

PUSSY'S ROAD TO RUIN,

OR

DO AS YOU ARE BID.



TRANSLATED FREELY FROM THE GERMAN BY MADAME DE CHATELAIN.

FOURTH EDITION.

LEIPZIG:

WILLIAM ENGELMANN.

LONDON:

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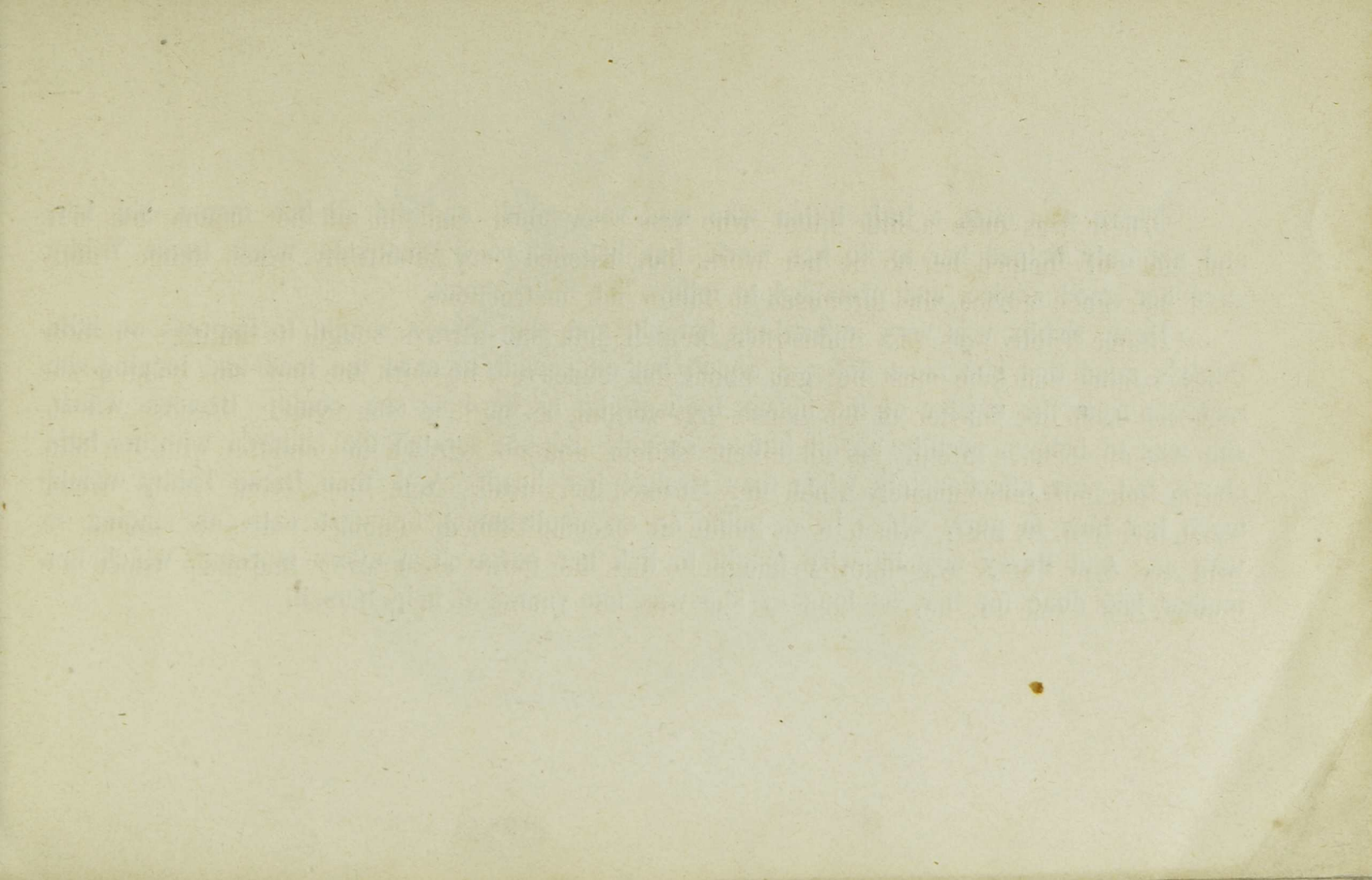
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There was once a little kitten who was very good, and did all her mama bid her, and not only helped her to do her work, but listened very attentively when Dame Tabby gave her good advice, and promised to follow her instructions.

