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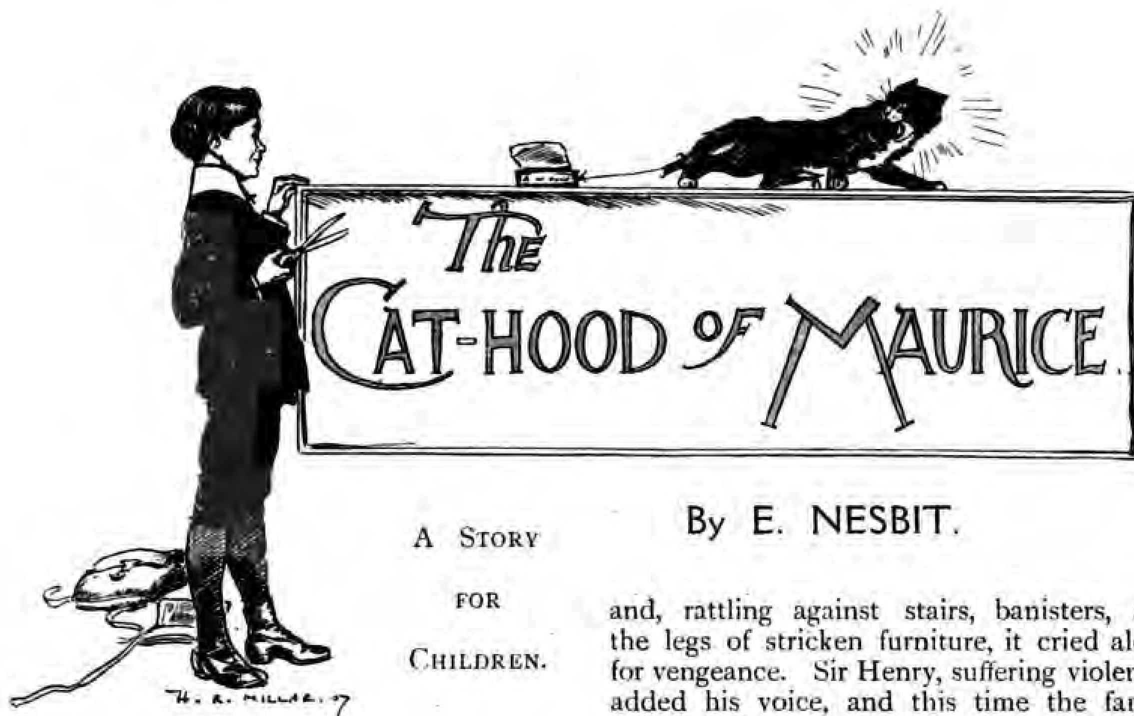

The Cat-Hood of Maurice.

A Story for Children.

By E. NESBIT.

TO have your hair cut is not painful, nor does it hurt to have your whiskers trimmed. Round wooden shoes, shaped like bowls, are not comfortable wear, however much it may amuse the onlooker to see you try to walk in them. If you have a nice fur coat like a company promoter's, it is most annoying to be made to swim in it. And if you had a tail, surely it would be solely your own affair; that anyone should tie a tin can to it would strike you as an unwarrantable impertinence—to say the least.

But it is difficult for an outsider to see these things from the point of view of both the persons concerned. To Maurice, scissors in hand, alive and earnest to snip, it seemed the most natural thing in the world to shorten the stiff whiskers of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman by a generous inch. He did not understand how useful those whiskers were to Sir Henry both in sport and in the more serious business of getting a living. Also it amused Maurice to throw Sir Henry into ponds, though Sir Henry only once permitted this liberty. To put walnuts on Sir Henry's feet and then to watch him walk on ice was, in Maurice's opinion, as good as a play. Sir Henry was a very favourite cat, but Maurice was discreet, and Sir Henry, except under violent suffering, was, at that time anyhow, dumb.

