

· THE ·  
· RUBÁIYÁT ·  
· OF ·  
· A PERSIAN ·  
· KITTEN ·



· OLIVER HERFORD ·



*Photographs by Vander Wode*

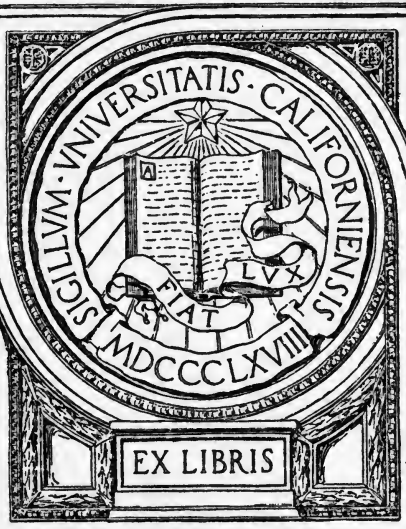
### OLIVER HERFORD

Famous artist, wit and playwright. The cat in this picture was, in its early youth, the inspiration for Mr. Herford's "Rubaiyat of a Persian Kitten"

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**The Rubáiyát of a  
Persian Kitten**

**BOOKS BY OLIVER HERFORD**

*WITH PICTURES BY THE AUTHOR*

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The  
**Rubáiyát**  
of a  
**Persian Kitten**

By  
**Oliver Herford**



New York · Charles Scribner's Sons

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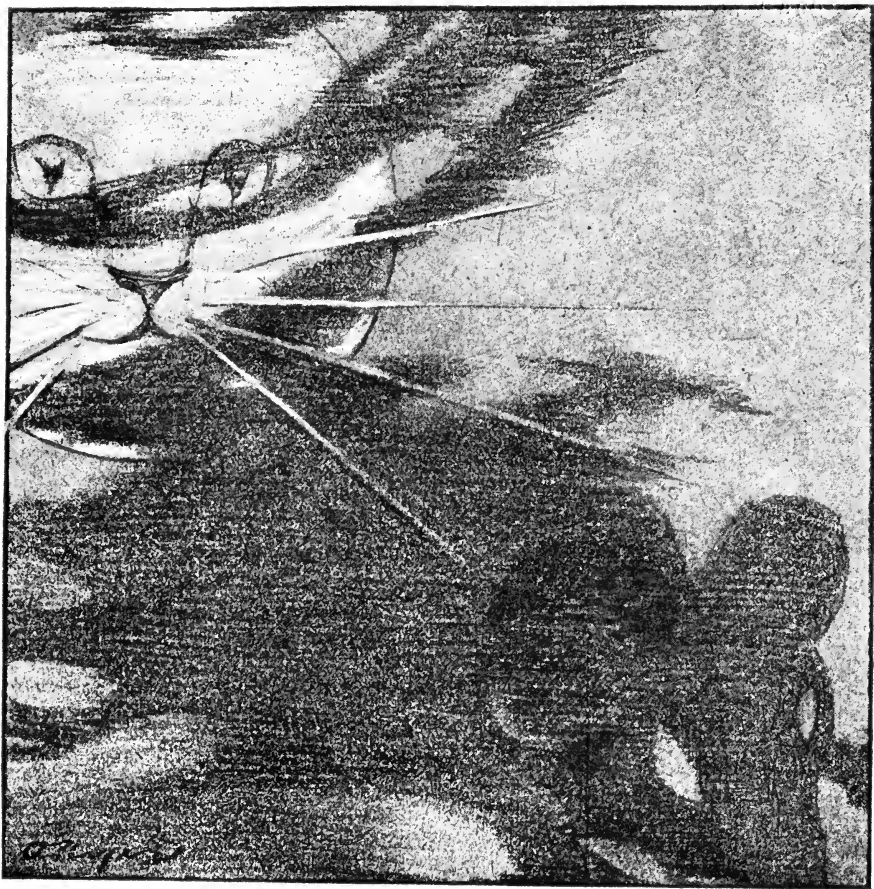
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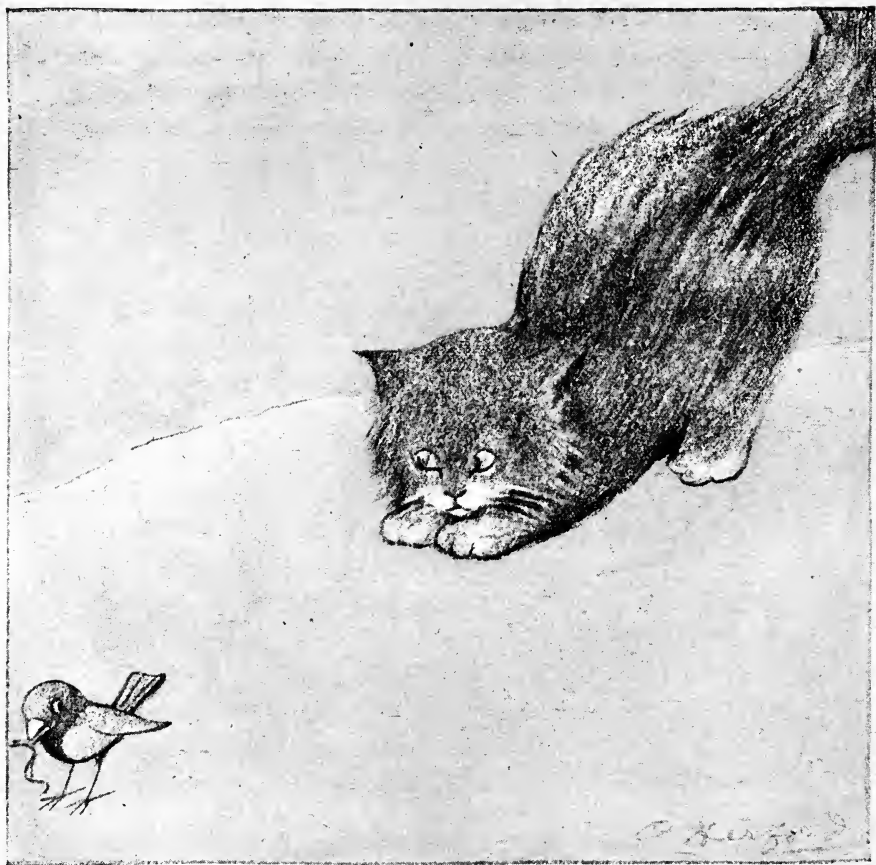
**The Rubáiyát of a  
Persian Kitten**

