

When we reached Sulden-Thal, we made a slight detour, at Pinggera's request, to pass near the chapel. Pinggera gave a halloo, and a young woman appeared at the door and joined us. He presented her to me as his wife. That evening, at the Herr Curat Eller's house, I asked him what his wife had been doing at the chapel, and how he knew of her presence. He shamefacedly confessed that, at her request, he had taken her there in the morning before we started up the mountain; and there she had been on her knees until his halloo brought her the intelligence that her prayers had been answered.

It gave me a curious feeling when I

handed him the trifling sum for which he had risked his life that day. I was a reckless boy, perhaps eighteen years of age, and what I did with my life was of small concern to me, and of no real consequence to any other. But the question as to whether I was justified in tempting him, for a half-handful of coin, to do that which had kept his wife, without food or fire, on her knees for full twelve hours was one which I had some difficulty in solving; and whether it was her prayers or my sticking like a leech to the snow ridge when the guide fell that led to our fortunate return is one which I have never settled.

Charles Stewart Davison.

A KITTEN.

IF

"The child is father of the man,"

why is not the kitten father of the cat? If in the little boy there lurks the infant likeness of all that manhood will complete, why does not the kitten betray some of the attributes common to the adult puss? A puppy is but a dog plus high spirits, and minus common sense. We never hear our friends say they love puppies, but cannot bear dogs. A kitten is a thing apart; and many people who lack the discriminating enthusiasm for cats, who regard these beautiful beasts with aversion and mistrust, are won over easily, and cajoled out of their prejudices, by the deceitful wiles of kittenhood.

"The little actor cons another part,"

and is the most irresistible comedian in the world. Its wide-open eyes gleam with wonder and mirth. It darts madly at nothing at all, and then, as though suddenly checked in the pursuit, prances sideways on its hind legs with ridiculous agility and zeal. It makes a vast pre-

tense of climbing the rounds of a chair, and swings by the curtain like an acrobat. It scrambles up a table leg, and is seized with comic horror at finding itself full two feet from the floor. If you hasten to its rescue, it clutches you nervously, its little heart thumping against its furry sides, while its soft paws expand and contract with agitation and relief;

"And all their harmless claws disclose,
Like prickles of an early rose."

Yet the instant it is back on the carpet it feigns to be suspicious of your interference, peers at you out of "the tail o' its ee," and scampers for protection under the sofa, from which asylum it presently emerges with cautious trailing steps, as though encompassed by fearful dangers and alarms. Its baby innocence is yet unseared. The evil knowledge of uncanny things which is the dark inheritance of cathood has not yet shadowed its round infant eyes. Where did witches find the mysterious beasts that *sat motionless* by their fires, and watched unblinkingly the waxen manikins dwindling

in the flame? They never reared these companions of their solitude, for no witch could have endured to see a kitten gamboling on her hearthstone. A witch's kitten! That one preposterous thought proves how wide, how unfathomed, is the gap between feline infancy and age.

So it happens that the kitten is loved and cherished and caressed as long as it preserves the beguiling mirthfulness of youth. Richelieu, we know, was wont to keep a family of kittens in his cabinet, that their grace and gayety might divert him from the cares of state, and from black moods of melancholy. Yet, with short-sighted selfishness, he banished these little friends when but a few months old, and gave their places to younger pets. The first faint dawn of reason, the first indication of soberness and worldly wisdom, the first charming and coquettish pretenses to maturity, were followed by immediate dismissal. Richelieu desired to be amused. He had no conception of the finer joy which springs from mutual companionship and esteem. Even humbler and more sincere admirers, like Joanna Baillie, in whom we wish to believe Puss found a friend and champion, appear to take it for granted that the kitten should be the spoiled darling of the household, and the cat a social outcast, degraded into usefulness, and expected to work for her living. What else can be understood from such lines as these?

“ Ah! many a lightly sportive child,
 Who hath, like thee, our wits beguiled,
 To dull and sober manhood grown,
 With strange recoil our hearts disown.
 Even so, poor Kit! must thou endure,
 When thou becomest a cat demure,
 Full many a cuff and angry word,
 Chid roughly from the tempting board.
 And yet, for that thou hast, I ween,
 So oft our favored playmate been,
 Soft be the change which thou shalt prove,
 When time hath spoiled thee of our love;
 Still be thou deemed, by housewife fat,
 A comely, careful, mousing cat,
 Whose dish is, for the public good,
 Replenished oft with savory food.”

Here is a plain exposition of the utilitarian theory which Shakespeare is supposed to have countenanced because Shylock speaks of the “harmless, necessary cat.” Shylock, forsooth! As if he, of all men in Christendom or Jewry, knew anything about cats! Small wonder that he was outwitted by Portia and Jessica, when an adroit little animal could so easily beguile him. But Joanna Baillie should never have been guilty of those snug commonplaces concerning the

“ comely, careful, mousing cat,”

remembering her own valiant Tabby who won Scott's respectful admiration by worrying and killing a dog. It ill became the possessor of an Amazonian cat distinguished by Sir Walter's regard to speak with such patronizing kindness of the race.