But the empty sardine-tin attached to Sir Henry's tail and hind legs—this had a voice, and, rattling against stairs, banisters, and the legs of stricken furniture, it cried aloud for vengeance. Sir Henry, suffering violently, added his voice, and this time the family heard. There was a chase, a chorus of "Poor pussy!" and "Pussy, then!" and the tail and the tin and Sir Henry were caught under Jane's bed. The tail and the tin acquiesced in their rescue. Sir Henry did not. He fought, scratched, and bit. Jane carried the scars of that rescue for many a long week.

When all was calm Maurice was sought and, after some little natural delay, found—in the boot-cupboard.

"Oh, Maurice!" his mother almost sobbed, "how *can* you? What will your father say?"

Maurice thought he knew what his father would do.

"Don't you know," the mother went on, "how wrong it is to be cruel?"

"I didn't mean to be cruel," Maurice said. And, what is more, he spoke the truth. All the unwelcome attentions he had showered on Sir Henry had not been exactly intended to hurt that stout veteran—only it was interesting to see what a cat would do if you threw it in the water, or cut its whiskers, or tied things to its tail.

"Oh, but you must have meant to be cruel," said mother, "and you will have to be punished."

"I wish I hadn't," said Maurice, from the heart.

"So do I," said his mother, with a sigh; "but it isn't the first time; you know you tied Sir Henry up in a bag with the hedgehog only last Tuesday week. You'd better go to your room and think it over. I shall have to tell your father directly he comes home."

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Maurice went to his room and thought it over. And the more he thought the more he hated Sir Henry. Why couldn't the beastly cat have held its tongue and sat still? That at the time would have been a disappointment, but now Maurice wished it had happened. He sat on the edge of his bed and savagely kicked the edge of the green Kidderminster carpet, and hated the cat.

He hadn't meant to be cruel; he was sure he hadn't; he wouldn't have pinched the cat's feet or squeezed its tail in the door, or pulled its whiskers, or poured hot water on it. He felt himself ill-used, and knew that he would feel still more so after the inevitable interview with his father.

But that interview did not take the immediately painful form expected by Maurice. His father did *not* say, "Now I will show you what it feels like to be hurt." Maurice had braced himself for that, and was looking beyond it to the calm of forgiveness which should follow the storm in which he should so unwillingly take part. No; his father was already calm and reasonable—with a dreadful calm, a terrifying reason.

"Look here, my boy," he said. "This cruelty to dumb animals must be checked—severely checked."

"I didn't mean to be cruel," said Maurice.

"Evil," said Mr. Basingstoke, for such was Maurice's surname, "is wrought by want of thought as well as want of heart. What about your putting the hen in the oven?"

"You know," said Maurice, pale but determined, "you *know* I only wanted to help her to get her eggs hatched quickly. It says in 'Fowls for Food and Fancy' that heat hatches eggs."

"But she hadn't any eggs," said Mr. Basingstoke.

"But she soon would have," urged Maurice. "I thought a stitch in time——"

"That," said his father, "is the sort of thing that you must learn not to think."

"I'll try," said Maurice, miserably hoping for the best.

"I intend that you shall," said Mr. Basingstoke. "This afternoon you go to Dr. Strongitharm's for the remaining week of term. If I find any more cruelty taking place during the holidays you will go there permanently. You can go."

"Oh, father, *please* not," was all Maurice found to say.

"I'm sorry, my boy," said his father, much more kindly; "it's all for your own good, and it's as painful to me as it is to you—remember that. The cab will be here at four. Go and put your things together, and Jane shall pack for you."

So the box was packed. Mabel, Maurice's kiddy sister, cried over everything as it was put in. It was a very wet day.

"If it had been any school but old Strong's," she sobbed.

She and her brother knew that school well: its windows, dulled with wire blinds, its big alarm bell, the high walls of its grounds, bristling with spikes, the iron gates, always locked, through which gloomy boys, imprisoned, scowled on a free world. Dr. Strongitharm's was a school "for backward and difficult boys." Need I say more?

