;" and he trotted softly into the butler's pantry. It was rather dark, but you know we dogs can see as well as cats in the dark, although they do make such a fuss about it, and declare that they are the only creatures who can.

There was a man outside the window, and I tapped Tinker with my tail to show him that he ought to bark, but he never moved. The man had been scraping and scraping till he had got out one of the window-panes. It was a very little window-pane, only just big enough for his hand to go through; and the man took out the window-pane and put his hand through, making a long arm to get at the fastening of the window; and just as he was going to undo the hasp, Tinker made a spring on to the window-ledge, and he caught the man's hand in his mouth, and the man gave a push, and Tinker fell off the window-ledge, but he took the man's hand with him; and there was the man's arm dragged through the window-pane, and Tinker hanging on to his fingers.

The man broke some more panes and tried to get his other hand through, and if he had he would have done for Tinker, but he could not manage it; and now I thought "This is the time to bark," and I barked. I barked my best, I barked nobly, though I am not a house-dog, and I don't think it's my business.

In less than a minute down came the gardener and the undergardener: and Tinker was still holding on, and they took the man, and he was marched off to prison, and it turned out to be the man in the fur cap. But though they made fuss enough about Tinker's share in the business, you may be sure it didn't make me think

much more of him.

I should never have had anything to say to him but for one thing. Early one morning we three dogs – it's all over long ago, and I hope I can be generous and let bygones be bygones; he is one of *us* now – went out for a run in the paddock by the wood, and while Trap and I were trotting up and down chatting about the weather, that Tinker dog bolted into the wood, and in less than a minute came out with a rabbit.

I saw at once that he could never get it eaten before Miss Daisy came out, and I knew that, if he were found with it, his sufferings would be awful. So I helped him to eat it. I know my duty to a fellow-creature, I trust. It was a very young rabbit, and tender. Not too much fur. Fur gets in your throat, and spoils your teeth, besides. We had just finished it when my mistress came out. Trap would not eat a bit, even to help Tinker out of his scrape, but *I* have a kind heart.

Well, after that I thought I might as well consent to be friends with Tinker, in spite of his low breeding. You see, I had helped him out of a dreadful scrape, and one always feels kindly to people one has helped. He has caught several more rabbits since then, and I have always stood by him on those occasions, and I always mean to. I am not one to turn my back on a friend, I believe.

So now he has a collar like ours, and I hardly feel degraded at all when I sit opposite to him at the doll's tea-parties.

Rats!

"HE has no nose," said my master; "he is a handsome dog, but he has no nose."

This annoyed me very much, for I have a nose – a very long, sharp, black nose. I wear tan boots and gloves, and my coat is a beautiful shiny black.

I am a Manchester terrier, and I fulfil the old instructions for such dogs. I am

Neckèd like a drakè,
Headed like a snakè,
Tailed like a ratte,
And footed like a catte.

And then they said I had no nose.

But Kerry explained to me that my master did not mean to find fault with the shape of my nose, but that what he wanted to be understood was that I had no nose for smelling rats. Kerry has, and he is ridiculously vain of this accomplishment.

"And you have no nose, you know, old boy," said Kerry; "why, you would let the rats run all over you and never know it."

I turned up my nose – my beautiful, pointed, handsome nose – and walked away without a word.

A few weeks afterwards my master brought home with him

some white rats. Kerry was out at the time, but my master showed me the rats through the bars of their cage. He also showed me a boot and a stick. Although I have no nose, I was clever enough to put two and two together. Did I mention that there were two rats?

We were not allowed to go in the study, either of us, and my master put the rats there in their cage on the table.

That night, when everybody had gone to bed, I said to Kerry, "I may have no nose, old man, but I smell rats."

Kerry sniffed contemptuously.

"You!" said he, curling himself round in his basket; "I don't believe you could smell an elephant if there were one in the dresser drawer."

I kept my temper. "I am not feeling very well, Kerry," I said gently, "or I would go and see myself. But I am sure there *are* rats; I smell them plainly; they seem to be in the study."