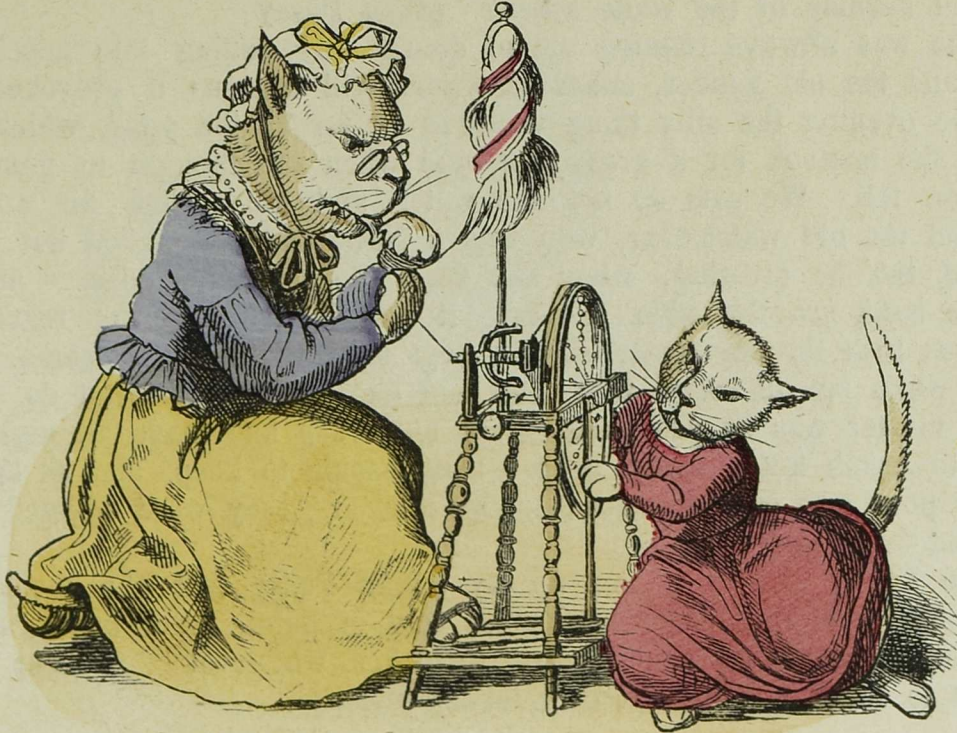
Dame Tabby was very industrious herself, and she always sought to impress on little Pussy's mind that she must not gad about, but endeavour to earn the food and lodging she received from the master of the house, by working as hard as she could. Besides which, she was to behave prettily as all kittens should, and not scratch the children with her little claws, but purr affectionately when they stroked her head. And then Dame Tabby would teach her how to purr, which is as polite an accomplishment amongst cats, as singing is with us. And Pussy was likewise taught to lick her paws clean every morning, which her mother had done for her, as long as she was too young to help herself.



As Dame Tabby sat at her spinning wheel, she used often to tell stories about kittens who had got into some scrape, by not minding their mother's good advice.

"When I was young, and lived in the country", would she often relate, "we had a neighbour who had as fine a brood of kittens as ever was seen. Amongst the number there was a tortoiseshell kitten, and another as white as snow and as soft as down, that were the prettiest little creatures imaginable. But because every body admired them, they grew very froward, and were always playing all sorts of tricks. Their mother had frequently told them not to steal any eatables from the pantry, but the tortoiseshell kitten was so greedy, that once, when the cook was called away from the kitchen, where she left some fish boiling on the fire, the kitten made a spring to seize hold of it, and by so doing upset the kettle, and was wearily scalded to death."