Well, there was no help for it. The box was packed, the cab was at the door. The farewells had been said. Maurice determined that he wouldn't cry and he didn't, which gave him the one touch of pride and joy that such a scene could yield. Then at the last moment, just as father had one leg in the cab, the Taxes called. Father went back into the house to write a cheque. Mother and Mabel had retired in tears. Maurice used the reprieve to go back after his postage-stamp album. Already he was planning how to impress the other boys at old Strong's, and his was really a very fair collection. He ran up into the schoolroom, expecting to find it empty. But someone was there: Sir Henry, in the very middle of the ink-stained table-cloth.

"You brute," said Maurice; "you know jolly well I'm going away, or you wouldn't be here." And, indeed, the room had never, somehow, been a favourite of Sir Henry's.

"Meaow," said Sir Henry.

"Mew!" said Maurice, with scorn. "That's what you always say. All that fuss about a jolly little sardine-tin. Anyone would have thought you'd be only too glad to have it to play with. I wonder how you'd like being a boy? Lickings, and lessons, and impots, and sent back from breakfast to wash your ears. You wash yours anywhere—I wonder what they'd say to me if I washed my ears on the drawing-room hearthrug?"

"Meaow," said Sir Henry, and washed an ear, as though he were showing off.

"Mew," said Maurice again; "that's all you can say."

"Oh, no, it isn't," said Sir Henry, and stopped his ear-washing.

"I say!" said Maurice, in awestruck tones.

"If you think cats have such a jolly time," said Sir Henry, "why not *be* a cat?"

"I would if I could," said Maurice, "and fight you——"

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"'IF YOU THINK CATS HAVE SUCH A JOLLY TIME,' SAID SIR HENRY, 'WHY NOT BE A CAT?'"

"Thank you," said Sir Henry.

"But I can't," said Maurice.

"Oh, yes, you can," said Sir Henry. "You've only got to say the word."

"What word?"

Sir Henry told him the word; but I will not tell you, for fear you should say it by accident and then be sorry.

"And if I say that I shall turn into a cat?"

"Of course," said the cat.

"Oh, yes, I see," said Maurice. "But I'm not taking any, thanks. I don't want to be a cat for always."

"You needn't," said Sir Henry. "You've only got to get someone to say to you, 'Please leave off being a cat and be Maurice again,' and there you are."

Maurice thought of Dr. Strongitharm's. He also thought of the horror of his father when he should find Maurice gone, vanished, not to be traced. "He'll be sorry, then," Maurice told himself, and to the cat he said, suddenly:—

"Right — I'll do it. What's the word, again?"

"——," said the cat.

"——," said Maurice; and suddenly the table shot up to the height of a house, the walls to the height of tenement buildings, the pattern on the carpet became enormous, and Maurice found himself on all fours. He tried to stand up on his feet, but his shoulders were oddly heavy. He could only rear himself upright for a moment, and then fell heavily on his hands. He looked down at them; they seemed to have grown shorter and fatter, and were encased in black fur gloves. He felt a desire to walk on all fours—tried it—did it. It was very odd — the movement of the arms straight from the shoulder, more like the movement of the piston of an engine than anything Maurice could think of at the moment.

"I am asleep," said Maurice —"I am dreaming this. I am dreaming that I am a cat. I hope I dreamed that about the sardine-tin and Sir Henry's tail, and Dr. Strong's."

"You didn't," said a voice he knew and yet didn't know, "and you aren't dreaming this."

"Yes, I am," said Maurice; "and now I'm going to dream that I fight that beastly black cat, and give him the best licking he ever had in his life. Come on, Sir Henry."

A loud laugh answered him.

"Excuse my smiling," said the voice he knew and didn't know, "but don't you see—you *are* Sir Henry!"

A great hand picked Maurice up from the floor and held him in the air. He felt the position to be not only undignified but unsafe, and gave himself a shake of mingled relief and resentment when the hand set him down on the inky table-cloth.

"You are Sir Henry now, my dear Maurice," said the voice, and a huge face came quite close to his. It was his own face, as it would have seemed seen through a magnifying glass. And the voice—oh, horror! — the voice was his own voice—Maurice Basingstoke's voice. Maurice shrank from the voice, and he would have liked to claw the face, but he had had no practice.