**W**ake! for the Golden Cat has  
put to flight  
The Mouse of Darkness  
with his Paw of Light:  
Which means, in Plain and  
simple every-day  
Unoriental Speech—The Dawn  
is bright.





**T**hey say the Early Bird the  
Worm shall taste.  
Then rise, O Kitten! Wherefore,  
sleeping, waste  
The fruits of Virtue? Quick!  
the Early Bird  
Will soon be on the flutter—O  
make haste!



The Early Bird has gone, and  
with him ta'en  
The Early Worm—Alas! the  
Moral 's plain,  
O Senseless Worm! Thus,  
thus we are repaid  
for Early Rising—I shall doze  
again.



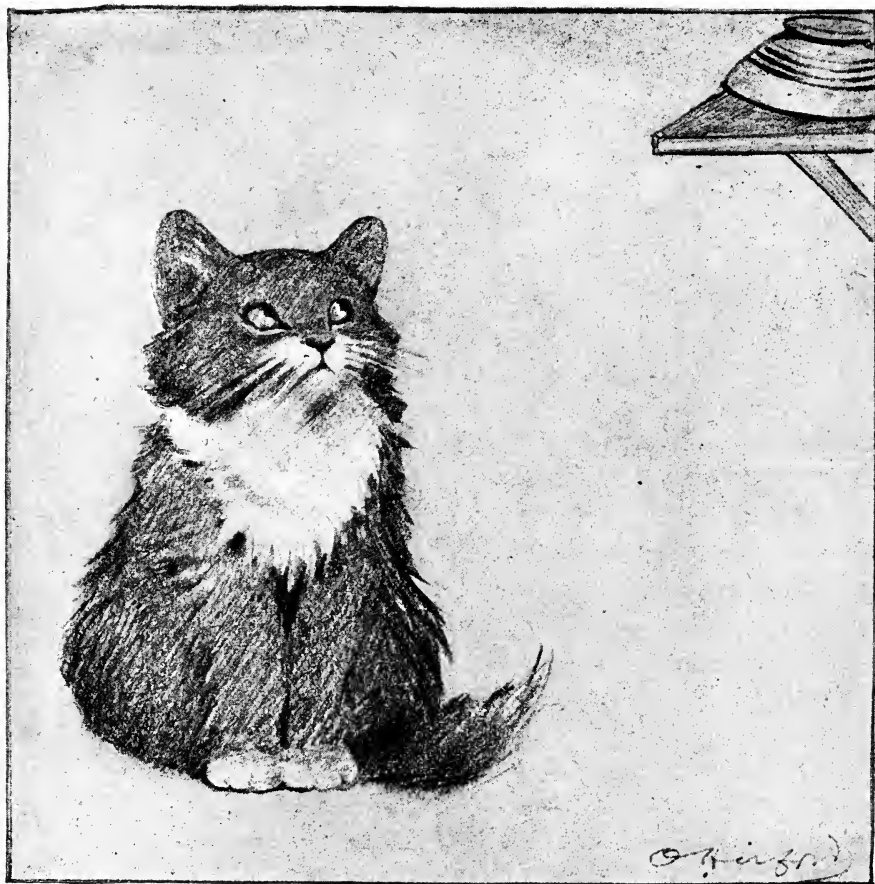
**T**he Mouse makes merry 'mid  
the Larder Shelves,  
The Bird for Dinner in the  
Garden delves.