We can make no more stupid blunder than to look upon our pets from the standpoint of utility. Puss, as a rule, is another Nimrod, eager for the chase, and unwearyingly patient in pursuit of her prey. But she hunts for her own pleasure, not for our convenience; and when a life of luxury has relaxed her ardor, she often declines to hunt at all. I knew intimately two Maryland cats, well born and of great personal attractions. The sleek, black Tom was named Onyx, and his snow-white companion Lilian. Both were idle, urbane, fastidious, and self-indulgent as Lucullus. Now, into the house honored, but not served, by these charming creatures came a rat, which secured permanent lodgings in the kitchen, and speedily evicted the maid servants. A reign of terror followed, and after a few days of hopeless anarchy it occurred to the cook that the cats might be brought from their comfortable cushions upstairs and shut in at night with their hereditary foe. This was done, and the next morning, on opening the kitchen door, a tableau rivaling the peaceful scenes of Eden was presented to the view. On one side of the hearth lay Onyx, on the other

Lilian; and ten feet away, upright on the kitchen table, sat the rat, contemplating them both with tranquil humor and content. It was apparent to him, as well as to the rest of the household, that he was an object of absolute, contemptuous indifference to those two lordly cats.

There is none of this superb unconcern in the joyous eagerness of infancy. A kitten will dart in pursuit of everything that is small enough to be chased with safety. Not a fly on the window-pane, not a moth in the air, not a tiny crawling insect on the carpet, escapes its unwelcome attentions. It begins to "take notice" as soon as its eyes are open, and its vivacity, outstripping its dawning intelligence, leads it into infantile perils and wrong doing. I own that when Agrippina brought her first-born son — aged two days — and established him in my bedroom closet, the plan struck me at the start as inconvenient. I had prepared another nursery for the little Claudius Nero, and I endeavored for a while to convince his mother that my arrangements were best. But Agrippina was inflexible. The closet suited her in every respect; and, with charming and irresistible flattery, she gave me to understand, in the mute language I knew so well, that she wished her baby boy to be under my immediate protection. "I bring him to you because I trust you," she said as plainly as looks can speak. "Downstairs they handle him all the time, and it is not good for kittens to be handled. Here he is safe from harm, and here he shall remain." After a few weak remonstrances, the futility of which I too clearly understood, her persistence carried the day. I removed my clothing from the closet, spread a shawl upon the floor, had the door taken from its hinges, and resigned myself, for the first time in my life, to the daily and hourly companionship of an infant.

I was amply rewarded. People who require the household cat to rear her offspring in some remote attic or dark cor-

ner of the cellar have no idea of all the diversion and pleasure that they lose. It is delightful to watch the little blind, sprawling, feeble, helpless things develop swiftly into the grace and agility of kittenhood. It is delightful to see the mingled pride and anxiety of the mother, whose parental love increases with every hour of care, and who exhibits her young family as if they were infant Gracchi, the hope of all their race. During Nero's extreme youth, there were times when Agrippina wearied both of his companionship and of her own maternal duties. Once or twice she abandoned him at night for the greater luxury of my bed, where she slept tranquilly by my side, unmindful of the little wailing cries with which Nero lamented her desertion. Once or twice the heat of early summer tempted her to spend the evening on the porch roof which lay beneath my windows, and I have passed some anxious hours awaiting her return, and wondering what would happen if she never came back, and I were left to bring up the baby by hand.

But as the days sped on, and Nero grew rapidly in beauty and intelligence, Agrippina's affection for him knew no bounds. She could hardly bear to leave him even for a little while, and always came hurrying back to him with a loud frightened mew, as if fearing he might have been stolen in her absence. At night she purred over him for hours, or made little gurgling noises expressive of ineffable content. She resented the careless curiosity of strangers, and was a trifle supercilious when the cook stole softly in to give vent to her fervent admiration. But from first to last she shared with me her pride and pleasure; and the joy in her beautiful eyes, as she raised them to mine, was frankly confiding and sympathetic. When the infant Claudius rolled for the first time over the ledge of the closet, and lay sprawling on the bedroom floor, it would have been hard to say which of us was the

more elated at his prowess. A narrow pink ribbon of honor was at once tied around the small adventurer's neck, and he was pronounced the most daring and agile of kittens. From that day his brief career was a series of brilliant triumphs. He was a kitten of parts. Like one of Miss Austen's heroes, he had air and countenance. Less beautiful than his mother, whom he closely resembled, he easily eclipsed her in vivacity and the specious arts of fascination. Never were mother and son more unlike in character and disposition, and the inevitable contrast between kittenhood and cathood was enhanced in this case by a strong natural dissimilarity which no length of years could have utterly effaced.

Agrippina had always been a cat of manifest reserves. She was only six weeks old when she came to me, and had already acquired that gravity of demeanor, that air of gentle disdain, that dignified and somewhat supercilious composure, which won the respectful admiration of those whom she permitted to enjoy her acquaintance. Even in moments of self-forgetfulness and mirth her recreations resembled those of the little Spanish Infanta, who, not being permitted to play with her inferiors, and having no equals, diverted herself as best she could with sedate and solitary sport. Always chary of her favors, Agrippina cared little for the admiration of her chosen circle; and, with a single exception, she made no friends beyond it.