"You are Sir Henry," the voice repeated, "and I am Maurice. I like being Maurice. I am so large and strong. I could drown you in the water-butt, my poor cat—oh, so easily. No, don't spit and swear. It's bad manners—even in a cat."

"Maurice!" shouted Mr. Basingstoke from between the door and the cab.

Maurice, from habit, leaped towards the door.

"It's no use *your* going," said the thing that looked like a giant reflection of Maurice; "it's *me* he wants."

"But I didn't agree to your being me."

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"That's poetry, even if it isn't grammar," said the thing that looked like Maurice. "Why, my good cat, don't you see that if you are I, I must be you? Otherwise we should interfere with time and space, upset the balance of power, and as likely as not destroy the solar system. Oh, yes – I'm you, right enough, and shall be, till someone tells you to change from Sir Henry into Maurice. And now you've got to find someone to do it."

("Maurice!" thundered the voice of Mr. Basingstoke.)

"That'll be easy enough," said Maurice.

"Think so?" said the other.

"But I sha'n't try yet. I want to have some fun first. I shall catch heaps of mice!"

"Think so? You forget that your whiskers are cut off—Maurice cut them. Without whiskers, how can you judge of the width of the places you go through? Take care you don't get stuck in a hole that you can't get out of or go in through, my good cat."

"Don't call me a cat," said Maurice, and felt that his tail was growing thick and angry.

"You *are* a cat, you know—and that little bit of temper that I see in your tail reminds me——"

Maurice felt himself gripped round the middle, abruptly lifted, and carried swiftly through the air. The quickness of the movement made him giddy. The light went so quickly past him that it might as well have been darkness. He saw nothing, felt nothing, except a sort of long sea-sickness, and then suddenly he was not being moved. He could see now. He could feel. He was being held tight in a sort of vice — a vice covered with chequered cloth. It looked like the pattern, very much exaggerated, of his school knickerbockers. It *was*. He was being held between the hard, relentless knees of that creature that had once been Sir Henry, and to whose tail he had tied a sardine-tin. Now *he* was Sir Henry, and something was being tied to *his* tail. Something mysterious, terrible. Very well, he would show that he was not afraid of anything that could be attached to tails. The string rubbed his fur the wrong way—it was that that annoyed him, not the string itself; and as for what was at the end of the string, what *could* that matter to any sensible cat? Maurice was quite decided that he was—and would keep on being—a sensible cat.

The string, however, and the uncomfortable, tight position between those chequered knees—something or other was getting on his nerves.

"Maurice!" shouted his father below, and the be-catted Maurice bounded between the knees of the creature that wore his clothes and his looks.

"Coming, father," this thing called, and sped away, leaving Maurice on the servant's bed — under which Sir Henry had taken refuge, with his tin can, so short and yet so long a time ago. The stairs re-echoed to the loud boots which Maurice had never before thought loud; he had often, indeed, wondered that anyone could object to them. He wondered now no longer.

He heard the front door slam. That thing had gone to Dr. Strongitharm's. That was one comfort. Sir Henry was a boy now; he would know what it was to be a boy. He, Maurice, was a cat, and he meant to taste fully all catty pleasures, from milk to mice. Meanwhile he was without mice or milk, and, unaccustomed as he was to a tail, he could not but feel that all was not right with his own. There was a feeling of weight, a feeling of discomfort, of positive terror. If he should move, what would that thing that was tied to his tail do? Rattle, of course. Oh, but he could not bear it if that thing rattled. Nonsense; it was only a sardine-tin. Yes, Maurice knew that. But all the same—if it did rattle! He moved his tail the least little soft inch. No sound. Perhaps really there wasn't anything tied to his tail. But he couldn't be sure unless he moved. But if he moved the thing would rattle, and if it rattled Maurice felt sure that he would expire or go mad. A mad cat. What a dreadful thing to be! Yet he couldn't sit on that bed for ever, waiting, waiting, waiting for the dreadful thing to happen.