"Go to sleep," he said; "you're dreaming, old man."

"Why don't you go and see?" I said. "If I didn't feel so very faint, I would go myself."

Kerry got out of his basket reluctantly. "I suppose I ought to go, if you are quite certain," he said; and he went.

In less than a minute he returned to the kitchen, trembling all over with excitement.

"Chappie!" he said; "Chappie!"

"Well?"

"There *are* rats," he whispered hoarsely; "there are rats in the study."

"Did you go in?" I asked.

"No, you know we're forbidden to go in, but I smelt them quite plainly. I can't smell them at all here," he said regretfully. "What a nose you have got, after all, Chappie!"

"What are you going to do, Kerry?" I asked.

"Why, nothing," he said; "we mustn't go in the study."

"Oh," I said, "rules weren't made for great occasions like this; it's your business to kill rats wherever they are."

And that misguided wire-haired person went up. He got them out of the cage, and killed them.

The next morning, when the master came down, he thrashed Kerry within an inch of his life. He knows I don't touch rats; and, besides, I was so unwell that nobody could have suspected me. And I explained to Kerry that, good as my nose is, I couldn't possibly tell by the smell that the rats were white, and, therefore, sacred. It was not worth while to mention that I had seen them before.

Kerry looks up to me now as a dog with a nose, and I am much happier than formerly. But Kerry is not nearly so keen on rats now. I thought somehow he wouldn't be.

The Tables Turned

WE knew it was a dog, directly the basket was set down in the hall. We heard it moving about inside. We sniffed all round. We asked it why it didn't come out (the basket was tightly tied up with string). "Are you having a good time in there?" said Roy. "Can't you show your face?" said I. "He's ashamed of it," said Roy, waving his long bushy tail. Then he growled a little, and the dog inside growled too; and then, as Roy had an appointment with the butcher at his own back door, I went out to see him home.

"I am so sorry I am going away for Christmas with my master," he said when we parted; "but you must introduce that new dog to me when I come home. We mustn't stand any of his impudence, eh?"

I was sorry Roy was going away, for Roy is my great friend. He always fights the battles for both of us. I daresay I might have got into the way of fighting my own battles, but I never like to interfere with anybody's pleasure, and Roy's chief pleasure is fighting. As for me, I think the delights of that recreation are over-estimated.

When my master came home, he opened the basket, and a dog of Irish family tumbled out, growling and snarling, and hid himself under the sofa. They wasted more biscuits on him than I have ever seen wasted on any deserving dog; and at last they got

him out, and he consented to eat some supper. They gave him a much better basket than mine, and we went to bed.

Next morning, the Irish terrier got out of his basket, stretched himself, yawned, and insisted on thrashing me before breakfast.

"But I am a dog of peace," I said; "I don't fight."

"But I do, you see," he answered, "that's just the difference."

I tried to defend myself, but he got hold of one of my feet, and held it up. I sat up, and howled with pain and indignation.

"Have you had enough?" he said, and, without waiting for my answer, proceeded to give me more.

"But I don't fight," I said; "I don't approve of fighting."

"Then I'll teach you to have better manners than to say so," said he, and he taught me for nearly five minutes.

"Now then," he said, "are you licked?"

"Yes," I answered; for indeed I was.

"Are you sorry you ever tried to fight with me?"

"Yes," still seemed to be the only thing to say.

"And do you approve of fighting?"

He seemed to wish me to say "yes," and so I said it.

"Very well, then," he said; "now we'll be friends, if you like. Come along; you have given me an appetite for breakfast."

"Any society worth cultivating about here?" he asked, after the meal, in his overbearing way.

"I have a very great friend who lives next door," I said; "but I don't know whether I should care to introduce you to him."

He showed his teeth, and asked what I meant.

"You see, you might not like him; and, if you didn't like him – but he's a most agreeable dog."

"A good fighter?" asked Rustler.

I scratched my ear with my hind foot, and pretended to think.

