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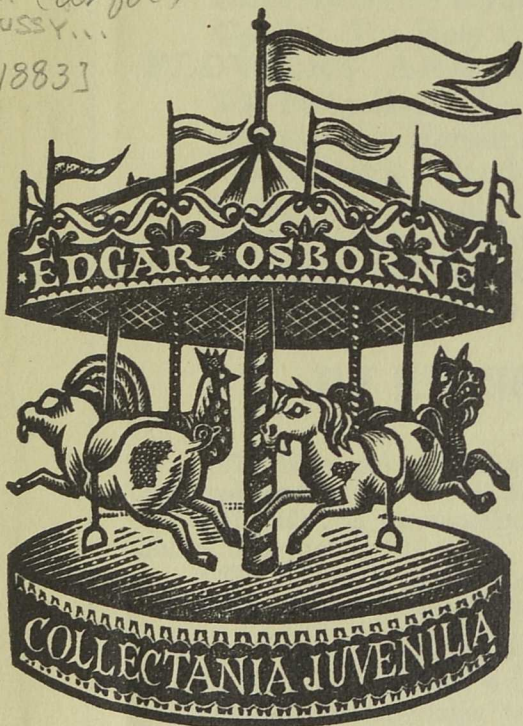
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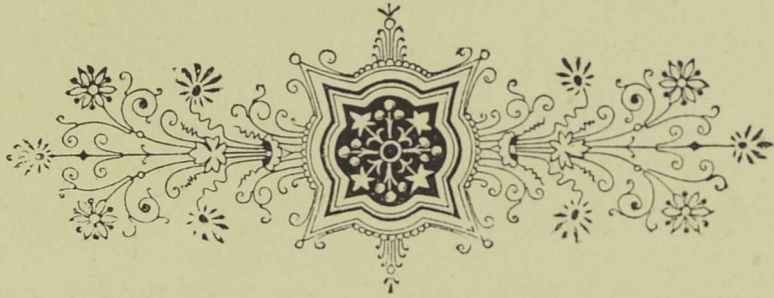
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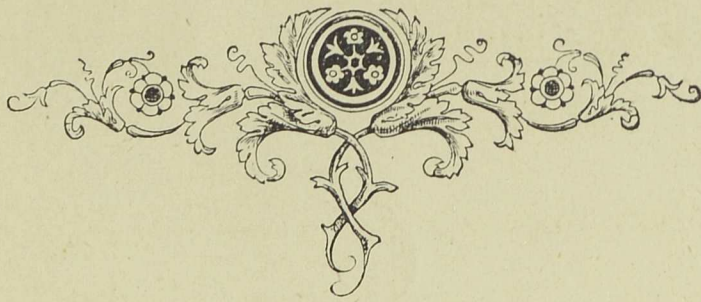
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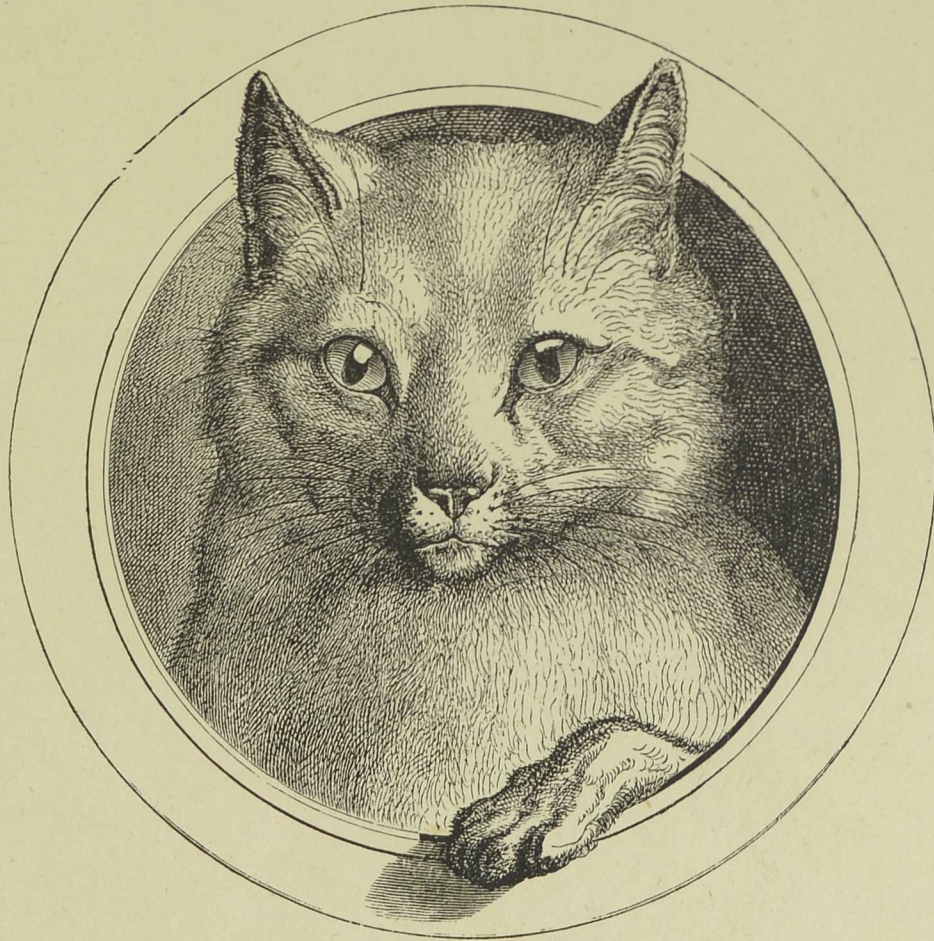
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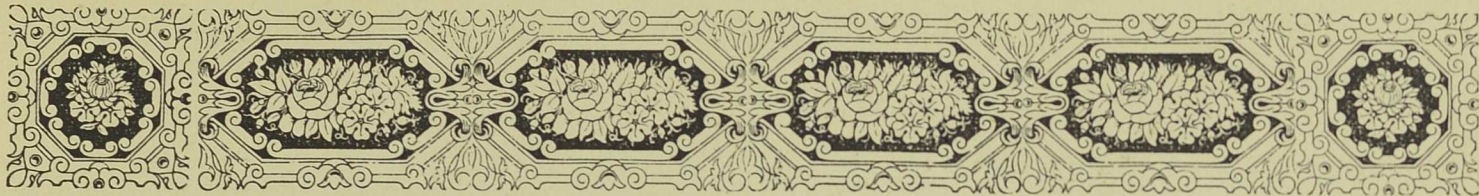
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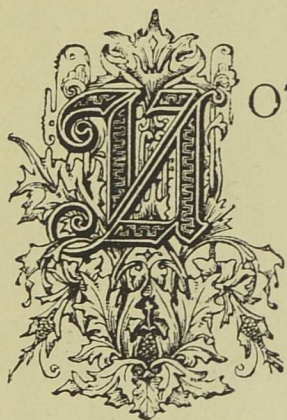
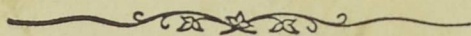