"Oh, dear," sighed Maurice the cat. "I never knew what people meant by 'afraid' before."

His cat-heart was beating heavily against his furry side. His limbs were getting cramped—he must move. He did. And instantly the awful thing happened. The sardine-tin touched the iron of the bed-foot. It rattled.

"Oh, I can't bear it, I can't," cried poor Maurice, in a heartrending meaow that echoed through the house. He leaped from the bed and tore through the door and down the stairs, and behind him came the most terrible thing in the world. People might call it a sardine-tin, but he knew better. It was the soul of all the fear that ever had been or ever could be. *It rattled.*

Maurice who was a cat flew down the stairs; down, down—it followed. Oh,

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horrible! Down, down! At the foot of the stairs the horror, caught by something—a banister—a stair-rod—stopped. The string on Maurice's tail tightened, his tail was jerked, he was stopped. But the noise had stopped too. Maurice lay only just alive at the foot of the stairs.

It was Mabel who untied the string and soothed his terrors with strokings and tender love-words. Maurice was surprised to find what a nice little girl his sister really was.

"I'll never tease you again," he tried to say, softly—but that was not what he said. What he said was "Purrrr."

"Dear pussy, nice poor pussy, then," said Mabel, and she hid away the sardine-tin and did not tell anyone. This seemed unjust to Maurice until he remembered that, of course, Mabel thought that he was really Sir Henry, and that the person who had tied the tin to his tail was her brother Maurice. Then he was half grateful. She carried him down, in soft, safe arms, to the kitchen, and asked cook to give him some milk.

"Tell me to change back into Maurice," said Maurice, who was quite worn out by his cattish experiences. But no one heard him. What they heard was, "Meaow—Meaow—Meeeaow!"

Then Maurice saw how he had been tricked. He could be changed back into a boy as soon as anyone said to him, "Leave off being a cat and be Maurice again," but his tongue had no longer the power to ask anyone to say it.

He did not sleep well that night. For one thing he was not accustomed to sleeping on the kitchen hearthrug, and the blackbeetles were too many and too cordial. He was glad when cook came down and turned him out into the garden, where the October frost still lay white on the yellowed stalks of sunflowers and nasturtiums. He took a walk, climbed a tree, failed to catch a bird, and felt better. He began also to feel hungry. A delicious scent came stealing out of the back kitchen door. Oh, joy, there were to be herrings for breakfast! Maurice hastened in and took his place on his usual chair.

His mother said, "Down, puss," and gently tilted the chair so that Maurice fell off it. Then the family had herrings. Maurice said, "You might give me some," and he said it so often that his father, who, of course, heard only mewings, said:—

"For goodness' sake put that cat out of the room."

Maurice breakfasted later, in the dust-bin, on herring heads.

But he kept himself up with a new and splendid idea. They would give him milk presently, and then they should see.

He spent the afternoon sitting on the sofa in the dining-room, listening to the conversation of his father and mother. It is said that listeners never hear any good of themselves. Maurice heard so much that he was surprised and humbled. He heard his father say that he was a fine, plucky little chap, but he needed a severe lesson, and Dr. Strongitharm was the man to give it to him. He heard his mother say things that made his heart throb in his throat and the tears prick behind those green cat-eyes of his. He had always thought his parents a little bit unjust. Now they did him so much more than justice

"IT WAS MABEL WHO UNTIED THE STRING AND SOOTHED HIS TERRORS."

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"HE LANDED THERE ON HIS FOUR PADDED FEET, LIGHT AS A FEATHER; BUT FATHER WAS NOT PLEASED."

that he felt quite small and mean inside his cat-skin.

"He's a dear, good, affectionate boy," said mother. "It's only his high spirits. Don't you think, darling, perhaps you were a little hard on him?"

"It was for his own good," said father.

"Of course," said mother; "but I can't bear to think of him at that dreadful school."