"Oh, I see he's not," said Rustler contemptuously; "well, you shall introduce him to me directly he comes back."

Rustler's overbearing and disagreeable manners so upset me that I was quite thin when, at the end of the week, Roy came home. I told him my troubles at once.

"Bring your Rustler along," he said grandly, "and introduce him to *me*."

So I did. Rustler came along with his ears up, and his miserable tail in the air. Roy lay by his kennel looking the image of serenity and peacefulness. To judge by his expression, he might not have had a tooth in his head.

Rustler stood with his feet as far apart as he could get them, and put his head on one side.

"I have heard so much about you, Mr. What's-your-name," he said, "that I have come to make a closer acquaintance."

"Delighted, I'm sure," said Roy, who has splendid manners.

"If you will get on your legs," said Rustler rudely, "I will tell you what I think of you."

Roy got on his legs, still looking very humble, and the next minute he had Rustler by the front foot, and was making him sit down and scream just as Rustler had made me. It was a magnificent fight.

"Have you had enough?" said Roy, and then gave him more without waiting for an answer.

"I don't want to fight any more," said Rustler at last; "I am sorry I spoke."

"Then I'll teach you to have more pluck than to own it," said Roy.

When he had taught him for some time, he said, "Are you licked?"

"Yes," said Rustler, glaring at me out his uninjured eye.

"Are you sorry you tried to fight with me?"

"Yes."

"Will you promise to leave my little friend here alone?"

"Yes."

Then Roy let him go. We shook tails all round, and Rustler and I went home.

"Poor Rustler," I said, "I know exactly how you feel."

"You little humbug," he said, with half a laugh – for he is not an ill – natured fellow when you come to know him – "you managed it very cleverly! and I'm not one to bear malice; but, I say, your friend is A1."

We are now the most united trio, and Roy and Rustler have licked all the other dogs in the neighbourhood.

A Noble Dog

ROVER would go into the water fast enough for a bathe or a swim, but he would not bring anything out. The children used to throw in sticks, and Rover and I used to bound in together; but I would bring the stick back, while he swam round and round, enjoying himself.

I am not vain, but I could not help feeling how much superior I was to such a dog as Rover. He is a prize Newfoundland, and I am only a humble retriever of obscure family.

So one day I said to him —

"Why don't you fetch the sticks out when the children throw them in?"

"I don't care about sticks," he said.

"But it's so grand and clever to be able to fetch them out."

"Is it?" he answered.

"I know it is, for the children tell me so.

"Do they?" he said.

"I wonder you are not ashamed," I went on, a little nettled by his meekness, "never to do anything useful. I should be, if I were you."

"Ah," he said, "but you see you are not. Good night."

We used to spend a great deal of time by the river. The children loved to play there, and we dogs were always expected to go with them.

One day, as I was lying asleep on the warm grass by the river bank, I heard a splash. I jumped in, but there was no stick, only one of the children floating down on the stream, and screaming whenever her head came from under the water.

I thought it was a new kind of game, not very interesting, so I swam out again; and just as I was shaking the water out of my ears, I heard another great flop, and there was Rover in the water, holding on to the child's dress. He pulled her out some ten yards down the stream; and oh! if you could have seen the fuss that the master and mistress and the rest of the children made of that black and white spotted person!

"Why, Rover," I said afterwards, when we had got home and were talking it over, "whatever made you think that the child wanted to be pulled out of the water?"

"It's my business to pull people out of the water," he said.

"But," I urged, "I always thought you were too stupid to understand things."

"Did you?" he said, turning his mild eyes on me.

"Why didn't you explain to me that you – "

"My dear dog," he said, "I never think it worth while to fetch sticks out of the water, and I never think it worth while to explain things to stupid people."

The Dyer's Dog

SHE was beautiful, with a strange unearthly beauty. She had a little black nose. Her eyes were small, but bright and full of charm. Her ears were long and soft, and her tail curled like one of the ostrich plumes in the window of the dyer with whom she lived.