And then Dame Tabby would shake her head and look wise, while Pussy listened very demurely as she kept turning the wheel to help her mammy to spin.



“And what became of the white kitten?” asked Pussy.

“O — she was always running out of doors, and getting into mischief by teasing the watch-dog and the old gander, either of whom will bite us if provoked;” said Dame Tabby, “and one evening the silly thing ventured as far as the pond, which being covered with duckweed, she mistook for a grass plot, and when she thought to gambol over it — plump! — in she fell. We cats do not like water, and the foolish kit would have been drowned, had not the old watch-dog, who was a Newfoundland, pulled her out — for he was goodhearted, tho’ he growled, when she used to scratch his nose — and there she lay shivering on the bank scarcely able to stir. It was dark before she reached the house, and the door was shut for the night, so she kept mewling till the morning, when she was found with her white fur all soiled with mud and duckweed. And what do you think came next? Why her master was so provoked at the noise she had made all night, that he gave her and the tortoiseshell kitten away, as too troublesome to keep, and as the families that took them were poor and only wanted them as mousers, they were obliged to work hard not to be starved.”

And Dame Tabby always wound up by telling Pussy that she must try above all things to become a good mouser as the surest way of gaining her master’s favor, and now that she was old enough, always took her with her whenever she went a-hunting, and spared no pains to teach her the art of catching mice.



One day as Pussy was sitting at the door, thinking of nothing at all, there came along a strange Grimalkin, who said to her: "Good morning, Pussy, how do you do?"

"What's that to you?" said Pussy.

"Oh! nothing particular," said he, "only I should think it must be very tiresome to sit moping from one year's end to another, pent up within the narrow walls of a house. Now suppose, Pussy you were to take an airing on the roof this evening?"

"But I mustn't," said Pussy, "for mama has forbid me to stir out of the house."

"Now you are talking nonsense, Pussy — surely the roof is part of the house, therefore you would not be disobeying her orders by taking a little — only a very little walk on the pantiles," answered he in a coaxing tone. "Now do come, and you will see how pleasant it is up there in the moonshine."

"I'll think about it," said Pussy, "and perhaps I may come."



When Pussy was left alone, she began to think over what her new acquaintance had said to her.

"He's right after all," said she to herself, "the roof belongs to the house sure enough." And on the stroke of nine, she climbed out on the pantiles.

The stranger was already there, and he addressed her in a very friendly tone, and they began walking about arm in arm, up and down the pantiles, in a very proper, genteel sort of manner. For tho' you or I should have some trouble in keeping a safe footing on a promenade of this kind, it is all very pleasant to cats.

In about an hour's time Pussy said: "I must now go down again, for fear I should be missed."

"Yes you are right," said the fellow, "you had better go home, so good night till we meet again. By the bye, Puss," added he, calling after her, "do come down into the garden, early to-morrow morning, for I have something very particular to say to you."



"Well! I wonder what he has to say?" thought Pussy — "But go I must. As I have been out once, there can't be much more harm in going out once more — besides the garden belongs to the house."

So Pussy went into the garden next day, and found the stranger waiting for her.

"Pussy," said he, "I want you to do me a good turn. For some time past, I have been annoyed by an old jackdaw who is always eating the lettuce, which the old fellow has no business to do, so I want just to give him a lesson. Now all that I ask of you is to help me to catch him, and the rest will be easy enough."

It was not long before they caught the poor jackdaw. The stranger give him a couple of heavy blows, while Pussy held him fast.