"Well——," father was beginning, when Jane came in with the tea-things on a clattering tray, whose sound made Maurice tremble in every leg. Father and mother began to talk about the weather.

Maurice felt very affectionately to both his parents. The natural way of showing this was to jump on to the sideboard and thence on to his father's shoulders. He landed there on his four padded feet, light as a feather; but father was not pleased.

"Bother the cat!" he cried. "Jane, put it out of the room."

Maurice was put out. His great idea, which was to be carried out with milk, would

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certainly not be carried out in the dining-room. He sought the kitchen, and, seeing a milk-can on the window-ledge, jumped up beside the can and patted it as he had seen Sir Henry do.

"My!" said a friend of Jane's who happened to be there, "ain't that cat clever—a perfect moral, I call her."

"He's nothing to boast of this time," said cook. "I will say for Sir Henry he's not often taken in with a empty can."

This was naturally mortifying for Maurice, but he pretended not to hear, and jumped from the window to the tea-table and patted the milk-jug.

"Come," said the cook, "that's more like it," and she poured him out a full saucer and set it on the floor.

Now was the chance Maurice had longed for. Now he could carry out that idea of his. He was very thirsty, for he had had nothing since that delicious breakfast in the dust-bin. But not for worlds would he have drunk the milk. No. He carefully dipped his right paw in it, for his idea was to make letters with it on the kitchen oil-cloth. He meant to write: "Please tell me to leave off being a cat and be Maurice again," but he found his paw a very clumsy pen, and he had to rub out the first "P" because it only looked like an accident. Then he tried again and actually did make a "P" that any fair-minded person could have read quite easily.

"I wish they'd notice," he said, and before he got the "l" written they did notice.

"Drat the cat," said cook; "look how he's messing the floor up."

And she took away the milk.

Maurice put pride aside and mewed to have the milk put down again. But he did not get it.

Very weary, very thirsty, and very tired of being Sir Henry, he presently found his way to the schoolroom, where Mabel with patient toil was doing her home-lessons. She took him on her lap and stroked him while she learned her French verb. He felt that he was growing very fond of her. People were quite right to be kind to dumb animals. Presently she had to stop stroking him and do a map. And after that she kissed him and put him down and went away. All the time she had been doing the map, Maurice had had but one thought: *Ink!*

The moment the door had closed behind her—how sensible people were who closed doors gently—he stood up in her chair with one paw on the map and the other on the ink. Unfortunately, the inkstand top was made to dip pens in, and not to dip paws. But Maurice was desperate. He deliberately upset the ink—most of it rolled over the table-cloth and fell pattering on the carpet, but with what was left he wrote quite plainly, across the map:—

"Please tell Sir Hen
ry to stop being
a cat and be Mau
rice again."

"There!" he said; "they can't make any mistake about that." They didn't. But they made a mistake about who had done it, and Mabel was deprived of jam with her supper bread.

Her assurance that some naughty boy must have come through the window and done it while she was not there convinced nobody, and, indeed, the window was shut and bolted.

Maurice, wild with indignation, did not mend matters by seizing the opportunity of a few minutes' solitude to write:—

"It was not Mabel
it was Maur
ice I mean Sir Henry,"

because when that was seen Mabel was instantly sent to bed.

"It's not fair!" cried Maurice.

"My dear," said Maurice's father, "if that cat goes on mewing to this extent you'll have to get rid of it."

Maurice said not another word. It was bad enough to be a cat, but to be a cat that was "got rid of"! He knew how people got rid of cats. In a stricken silence he left the room and slunk up the stairs—he dared not mew again, even at the door of Mabel's room. But when Jane went in to put Mabel's light out Maurice crept in too, and in the dark tried with stifled mews and purrs to explain to Mabel how sorry he was. Mabel stroked him and he went to sleep, his last waking thought amazement at the blindness that had once made him call her a silly little kid.