I often wonder what the  
creatures eat  
One half so toothsome as they  
are **T**hemselves.





**A**nd that Inverted Bowl of  
Skyblue Delf  
That helpless lies upon the  
Pantry Shelf—  
Lift not your eyes to It for  
help, for It  
Is quite as empty as you are  
yourself.

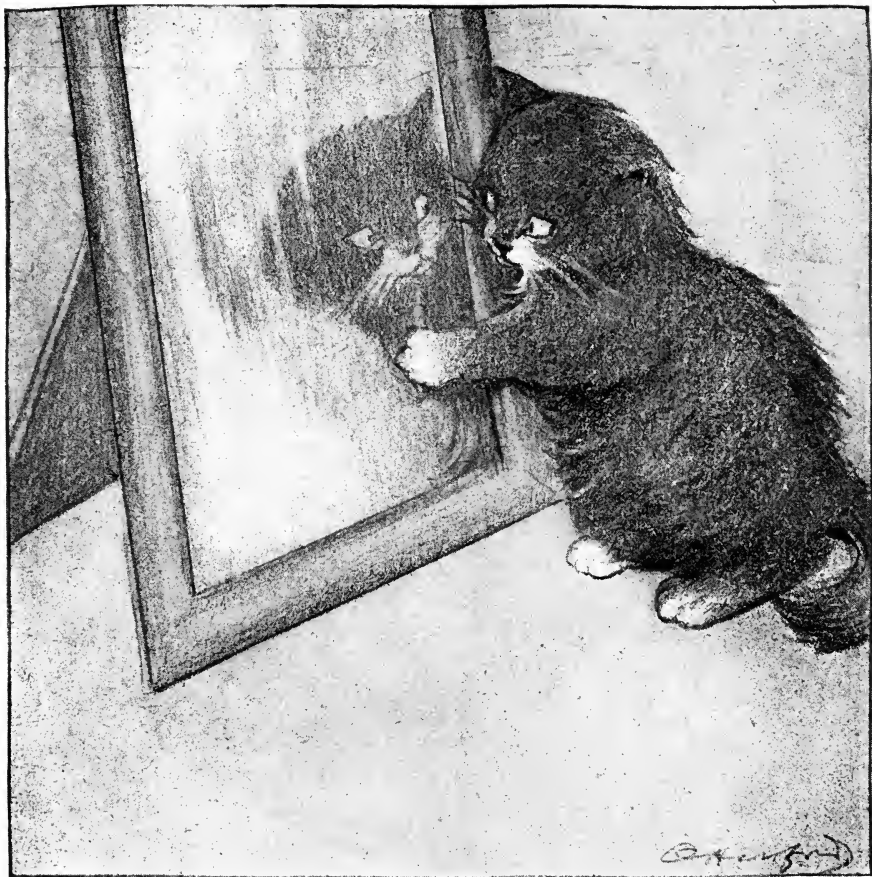


*W. H. King*

**T**he Ball no question makes of  
    Ayes or Noes,  
But right or left, as strikes the  
                    Kitten, goes;  
    Yet why, altho' I toss it far  
                    Afield,  
It still returneth—Goodness  
                    only knows!



**A** Secret Presence that my  
likeness feigns,  
And yet, quicksilver-like, eludes  
my pains—  
In vain I look for Him  
behind the glass;  
He is not there, and yet He still  
remains.

