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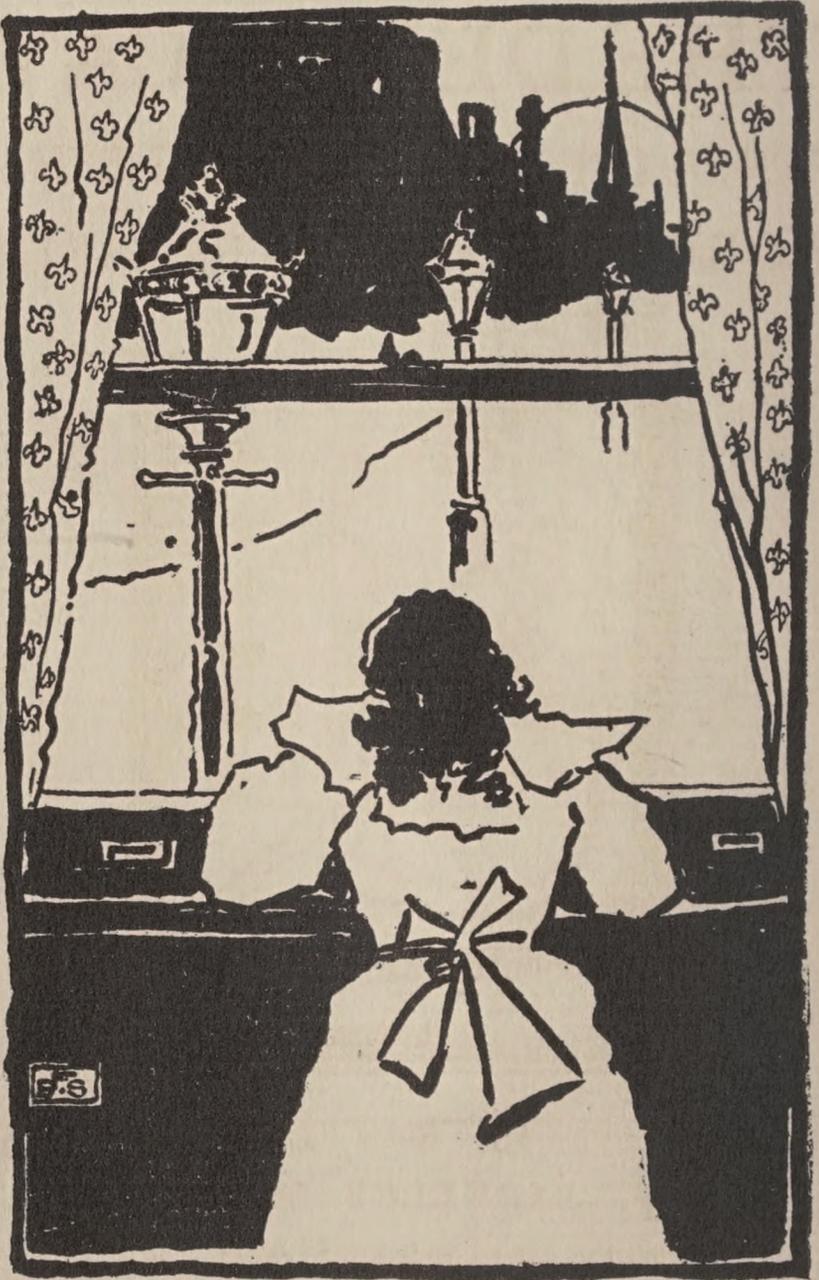




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THE DELFT CAT



ELEANOR'S CHRISTMAS

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THE DELFT CAT

AND OTHER STORIES BY
ROBERT HOWARD RUSSELL



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To a Little Girl.



THE DELFT CAT.

“Well,” said the Delft Cat, “I’m getting awfully tired of this! Here I have to sit on this blue and white cushion day in and day out, and stare at the ceiling. Just think of it! I never sat on anything else in all my life. Now, why aren’t people content to follow nature when they are making a cat and not inseparably attach one for the rest of his days to a blue and white cushion?”