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PUSSY CAT PURR.



NOT a hundred years ago there lived a Mr. Purr, and his wife, Mrs. Purr, in their own little house, and very happy they were together. They had a little servant called Mew, who did all the cooking and washing for them, so that they lived in luxury, and were looked up to, like all great folk who do nothing for themselves.

One day, a bright summer's morning, Mr. Purr started up from his seat, and cried out to his wife—

“Mrs. P., don't sit there all day, thinking of mice! Look at the glorious sun! Look at the blue sky! Put your best bonnet on, and we'll take a stroll.”

“*All* right, Mr. P., why make such a fuss? And I *wasn't* thinking of mice, as it happens—I was thinking of rats—small ones, easy to swallow, and soft coated! You always think yourself so clever, and yet you are never right in your guesses. *Mice*, indeed! You're an idiot, P.”

“Well, my love, well,” replied the husband, who had learnt long ago that it was as well to soothe his mate's temper before



Mr. and Mrs. Purr take a walk.

it began to really boil. "Well, never mind! Rats or mice, what does it really matter? They're nearly the same! Don't you know why? No? Because there's a *b* in *b*-oth! Ha, ha!"

Mrs. Purr smiled at her husband's joke, got up from her chair—for these well-to-do pussies had chairs to sit on—and put on her bonnet and cloak. Mr. Purr donned his overcoat, seized his umbrella, and they set off.

The sun shone out gloriously hot, and the happy pair commenced their walk.

"Well, Mrs. P.," said the gentleman, "aren't you glad you came? I said you would be!"

"No, you didn't, my dear! You never said anything of the kind."