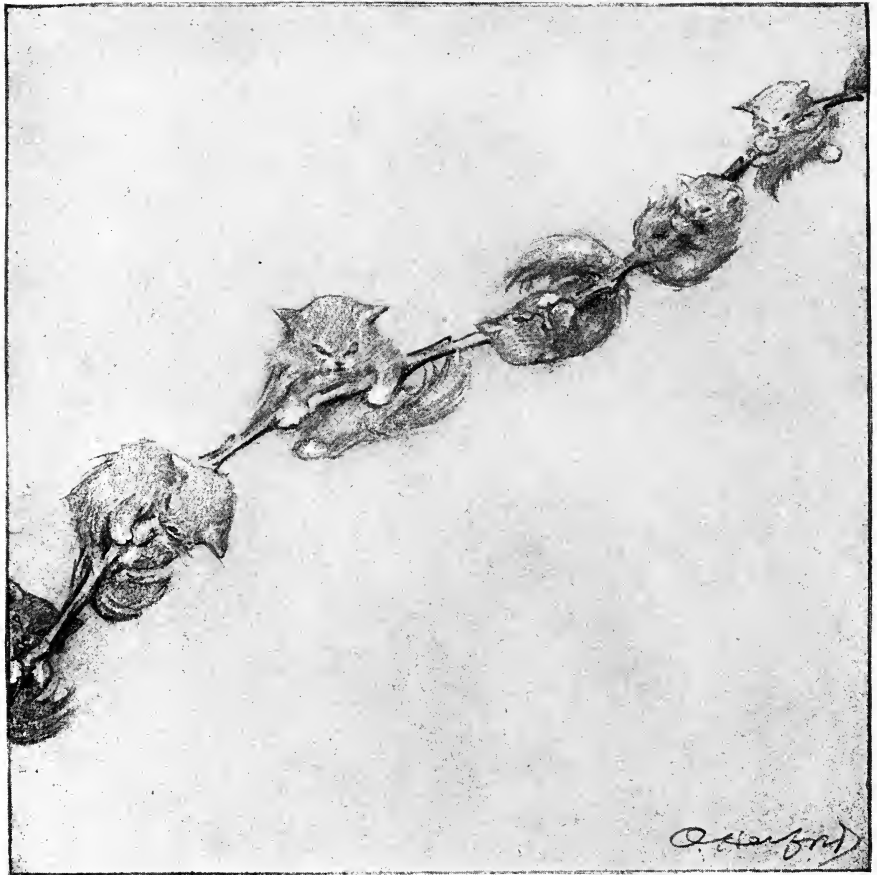


**W**hat out of airy Nothing to  
    invoke  
**A** senseless Something to resist  
                                    the stroke  
**O**f unpermitted Paw—upon  
                                    the pain  
**O**f Everlasting Penalties—if  
                                    broke.





**I** sometimes think the Pussy-  
Willows grey  
Are Angel Kittens who have lost  
their way,  
And every Bulrush on the  
river bank  
A Cat-Tail from some lovely  
Cat astray.



Sometimes I think perchance  
that Allah may,  
When he created Cats, have  
thrown away  
The Tails He marred in  
making, and they grew  
To Cat-Tails and to Pussy-  
Willows grey.



**A**nd lately, when I was not  
feeling fit,  
Bereft alike of Piety and Wit,  
There came an Angel Shape  
and offered me  
A fragrant Plant and bid me  
taste of it.



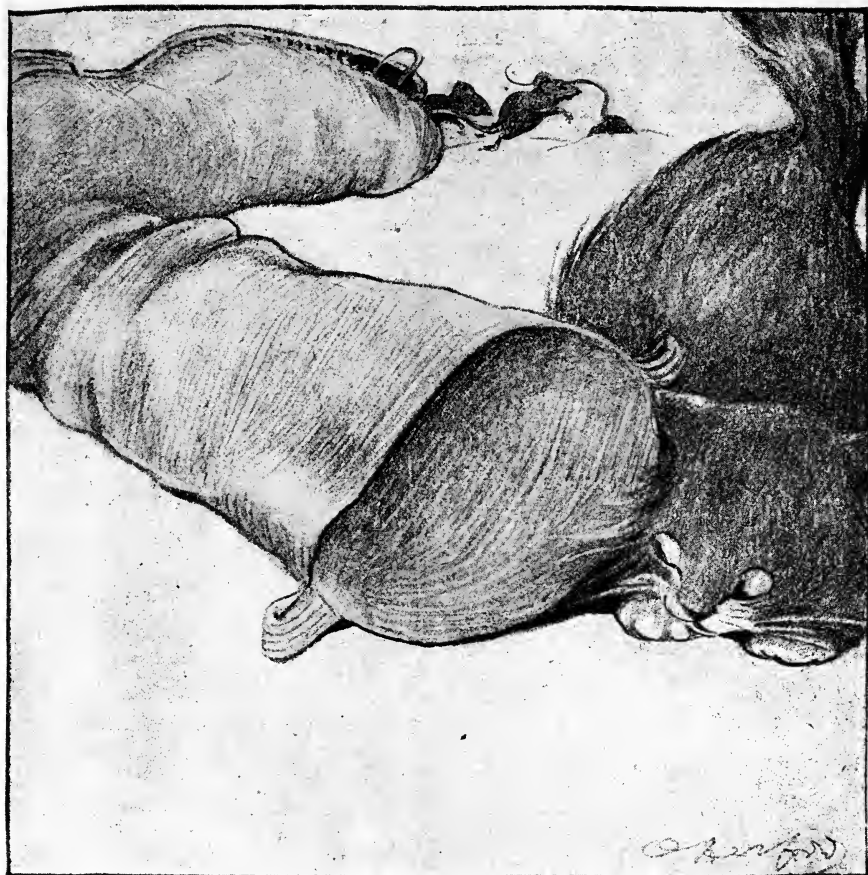
'Twas that reviving Herb,  
that Spicy Weed,  
The Cat-Nip. Tho' 'tis good in  
time of need,  
Ah, feed upon it lightly, for  
who knows  
To what unlovely antics it may  
lead.