If you have ever been a cat you will understand something of what Maurice endured during the dreadful days that followed. If you have not, I can never make you understand fully. There was the affair of the fishmonger's tray balanced on the wall by the back door — the delicious curled-up whiting; Maurice knew as well as you do that one mustn't steal fish out of other people's trays, but the cat that he was didn't know. There was an inward struggle—and

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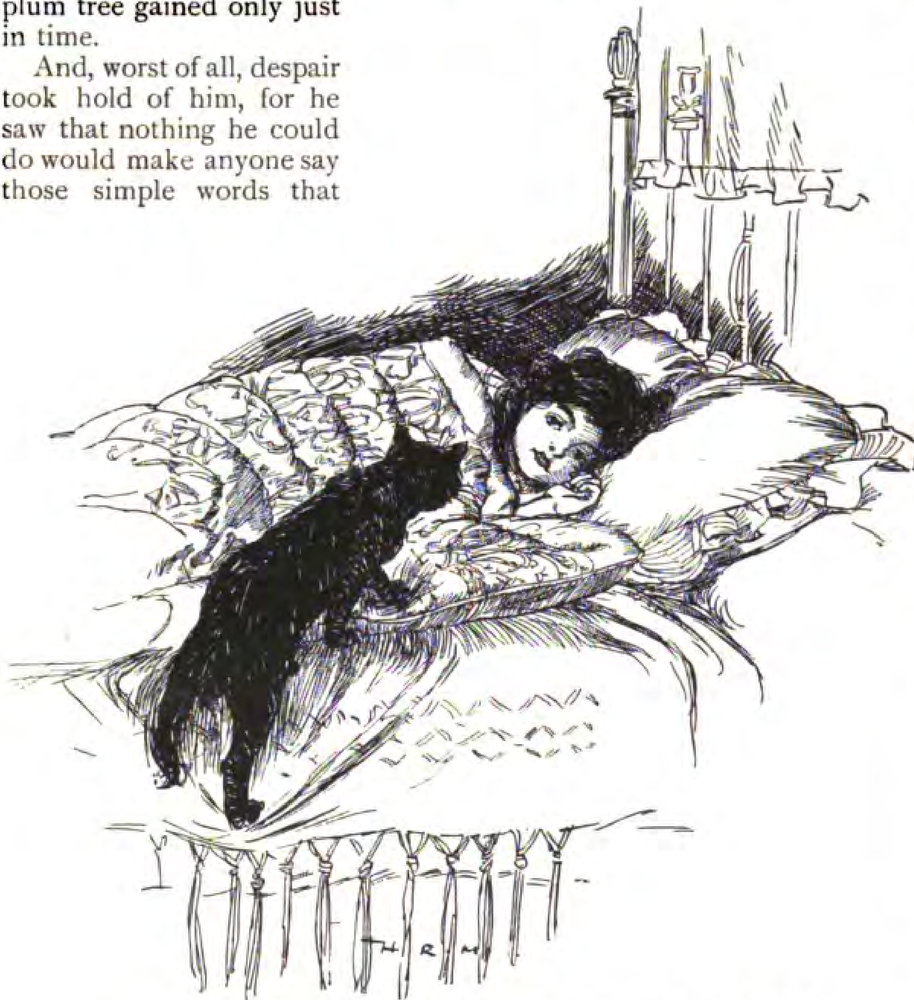
Maurice was beaten by the cat-nature. Later he was beaten by the cook.

Then there was that very painful incident with the butcher's dog, the flight across gardens, the safety of the plum tree gained only just in time.

And, worst of all, despair took hold of him, for he saw that nothing he could do would make anyone say those simple words that would release him. He had hoped that Mabel might at last be made to understand, but the ink had failed him; she did not understand his subdued mewings, and when he got the cardboard letters and made the same sentence with them Mabel only thought it was that naughty boy who came through locked windows. Somehow he could not spell before anyone—his nerves were not what they had been. His brain now gave him no new ideas. He felt that he was really growing like a cat in his mind. His interest in his meals grew beyond even what it had been when they were a schoolboy's meals. He hunted mice with growing enthusiasm, though the loss of his whiskers to measure narrow places with made hunting difficult. He grew expert in bird-stalking, and often got quite near to a bird before it flew away, laughing at him. But all the time, in his heart, he was very, very miserable. And so the week went by.