"How can you say so, my love! You know I did say it; or if I didn't, I thought it."

"Thinking and saying aren't the same thing, you know."

"They are with you, my love!"

"P.! How dare you? Do you want to insult me? I know I never speak without thinking; but as for thinking without speaking, I'm sure I do it often—once a day at least! You catch one up so short! You might learn to be more polite. If I had known what a boor you were, I would never have married you. Nor would my poor dear mamma have allowed me to. Nor my papa, nor——"

"Nor your great grandmother, I suppose," Mr. Purr broke in



Mr. Purr picks nuts for his wife.

hastily. "Now I'll tell you what it is, madam. I'm getting tired of these squabbles. I'll, I'll, I'll—*put up the umbrella*; it's getting too hot. If it *won't* rain, why, we must use the umbrella to keep off the sun—and your peppery words!"

So Mr. Purr opened up his umbrella, took his hat off his head, and held it in his hand. Now, Mrs. Purr was also getting rather hot, what with the sun and the dry air and her own temper. "I should like a bit of that shade," she thought to herself; then said aloud,—

"Shall I hold up the umbrella, for you—dear? I'm sure it's too warm for you to do it." Mr. Purr held out the handle for her to take; but she then added, "Perhaps it will be better if I take your arm instead, and you can hold the umbrella over *both* of us, can't you?"

So, you see, Mrs. Purr gained her end after all, as she was accustomed to do; and the picture shows you how they proceeded after this. They chatted and gossiped, and all went merrily as the wedding bells. After a while they entered a wood, and sat down under the shade of a tree, to cool and rest themselves.

Then Mr. Purr, tired by the walk and the warmth, said he would like a nap—"just forty winks to rest his eye-lids," he said.

So Mrs. Purr lay down beside him; but she could not sleep. She gazed at the bits of blue sky peeping out between the leaves above her, at the squirrels skipping about from bough to bough all round her, at the—



Dreadful accident to Mr. Purr.

"Hulloa!" she cried as she leapt up, "*nuts*—NUTS! Mr. P., Mr. P., up you get, you lazy husband!" and she tugged at Mr. Purr's paw until he jumped up, screaming—

"What is it? Murder! *Fire*!! POLICE!!! What's the matter?"

"Hush, you foolish cat; it's all right. There's nothing the matter—only NUTS!"

"Nuts?" repeated Mr. Purr, inquiringly. "What of them?"

"I want some," replied the lady cat; "and, what is more, I want you to get me some. *Do* now, there's a good, dear, darling pussy of a husband, as you always were!"

Mr. Purr felt very cross at being awakened so hurriedly, yet what could he say after such tender words? He would say nothing, and that's what he *did* say. After he had said it, he took off his coat and vest, carefully laid them under his tall hat, and gave a spring at the tree. Mrs. Purr stood at the foot of it, eagerly following him with her eyes, as he climbed up.

"Don't take those little ones, P.; there are some beauties lower down here, right over my head. Try to reach them, dear. I will hold my apron underneath to catch them, as you throw them down. That's right! Now then, over! That's it! Up and over! Now then! Oh! oh!" she screamed suddenly, for look at the picture!

It was indeed a sad sight, for Mr. Purr had over-reached himself, and thrown too much of his weight on the slender bough. A bend, a crack, and down they came, bough, cat, and all, smash through the foliage, bang down on to a huge stone beneath!



Mrs. Purr sings a dirge.

“Oh, oh!” continued Mrs. Purr, screaming, “Oh! oh! Alas! alas! my poor husband is killed; he’s dead, he’s dead!” and she ran to the spot where he had fallen. Yes, he was dead; not a breath passed his lips. The poor fellow had lost his life gathering nuts for his mate. Such a hero deserved a more glorious death. Ah, if he had only died fighting another Tom! But to be killed for the sake of *nuts!* and by a senseless *stone!* It was too heart-rending.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Purr ran home, wailing and miaou-ing; she called her neighbours together, and they fetched the dead cat home, and laid him on his bed. Mrs. Purr was not to be comforted. She remained the whole day in her room, lamenting and singing a dirge over her husband’s body. Poor Mrs. Purr! How sorry she now felt that she had ever spoken harshly to her mate, how sad and lonely she seemed! In her grief she called out for Mew, her maid-servant, and said,—

“He who has nourished me lies on yon bed!
 He who has cherished me lies there quite dead!
 Oft has he brought to me into my house
 Many a beautiful, delicate mouse!
 Miaou! Miaou! Miaou!”