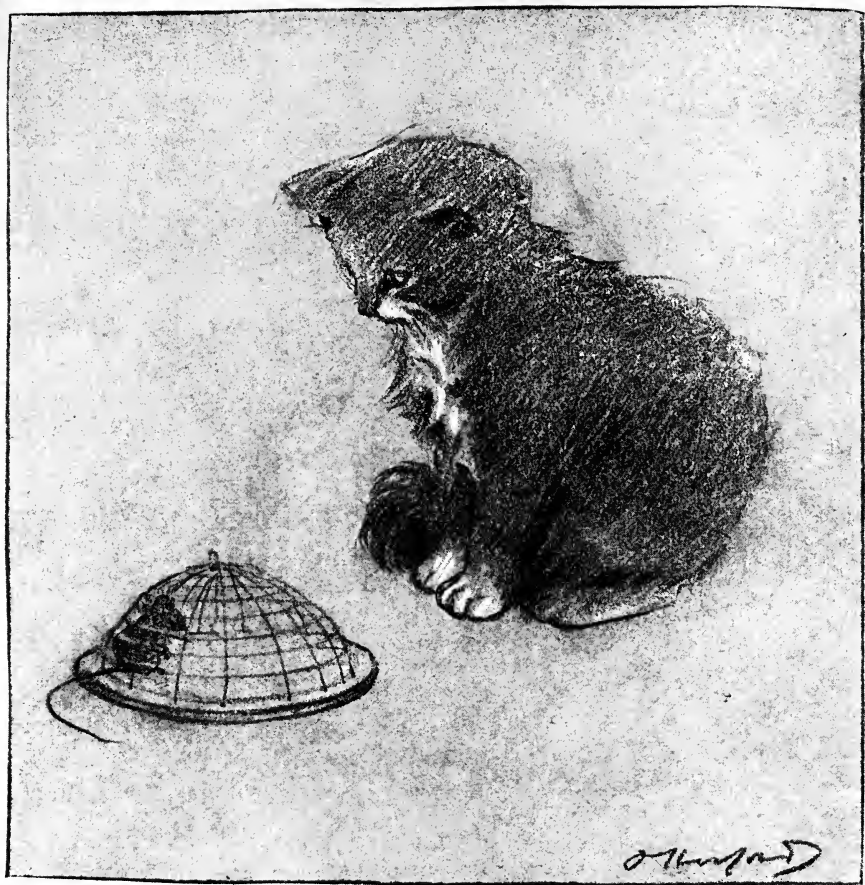


ONWARD

**S**trange—is it not?—that of  
the numbers who  
Before me passed this Door of  
Darkness thro',  
Not one returns thro' it again,  
altho'  
Ofttimes I 've waited here an  
hour or two.



'Tis but a Tent where takes  
his one Night's Rest  
A Rodent to the Realms of  
Death address'd,  
When Cook, arising, looks for  
him and then—  
Baits, and prepares it for  
another Guest.

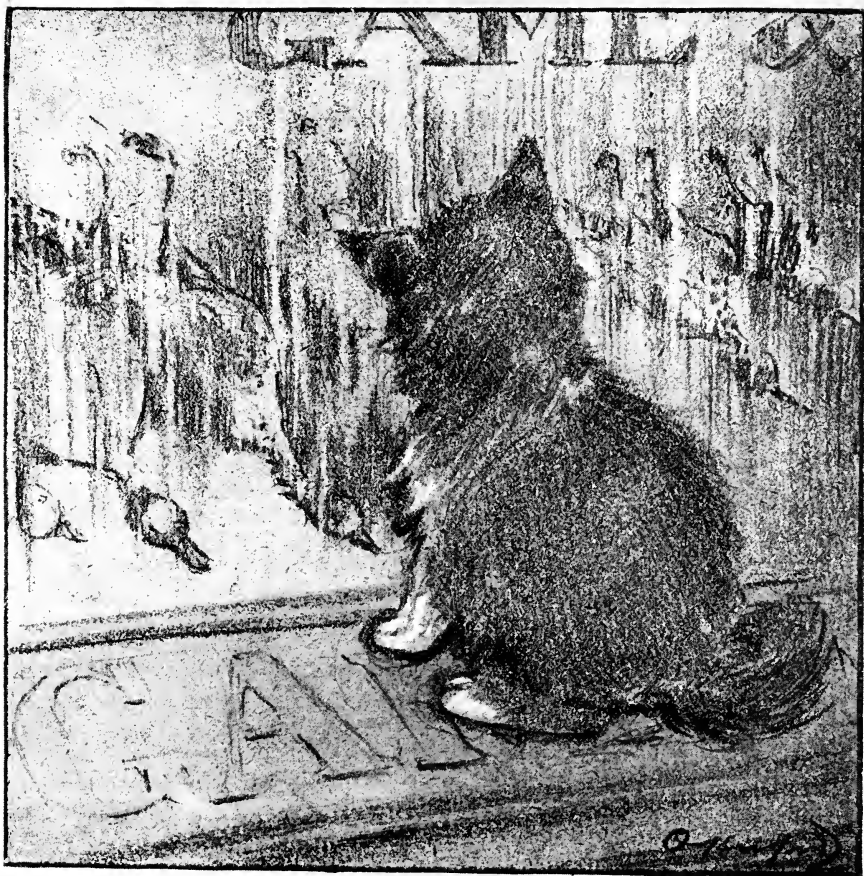


**T**hey say the Lion and the  
Lizard keep  
The Courts where Jamshyd  
gloried and drank deep.  
The Lion is my cousin ; I  
don't know  
Who Jamshyd is—nor shall it  
break my sleep.