"Oh dear! I do really think I've killed him!" suddenly exclaimed the reckless fellow. "There will be a pretty fuss! Suppose we were to eat him, and then nobody need be any the wiser about it. You know people are so fussy, that they would make as much noise and piece of work about the trumpery creature, as if a foolish bird like that was of the least consequence."



"Well, Pussy! The jackdaw tasted very nice yesterday — didn't he?" said Grimalkin to Pussy, next day. "A bird of this kind is not to be sneezed at. And we might enjoy such a treat oftener if we chose."

"How so?" enquired Pussy.

"Why, in the neighbour's poultry yard," replied Grimalkin. "There are plenty of young chickens there; it was but this morning that I counted as many as fourteen."

"Indeed? But I should not much like to venture there, for the old cock is the fiercest creature in the world."

"You needn't be afraid of him," said Grimalkin, "I'll settle his business, and there will not be the least danger for you. Let's go there towards noon when all the folks are at dinner — and you may depend upon it, we shall come off famously."

Accordingly at noon they jumped over the boards into the neighbouring yard, and down they pounced upon the fowls. Grimalkin secured the fierce old cock, and then cried out: "Have at them, Pussy and mind you catch a pair of chickens — I've got the old boy safe."

So after this notable feat, they dined upon the two chickens as luxuriously as a couple of aldermen.



"I say, Pussy, did you ever eat a carbonade of mutton chops?" said Grimalkin.

"No, never!" replied she, "where are they do be found?" "Why in the kitchin or in the pantry to be sure!" said he, "and you can't think what delicate eating they are. I am particularly fond of them when they are nicely drest with eggs and bread crumbs."

"I dare say I should think them nice, too," said Pussy. "Well then, you must know, Pussy," said the stranger, "that your master is going to have some chops for his supper, for I heard the cook beating them, a short time ago, and now she has cooked and dished them up. O how nice they do smell to be sure! Now suppose you were to climb up to the window, and creep into the dining room, while I keep watch outside — but mind you fetch a couple, Pussy — do you hear?"

So up Pussy went, and as the family had not yet come in to supper, she bore away her prize without being caught.



“I don't know what ails me to-day,” said Grimalkin, “but I feel quite queer. I think my stomach is out of order — I wish I could have some smoked meat.”

“Smoked meat! what is that, I should like to know?” said Pussy.

“Dear me! you know nothing,” said Grimalkin, “smoked meat has been hung up ever so long, and has the most delicate flavour in the world. There are whole strings of sausages in your pantry — now just go in, Pussy, and fetch one, and then you'll learn how they taste. To be candid with you, Miss Puss, you are little better than a simpleton, who does not know how to set about anything. One need give you such very minute instructions. — You ought to be more independent and take a little more courage. You are no longer a child now. Pray how long will it be before you are of age?”

So the silly little Puss, to show she was no longer a child, was once more persuaded to rob her master, especially as she had not been found out; and this time she again escaped with the string of sausages.