“And Mew,” she continued, “do not admit any one to see me. Say to everybody—

“She sits in her room
 In deepest of gloom,
 Weeping her bright eyes red;
 She sits by the bier,
 And sheds many a tear,
 Because her dear husband’s dead!”



First Arrival—Mr. Billy Goat.

Then poor Mrs. Purr retired to the side of her dead spouse, and Mew went downstairs to give her mistress' message to any callers.

It was not long before old Mr. Billy Goat came to the gate, and inquired if Mrs. Purr was at home, as he wished to offer her his sympathy.

Mew chanted in reply,—

“She sits in her room
In deepest of gloom,
Weeping her bright eyes red!
She sits by the bier,
And sheds many a tear,
Because her dear husband's dead!”

Then old Mr. Billy Goat, who was very conceited because he owned many lands and fields, on which he was wont to graze, said in a condescending voice, as he chucked Miss Mew under the chin, “Ah! I see! But tell her I am come to be her second husband. Tell her, Mr. William Goat is here, and wants to see her. She will be sure to let ME in!”

Mew went to her mistress, and cried “Madam Purr, Mr. William Goat is here, and has come to marry you. Isn't *that* good news? Think of his riches! And what a handsome pair of horns, and what a lovely pointed beard! I *shall* like him for my master!”

But Mrs. Purr only puckered up her pretty wet nose, and said—



Second Arrival—Mr. Hound.

“I will not have him, I do not want him,
 He’s wrinkled, old, and worn ;
 There’s many a beard that’s glossier far,
 And many a longer horn !
 He that lies here, upon this bed,
 Who fed me, and brought me home
 The fattest of mice,—he now is dead !
 Pray, let no others come !”

When the goat heard this answer he gave a gruff *Bah-ah-ah!* and went away in a huff. But scarcely had he time to get out of the court yard, and Miss Mew to get back to the kitchen, before brave Mr. Hound, of Hounslow Heath, arrived in his hunting dress, at the back door, with a “*Bow-wow, yap-yap!* Is Madame Purr within ?”

The maid-servant shrugged her shoulders, however, and said, “Well, yes, she is; but—

“She sits in her room,
 In deepest of gloom,
 Weeping her bright eyes red !
 She sits by the bier,
 And sheds many a tear,
 Because her dear husband’s dead !”

Then the dignified Hound said, “Just go and tell her Mr. Hound, of Hounslow Heath, is willing to be her second husband. That will please her, and drive away her grief !”

So Miss Mew went in to her mistress, and cried joyously, “Here’s good news, madame, Mr. Hound, of Hounslow Heath, is here, with an offer of marriage. What a lovely brown-and-white



Third Arrival—Mr. Alderman Turkey-cock.

coat he has, to be sure! And what splendid ears! I *shall* like him for my master!"

Poor Mrs. Purr did not think the same, for she wrinkled her face into a frown, and said,—

"I will not have him, I do not want him,
Pray bid him go from here;
There's many a coat that's sleeker far,
And many a silkier ear!
He that lies here, upon this bed,
Who fed me, and brought me home
The fattest of mice,—he now is dead!
Then let no others come!"

There was therefore nothing left for the dog but to turn tail and trot away, which he did, with first a growl, and then a howl. He had never had his pride so taken down before.

Shortly afterwards Mr. Alderman Turkey-cock appeared. He was known to all as a most vain creature, and was always attended by his little pug-dog servant, carrying his master's money-box after him, to show how wealthy he was.

"Gobble-gobble-gobble, is Mistress Purr within?" he cried.

Mew replied as she was bidden, "Yes, but—

"She sits in her room,
In deepest of gloom,
Weeping her bright eyes red!
She sits by the bier,
And sheds many a tear,
Because her dear husband's dead!"

"But go and tell her that rich Mr. Alderman Turkey-cock is here,



Fourth Arrival—Mr. Tom Darling.

with his money-box and all, come to marry her. I shall not take her away to-day, as I do not want a bride with red eyes. Tell her to dry up her tears, be happy, and to-morrow I will come again!"

Having exerted himself so much, Mr. Turkey-cock was about to go, when Mistress Mew stopped him, saying, "I will give my mistress your message at once, and bring back her answer."

"Her answer," muttered Mr. Turkey-cock; "of course she will accept me!" But Mew was soon back again with her old answer.