**I**mpotent glimpses of the  
Game displayed  
Upon the Counter—temptingly  
arrayed;  
Hither and thither moved or  
checked or weighed,  
And one by one back in the Ice  
Chest laid.



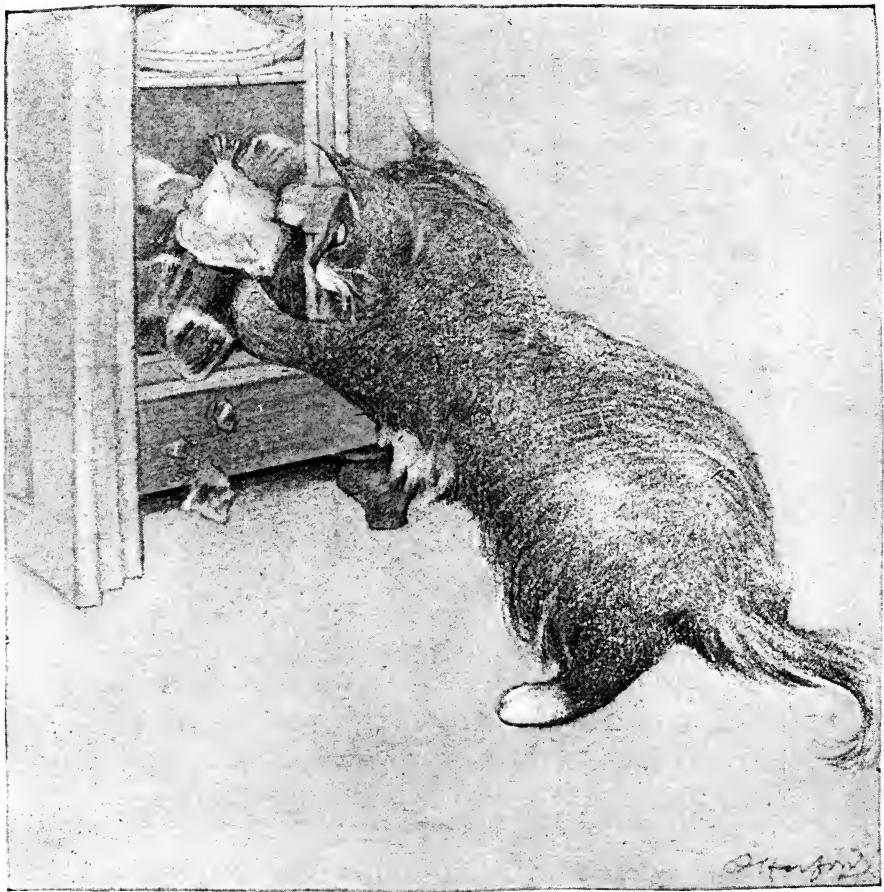


**W**hat if the Sole could fling  
the Ice aside,  
And with me to some Area's  
haven glide—  
Were 't not a Shame, were 't  
not a shame for it  
In this Cold Prison crippled to  
abide?



**S**ome for the Glories of the  
Sole, and Some  
Mew for the proper Bowl of  
Milk to come.

Ah, take the fish and let your  
Credit go,  
And plead the rumble of an  
empty Tum.



**O**ne thing is certain: tho' this  
Stolen Bite  
Should be my last and Wrath  
consume me quite,  
One taste of It within the Area  
caught  
Better than at the Table lost  
outright.



**I**ndeed, indeed Repentance oft  
before  
I swore, but was I hungry when  
I swore?  
And then and then came Cook  
— with Hose in hand—  
And drowned my glory in a  
sorry pour.





**W**hat without asking hither  
harried whence,  
And without asking whither  
harried hence—  
O, many a taste of that  
forbidden Sole  
Must down the memory of that  
Insolence.



**H**eaven, but the vision of a  
    flowing Bowl;  
And Hell, the sizzle of a frying  
    Sole  
    Heard in the hungry Darkness,  
    where Myself,  
So rudely cast, must impotently  
    roll.



**T**he Vine has a tough fibre  
which about  
While clings my Being;—let the  
Canine flout  
Till his Bass Voice be pitched  
to such loud key  
It shall unlock the door I mew  
without.



**U**p from the Basement to the  
Seventh flat  
I rose, and on the Crown of  
fashion sat,  
And many a Ball unravelled  
by the way—  
But not the Master's angry Bawl  
of "Scat!"