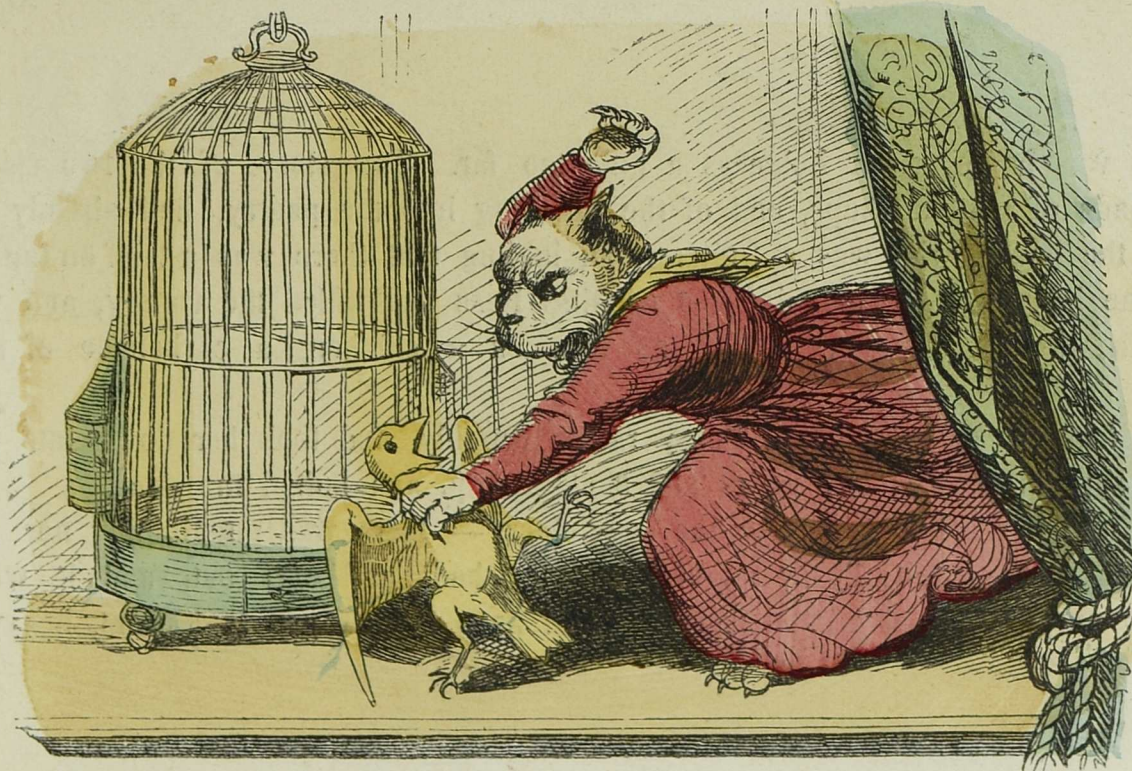
The day after this brank, Pussy sat lost in thought, in the sitting room. She could not get the stranger's sneers out of her head.

"I'll show him whether I am independent or not!" said she at length to herself.

And just as she had taken this resolution, her look fell on the canary bird who was hopping from perch to perch in his cage.

"It would be a very delicate morsel," thought Pussy, "he does not wear that fine yellow coat for nothing, that's a sure case."

And without further ado, Pussy went up to the cage, and began to nibble and scratch till the door opened, and she caught hold of the fluttering, trembling bird, just as she had seen Grimalkin do by the Jackdaw — and there was soon an end of the poor canary.



This was carrying her boldness a little too far. The story of the two chickens, of the carbonade of mutton chops, and of the breaking into the pantry, had already given the master of the house, who was a fruiterer, an inkling that there was a thief on the premises, and now he happened to come in, just as Miss Puss had killed the canary, and was about to ascertain whether a canary tasted as nice as a chicken, a carbonade of mutton, or a sausage.

The fruiterer seized hold of Pussy rather roughly, and took her down into the cellar, where he kept his apples and pears and shut her up, and bolted the door.

Nor was the cellar door like the cage door — there was no nibbling nor scratching that could have opened it; Pussy might have scratched her heart out, and it would have been to no purpose for any impression it could have made upon that great, heavy door.