Claudius Nero, on the contrary, thirsted for applause. Affable, debonair, and democratic to the core, the caresses and commendations of a chance visitor or of a housemaid were as valuable to him as were my own. I never looked at him "showing off," as children say, — jumping from chair to chair, balancing himself on the bedpost, or scrambling rapturously up the forbidden curtains, — without thinking of the young Emperor who contended in the amphitheatre for the worthless plaudits of the crowd. He

was impulsive and affectionate, — so, I believe, was the Emperor for a time, — and as masterful as if born to the purple. His mother struggled hard to maintain her rightful authority, but it was in vain. He woke her from her sweetest naps; he darted at her tail, and leaped down on her from sofas and tables with the grace of a diminutive panther. Every time she attempted to punish him for these misdemeanors he cried piteously for help, and was promptly and unwisely rescued by some kind-hearted member of the family. After a while Agrippina took to sitting on her tail, in order to keep it out of his reach, and I have seen her many times carefully tucking it out of sight. She had never been a cat of active habits or of showy accomplishments, and the daring agility of the little Nero amazed and bewildered her. "A Spaniard," observes that pleasant gossip, James Howell, "walks as if he marched, and seldom looks upon the ground, as if he contemned it. I was told of a Spaniard who, having got a fall by a stumble, and broke his nose, rose up, and, in a disdainful manner, said, 'This comes of walking on the earth.'"

Now Nero seldom walked on the earth. At least, he never, if he could help it, walked on the floor, but traversed a room in a series of flying leaps from chair to table, from table to lounge, from lounge to desk, with an occasional dash at the mantelpiece, just to show what he could do. It was curious to watch Agrippina during the performance of these acrobatic feats. Pride, pleasure, the anxiety of a mother, and the faint resentment of conscious inferiority struggled for mastery in her little breast. Sometimes, when Nero's radiant self-satisfaction grew almost insufferable, I have seen her eyelids narrow sullenly, and have wondered whether the Roman Empress ever looked in that way at her brilliant and beautiful son, when maternal love was withering slowly under the shadow of coming evil. Sometimes, when Nero had been prancing

and paddling about with absurd and irresistible glee, attracting and compelling the attention of everybody in the room, Agrippina would jump up on my lap, and look in my face with an expression I thought I understood. She had never before valued my affection in all her little petted, pampered life. She had been sufficient for herself, and had merely tolerated me as a devoted and useful companion. But now that another had usurped so many of her privileges, I fancied there were moments when it pleased her to know that one subject, at least, was not to be beguiled from allegiance; that to one friend, at least, she always was and always would be the dearest cat in the world.

I am glad to remember that love triumphed over jealousy, and that Agrippina's devotion to Nero increased with every day of his short life. The altruism of a cat seldom reaches beyond her kittens; but she is capable of heroic unselfishness where they are concerned. I knew of a London beast, a homeless, forlorn vagrant, who constituted herself an out-door pensioner at the house of a friendly man of letters. This cat had a kitten, whose youthful vivacity won the hearts of a neighboring family. They adopted it willingly, but refused to harbor the mother, who still came for her daily dole to her only benefactor. Whenever a bit of fish or some other especial dainty was given her, this poor mendicant scaled the wall, and watched her chance to share it with her kitten, her little wealthy, greedy son, who gobbled it up as remorselessly as if he were not living on the fat of the land.

Agrippina would have been swift to follow such an example of devotion. At dinner time she always yielded the precedence to Nero, and it became one of our daily tasks to compel the little lad to respect his mother's privileges. He

scorned his saucer of milk, and from tenderest infancy aspired to adult food, making predatory incursions upon Agrippina's plate, and obliging us finally to feed them in separate apartments. I have seen him, when a very young kitten, rear himself upon his baby legs, and with his soft and wicked little paw strike his mother in the face until she dropped the piece of meat she had been eating, when he tranquilly devoured it. It was to prevent the recurrence of such scandalous scenes that two dining-rooms became a necessity in the family. Yet he was so loving and so lovable, poor little Claudius Nero! Why do I dwell on his faults, remembering, as I do, his winning sweetness and affability? Hour after hour, in the narrow city garden, the two cats played together, happy in each other's society, and never a yard apart. Every night they retired at the same time, and slept upon the same cushion, curled up inextricably into one soft, furry ball. Many times I have knelt by their chair to bid them both good-night; and always, when I did so, Agrippina would lift her charming head, purr drowsily for a few seconds, and then nestle closer still to her first-born, with sighs of supreme satisfaction. The zenith of her life had been reached. Her cup of contentment was full.

It is a rude world, even for little cats, and evil chances lie in wait for the petted creatures we strive to shield from harm. Remembering the pangs of separation, the possibilities of unkindness or neglect, the troubles that hide in ambush on every unturned page, I am sometimes glad that the same cruel and selfish blow struck both mother and son, and that they lie together, safe from hurt or hazard, sleeping tranquilly and always, under the shadow of the friendly pines.

Agnes Repplier.