I have met many little dogs with noses as charming, and eyes as bright, and tails as curly; but never one who, like my Bessie, was a rich, deep pink all over.

I lived with a baker then. I was sitting on his doorstep when she first delighted my eyes. I ran across the road to give her good morning. She seemed pleased to see me. We had a little chat about the weather and the other dogs in the street, and about buns, and rats, and the vices of the domestic cat.

Her manners and her conversation were as bright and charming as her eyes. Before we parted, we had made an appointment for the next afternoon, and as I said good-bye, I ventured to ask —

"How is it, lady, that you are of such a surpassingly beautiful colour?"

"It is natural to our family," she said, tossing her pretty ears. "My mother was the Royal Crimson Dog at the Court of the King of India."

I bowed with deep respect and withdrew, for I heard them

calling me at home.

The next day I looked for my beautiful pink-coloured lady, but I looked in vain. Instead, a dog of a bright sky-blue, with a yellow ribbon round its neck, sat in the sun on the dyer's doorstep. Yet, could I be mistaken? That nose, those ears, that feathery tail, those bright and beaming eyes!

I went across. She received me with some embarrassment, which disappeared as I talked gaily of milk and guinea pigs, and the habits of the cats'-meat man. Before we parted I said —

"You have changed your dress."

"Yes," she said, "it's so common and vulgar to wear always one colour."

"But I thought" — I hesitated — "that your mother was the Royal Crimson Dog at the Court of —"

"So she was," replied the lady promptly, "but my father was the well-known sky-blue terrier at the Crystal Palace Dog Show. I resemble both my parents."

I retired, fascinated by her high breeding and graceful explanations. Through my dreams that night wandered a long procession of blue and crimson dogs.

The next day, when I hurried to keep the appointment she had been good enough to make with me, I found her a deep purple. Again I concealed my surprise, while we talked of subjects of common interest, of dog — collars and chains and kennels, of biscuits, bones, and the outrage of the muzzling order; and at last I said —

"You have changed your dress again. Your mother was the Royal – "

"Oh, don't," she said, "it's so tiresome to keep repeating things. My father was red and my mother was blue, and I myself, as you see, am purple. Don't you know that crimson and blue make purple? Any child with a shilling box of paints could have told you that."

I thanked her, and came away. Purple seemed to me the most beautiful colour in the world.

But the next day she was green – as green as grass. After the customary exchange of civilities, I remarked firmly —

"Blue and crimson may make purple, but – "

"But green is my favourite colour," she said briskly. "I suppose a dog is not to be bound down by the prejudices of its parents?"

I went away very sadly, and, as I went, I noticed that there were some curtains in the dyer's window of exactly the same tint as my friend's dress. The next day she was gone.

I sought her in vain. The day after, a French poodle appeared on the dyer's doorstep, dressed in stripes of orange and scarlet. I went boldly across to him.

"Good morning, old man; how do you come to be that colour?" I said.

"They dye me so," he answered gloomily. "It's a dreadful lot for a dog that respects himself."

I never saw Bessie but once again. She seemed then to be living with a tinsmith, and her colour was a gingery white.

I hope I am too much of a gentleman to taunt any lady in misfortune, but I couldn't help saying —

"Why don't you wear any of your beautiful coloured dresses now?"

She answered me curtly, for she saw that she had ceased to charm.

"I gave up wearing my pretty dresses," she said, "because silly people asked me so many questions about them."

As usual, I accepted her explanations in silence; but, when I see the poodle opposite, in his varying glories of blue, and green, and orange, and purple, I can't help thinking that perhaps my fair Bessie did not always speak the truth.

The Vain Setter

OURS is one of the most ancient and noble families in the land, and I contend that family pride is an exalted sentiment. I still hold to this belief, in spite of all the sufferings that it has brought upon me.

My father, whose ancestor came over with the Conqueror, has taken prizes at many a county show; and my mother, the handsomest of her sex, took one prize, and would have taken more, but for the unfortunate accident of having her tail cut off in a door.