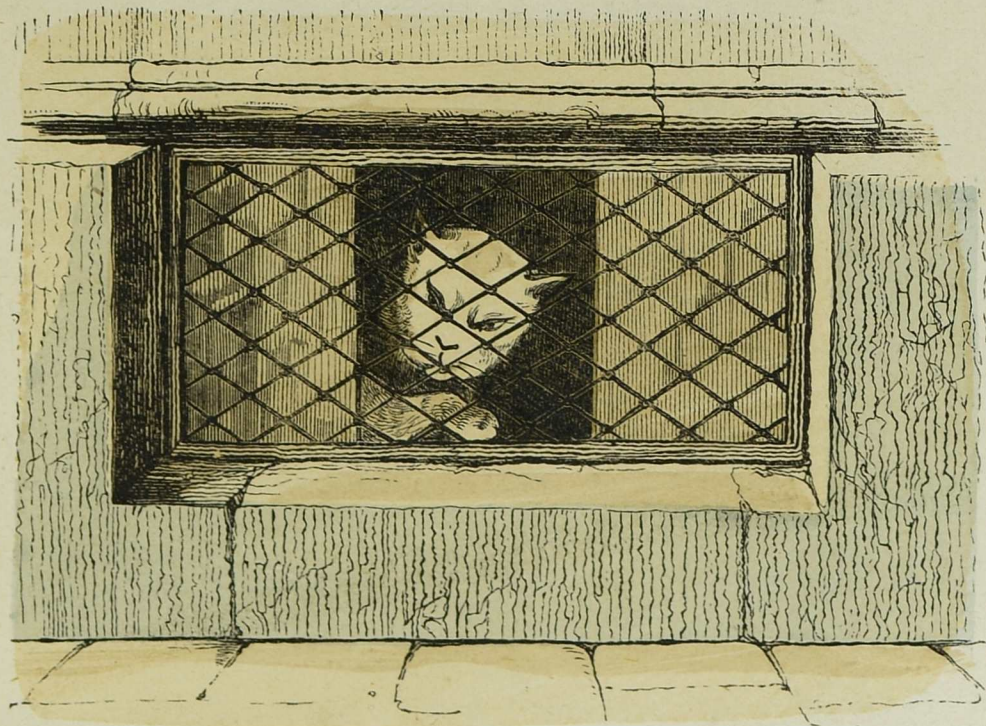


So there Pussy is obliged to stay and to catch mice, that she may not starve, for there is nothing else she can eat in that cellar. And she can only see the light of day thro' the narrow grating which lets air into the vault.

And Pussy is very sad at heart — for she does not think mice half such good eating as chickens or sausages — and she would be content now if she could only ramble about the house, even without climbing over the roof or going into the garden. But what is worst of all, Pussy feels she has lost her liberty thro' her own fault. How foolish she now thinks she was, to let herself be enticed into the garden — for if she had not helped Grimalkin to kill the poor jackdaw, she would never have been emboldened to catch the fowls, nor to rob her master, and would never have thought of killing his little favorite in the yellow coat.

O Pussy, Pussy! the first step in a wrong direction is sure to bring repentance! Perhaps she will grow wiser if ever the fruiterer lets her out, but in the meantime there she sits, and if you go to Munich, you may see her behind her grating in the cellar of the large house at number 3, in the Wittelsbacher Market Place.

As to the strange Grimalkin, he was never heard of any more.



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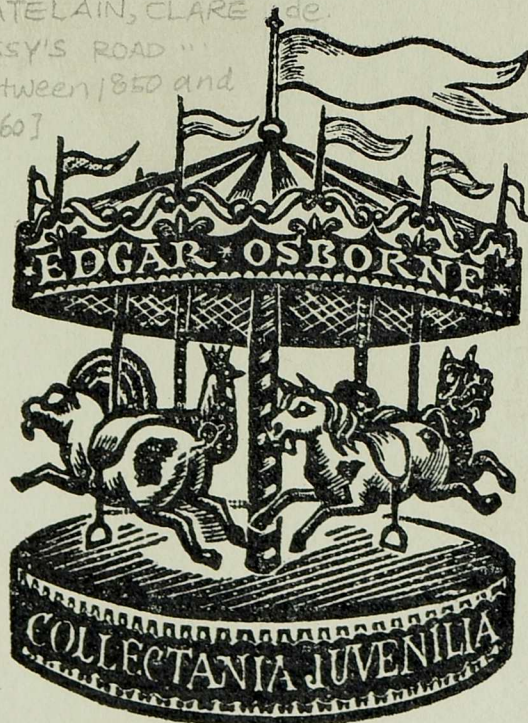
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