"WHEN JANE WENT IN TO PUT MABEL'S LIGHT OUT MAURICE CREPT IN TOO."

Maurice in his cat shape dreaded more and more the time when Sir Henry in the boy shape should come back from Dr. Strongitharm's. He knew—who better?—exactly the kind of things boys do to cats, and he trembled to the end of his handsome half-Persian tail.

And then the boy came home from Dr. Strongitharm's, and at the first sound of his boots in the hall Maurice in the cat's body fled with silent haste to hide in the boot-cupboard.

Here, ten minutes later, the boy that had come back from Dr. Strongitharm's found him.

Maurice fluffed up his tail and unsheathed his claws. Whatever this boy was going to do to him Maurice meant to resist, and his resistance should hurt the boy as much as possible. I am sorry to say Maurice swore softly among the boots, but cat-swearing is not really wrong.

"Come out, you old duffer," said Sir Henry in the boy shape of Maurice. "I'm not going to hurt you."

"I'll see to that," said Maurice, backing into the corner, all teeth and claws.

"Oh, I've had such a time!" said Sir Henry. "It's no use, you know, old chap; I can see where you are by your green eyes. My word, they do shine. I've been caned and shut up in a dark room and given thousands of lines to write out."

"I've been beaten, too, if you come to that," mewed Maurice. "Besides the butcher's dog."

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It was an intense relief to speak to someone who could understand his mews.

"Well, I suppose it's Pax for the future," said Sir Henry; "if you won't come out, you won't. Please leave off being a cat and be Maurice again."

And instantly Maurice, amid a heap of goloshes and old tennis bats, felt with a swelling heart that he was no longer a cat. No more of those undignified four legs, those tiresome pointed ears, so difficult to wash, that furry coat, that contemptible tail, and that terrible inability to express all one's feelings in two words — "mew" and "purr."

He scrambled out of the cupboard, and the boots and goloshes fell off him like spray off a bather.

He stood upright in those very chequered knickerbockers that were so terrible when their knees held one vice-like, while things were tied to one's tail. He was face to face with another boy, exactly like himself.

"*You* haven't changed, then—but there can't be two Maurices."

"HE SCRAMBLED OUT OF THE CUPBOARD, AND THE BOOTS AND GOLOSHES FELL OFF HIM LIKE SPRAY OFF A BATHER."

"There sha'n't be; not if I know it," said the other boy; "a boy's life's a dog's life. Quick, before anyone comes.

"Quick what?" asked Maurice.

"Why, tell me to leave off being a boy, and to be Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman again."

Maurice told him at once. And at once the boy was gone, and there was Sir Henry, in his own shape, purring politely, yet with a watchful eye on Maurice's movements.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid, old chap. It's Pax right enough," Maurice murmured in the ear of Sir Henry. And Sir Henry, arching his back under Maurice's stroking hand, replied with a purrrr-meaow that spoke volumes.

"Oh, Maurice, here you are. It *is* nice of you to be nice to Sir Henry, when it was because of him you——"

"He's a good old chap," said Maurice, carelessly. "And you're not half a bad old girl. See?"

Mabel almost wept for joy at this magnificent compliment, and Sir Henry himself took on a more happy and confident air.

Please dismiss any fears which you may entertain that after this Maurice became a model boy. He didn't. But he was much nicer than before. The conversation which he overheard when he was a cat makes him more patient with his father and mother. And he is almost always nice to Mabel, for he cannot forget all that she was to him when he wore the shape of Sir Henry. His father attributes all the improvement in his son's character to that week at Dr. Strongitharm's—which, as you know, Maurice never had. Sir Henry's character is unchanged. Cats learn slowly and with difficulty.

Only Maurice and Sir Henry know the truth—Maurice has never told it to anyone except me, and Sir Henry is a very reserved cat. He never at any time had that free flow of mew which distinguished and endangered the cat-hood of Maurice.

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