**T**hen to the Well of Wisdom I  
—and lo!

**W**ith my own Paw I wrought to  
make it flow,

**A**nd **T**his was all the Harvest  
that I reaped:

**W**e come like Kittens and like  
Cats we go.



**W**hy be this Ink the fount of  
Wit?—who dare  
Blaspheme the glistening Pen-  
drink as a snare?  
A Blessing?—I should spread  
it, should I not?  
And if a Curse—why, then upset  
it!—there!



**A** moment's Halt, a  
momentary Taste  
Of Bitter, and amid the Trickling  
Waste

I wrought strange shapes from  
Máh to Máhi, yet  
I know not what I wrote, nor  
why they chased.



**N**ow I beyond the Pale am  
safely past.  
O, but the long, long time their  
Rage shall last,  
Which, tho' they call to supper,  
I shall heed  
As a Stone Cat should heed a  
Pebble cast.

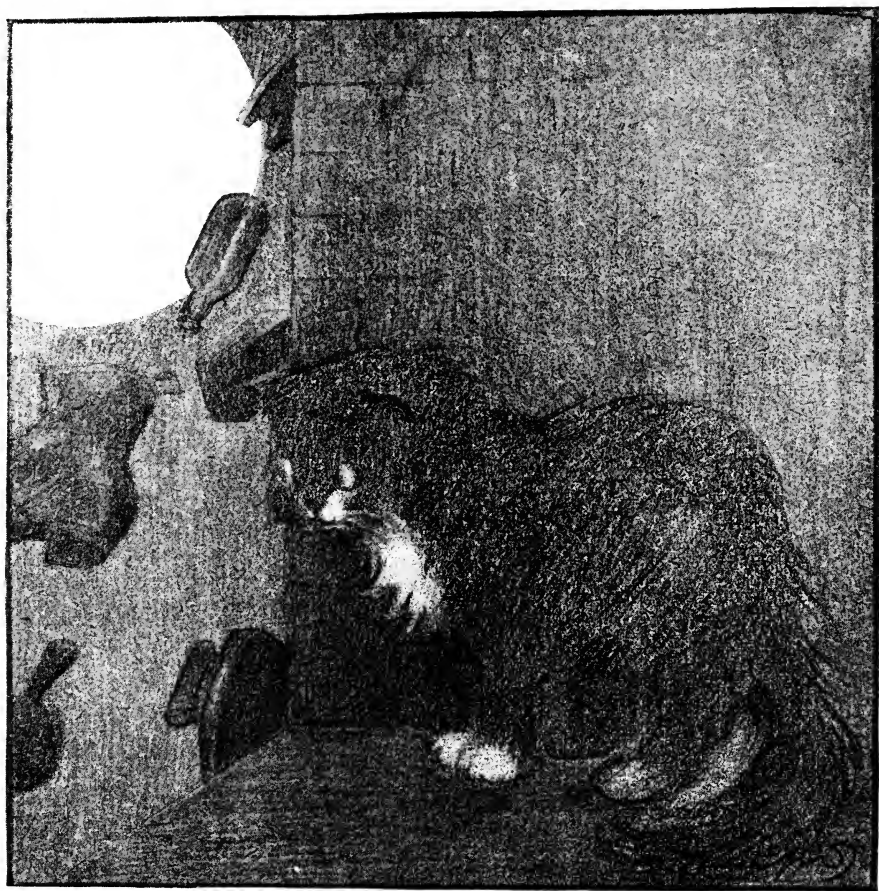




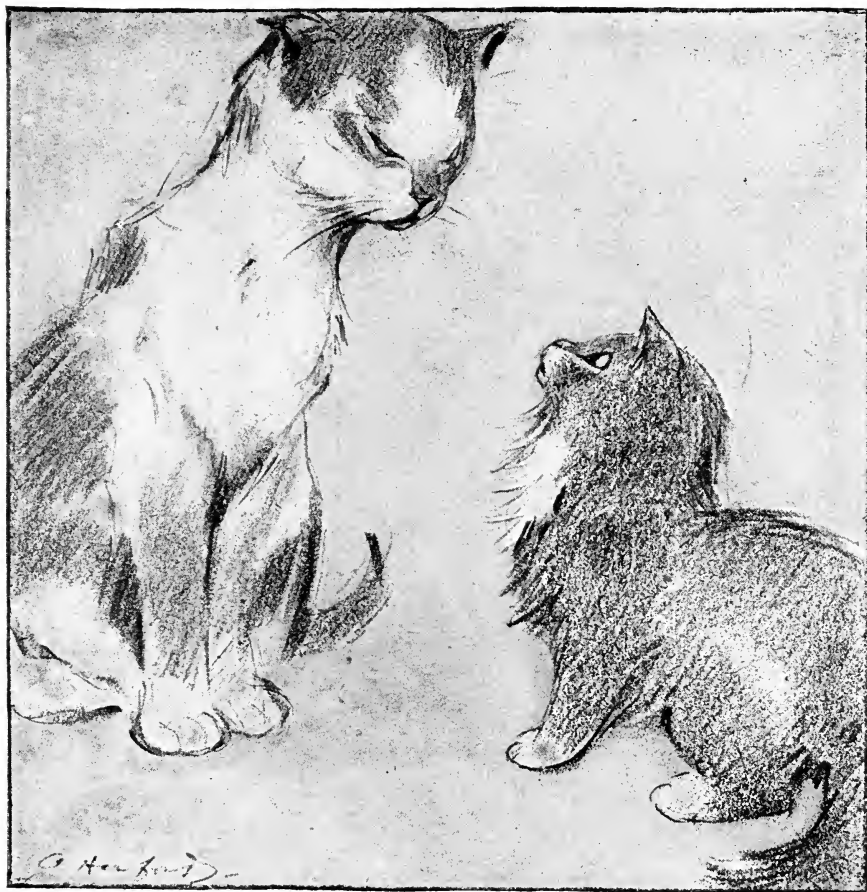
**A**nd that perverted Soul  
beneath the Sky  
They call the Dog—Heed not his  
angry Cry;  
Not all his Threats can make  
me budge one bit,  
Nor all his Empty Bluster  
terrify.