"Mistress says—

"I will not have him, I do not want him,
Pray bid him not come near;
There's many a cat that's better far
Would fain be admitted here!
But he lies dead, upon this bed,
Who fed me, and brought me home
The fattest of mice, which I call nice,—
Let none but cat-woer come!"

"Preposterous!" gurgled the old turkey-cock, and he got so excited, and so red in the face, that his puppy-servant had to pull down his fan-feathered tail, and sit upon it, to bring him round again.

At last, after a while, who should come, do you think, but beautiful, soft-skinned, spruce Mr. Thomas Darling, the dandy cat of the neighbourhood, the pet of the ladies, with the finest, and longest, and softest of tails imaginable!

"Is Madam Purr within?" he asked in a tender voice, "and may I have the honour of seeing her?"



Preparations for the Feast.

Mew replied as before, "Yes, she is within, but—

She sits in her room
In deepest of gloom,
Weeping her bright eyes red!
She sits by the bier,
And sheds many a tear,
Because her dear husband's dead!"

"But may I not speak with her," asked Tom Darling; "I should like to offer her some comfort, poor dear!"

"I will see," replied Miss Mew, and off she ran to her mistress, crying, "Such news, madam! such good news! Mr. Thomas Darling is here, and wants to talk with you, and to offer you some comfort. I can guess what he means! Oh, I *shall* like him for my master!"

Mrs. Purr did not pucker up her nose, did not wrinkle her brow; what do you think she did? Why, she gave a great bound of delight, skipped to and fro, and cried out to Mew,—

"Clear the house, and clear the hall,
Prepare for a wedding, prepare for a ball!
Put all things straight, and do not wait;
Go tell Mr. Darling he's not too late,
And show him up here for a *tête-à-tête!*"

And so it happened. First of all, the late Mr. Purr had to be buried. Then followed a great scrubbing and rubbing, hurrying and scurrying, hustle and bustle, stewing and brewing, roasting and toasting, until at length the house shone with brightness, and the wedding feast was ready.



The Wedding Dance.

The two cats were wedded by the priest, and then walked home, where they and the guests all sat down to table, and the feast began.

Everything there was mirth itself. The richest stews, the brownest hashes, the tenderest legs of mice loaded the table, and a saucer of milk was laid for each guest.

After the meal was over, songs followed; and after the songs came dancing. It was very late before the party broke up; and as they went home, well contented with their entertainment, the cows were already lowing, the cocks crowing, and the milkmen crying milk in the streets.

But what do you think the milkmen saw just outside Mr. and Mrs. Darling's house?

Why, the ducks from the farm-yard close by had scrambled into the court-yard, and were gobbling up what remained of the feast, and what had fallen from the table. And a fine time they had of it, too, for the poor Pussy in the picture, who sits with his hand on his stomach, had eaten too much, and felt too ill to trouble himself to drive them away, and so they finished the remains till the last bone was bare! Old Mother Duck had watched the cats at meal, and as soon as they left the table, she had called her Mr. Drake to her, and all her little ones, and had said,—

“See husband! see children! What a sin to waste such good things! Let us go there and feast ourselves. I declare the spilled milk has made quite a little pond. Won't we have a treat!”

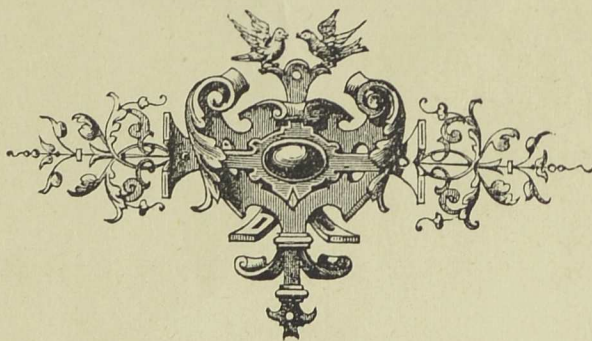


The poor neighbours finish the remains of the feast.

And so they all scrambled off, and amused themselves as is seen in the picture.

But now comes the funniest part of our story! Would you believe it, little Reader? Who do you think Mrs. Purr really is? Why, she is no other than your own pussy, the pussy you stroke every day, the pussy who is now lying on your hearth-rug; and if you do not believe it, you had better ask her, and see if she denies it. She ought to know best, and if she can't deny it, I must be right, mustn't I?

END.





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