I early determined to be worthy of my high breeding and undoubted descent. A setter should have long, silky ears. I made my brother pull mine gently for an hour at a time. In order to lengthen them, I combed their fringes with my paws.

My father's brow is lofty and narrow. The unfortunate accident which removed my mother from public life, suggested to me a way of cultivating our most famous family characteristic. I used to place my head between the doorpost and the door, while my brother leaned gently against the latter, so as to press my skull to the requisite shape. My legs, I knew, ought to be straight. I never indulged in any of those field-sports, to which my brother early turned a light-hearted attention; for I knew that undue exercise tends to curve the legs.

My tail was my special care. Regardless of comfort, I twisted

myself into the shape of a capital O, and, holding the end of my tail gently, but firmly, in my teeth, I stretched myself and it.

So much pains devoted to such a noble object could not be thrown away. I became the handsomest setter in the three counties.

My brother, in the meantime, grew expert in the coarse sporting exercises to which he devoted his energies. He had no pride. He tramped the mud of the fields; he tore his ears in bramble bushes; and I have seen him so far lose all sense of our family's dignity as to grovel at the feet of his master, and raise one of his paws, to indicate that birds were near – common birds; I believe they are called partridges.

"You might as well," I said to him bitterly – "you might as well have been born a pointer."

"Why not?" he said. "I know a pointer," he went on, laughing in his merry, careless way – "I know a pointer who lives at the Pines Farm. A capital fellow he is."

"My dear boy," I said, "just come and squeeze my head in the door a little, will you? and let me tell you that for one of our family to associate with a pointer is social ruin – common, coarse, smooth-coated persons, related, I should suppose, to the vulgar plum-pudding dog."

My brother only laughed; but he was a good-natured fellow, and pinched my head in the door until my forehead could stand the strain no longer.

I was sent to the Crystal Palace Dog Show; and, as I looked

round on the hundreds of dogs of all families and nationalities, I breathed a sigh of contentment, and blessed the fate that had made me, in this England of ours, a well-born English setter. My brother was not at the Show, of course; but I think even he would have admired me if he could have seen how far superior I was to all about me. Of course, I took the first prize. My mission was fulfilled: my family pride was satisfied. The judges unanimously pronounced me to be the most perfect and beautiful sporting dog in the whole Show. My master, wild with delight, patted my silky forehead, and then turned aside to talk with a stout gentleman in gaiters.

I thought of what my life would be – one long, joyous round of shows, applause, pats on the head from a grateful master, delicious food and first prizes.

But my master's base nature – his ancestors came over with George and the Hanoverians – struck all my hopes to the ground. I woke from my dream of triumph to find myself sold to the stout man in gaiters.

I never saw my brother again. I was never able to tell my fond and doting mother that I, like her, had taken a prize. I was never able to chat with my father over a bone, comparing with him experiences of the show bench. The stout, gaitered man took me away into a far country.

The next morning he took me out into the fields, and looked at me from time to time, as if he expected me to do something. Unwilling to disappoint him, I sat down and began my usual

exercise for lengthening my tail. He at once struck me violently. We went a little farther, and I noticed that he looked more and more displeased; but I could not imagine what it could be that so distressed him. Presently one of those common partridge birds had the impertinence to fly out close to me. I caught it at once, and looked round for applause. There only came another shower of blows.

"What's the good of your taking prizes," he said, "if you're such an idiot in the field? – might as well have a greyhound."

"I wish you had," I said under my breath.

I spent a week in torment, and then it occurred to me that this low-born, gaitered person would have been better pleased with my brother. So I tried to recall the tricks with which my brother had particularly aggravated me; and, the next time I smelt a partridge, I lay down, as I had seen my brother do, and lifted a foolish foot. I was rewarded with a pat and encouragement.

I have now sunk entirely to my brother's level. My master pronounces me to be a most excellent sporting dog. But I shall never forget the blows and angry words that were necessary to make me renounce my ideal of what a setter should be; and deep in my heart I still cherish, with passionate devotion, my views on duty, and my honourable family pride.