**T**hey are no other than a  
moving Show  
Of whirling Shadow Shapes that  
come and go  
Me-ward thro' Moon illumined  
Darkness hurled,  
In midnight, by the Lodgers in  
the Row.

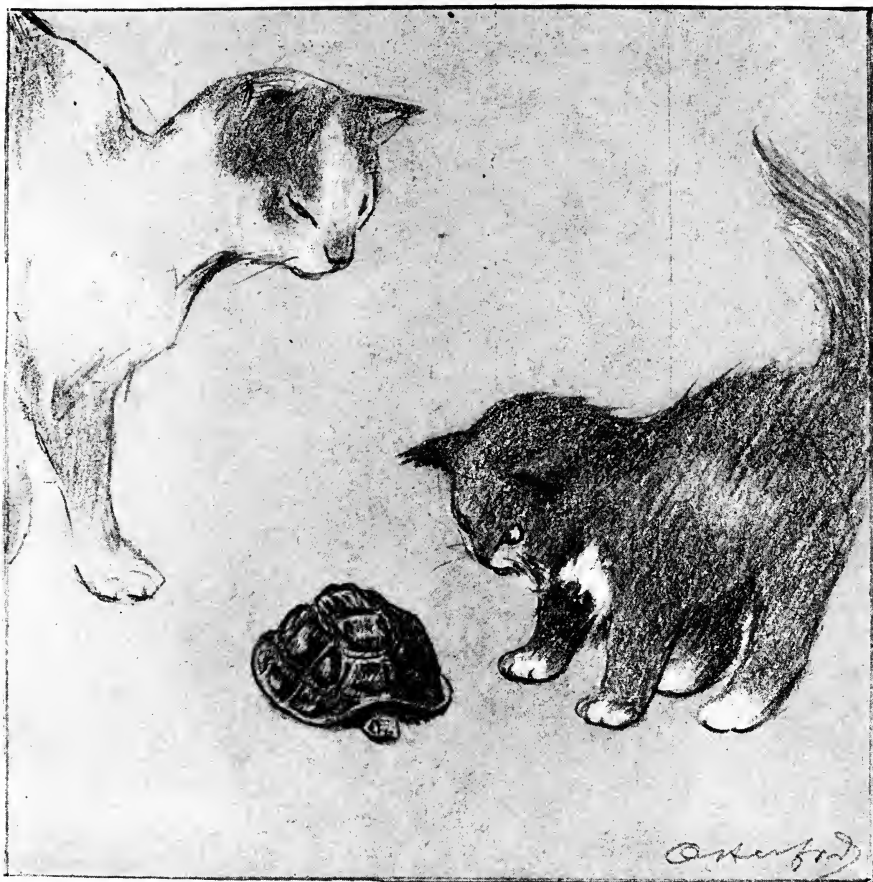


**M**yself when young did eagerly  
frequent  
The Backyard fence and heard  
great Argument  
About it, and About, yet  
evermore  
Came out with fewer fur than in  
I went.



**A**h, me! if you and I could  
but conspire  
To grasp this Sorry Scheme of  
things entire,  
Would we not shatter it to  
bits, and then  
Enfold it nearer to our Heart's  
Desire?





**T**ho' Two and Two make four.  
by rule of line,  
Or they make Twenty-two by  
Logic fine,  
Of all the figures one may  
fathom, I  
Shall ne'er be floored by anything  
but Nine.



**A**nd fear not lest Existence  
shut the Door  
On You and Me, to open it no  
more.

The Cream of Life from out  
your Bowl shall pour  
Nine times—ere it lie broken on  
the floor.



**S**o, if the fish you Steal—the  
Cream you drink—  
Ends in what all begins and ends  
in, Think,  
Unless the Stern Recorder  
points to Nine,  
Tho' They would drown you—  
still you shall not sink.









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