“Why, even the common live cats, which are ever so much cheaper and more plentiful than Delft, are free from



such ridiculous attachments. Of course, I don't mind it so much in the daytime, when I rest contentedly enough on it, although even then I must confess that I have sometimes longed to sit on a hard hearthstone for a change. One gets so frightfully tired of continually sitting on a cushion. It's like having sponge cake all the time when you want bread.

“But what hurts me most of all is the ridiculous figure that I cut when I get down from the mantle-piece every night at twelve o'clock to mingle with my friends, and have to take that confounded cushion with me.

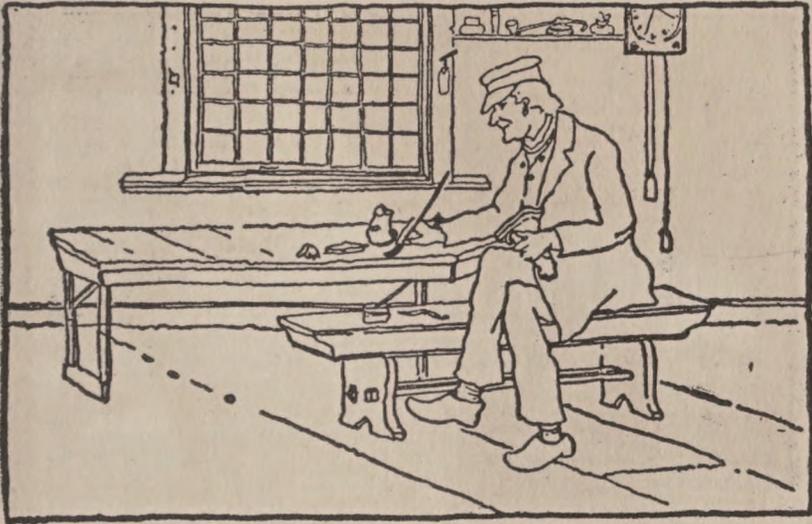
“You see, in the house where I live there are lots of cats, and, although I am very particular as to my friends, I must say that two or three of them are worthy of the friendship and esteem of any cat in the world, no matter what his lineage. There is the little crystal cat from Japan, Miss Koto, and the bronze cat from France, Miss Barye,



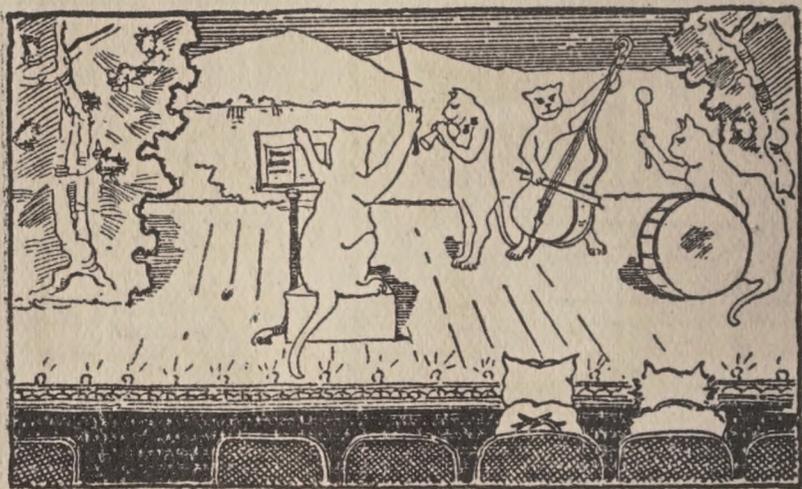
and then Fleurette! Ah, *ma chere* Fleurette!

"Fleurette is a French porcelain cat, and I must admit that she has completely captivated me. It was those blue eyes of hers that did it. I never saw such eyes in a cat, and what's more, I don't believe any one else ever did either, and, of course, being so much out of the ordinary, they give her a very distinguished appearance.

"I don't want to boast about such a



delicate matter, but if you wish to discover how fondly she returns my affection just look at her any day as she sits on the top of the book case, with her head twisted round, and her beautiful blue eyes gazing straight at me all day long, without so much as a wink. Of course, it makes me very proud, and I find by actual measurement that I carry my nose three-quarters of an inch higher in the air than I did when I left Holland six years ago. Those Dutchmen are so stupid, though, that they never would believe it even if I should send them a photograph of myself. They

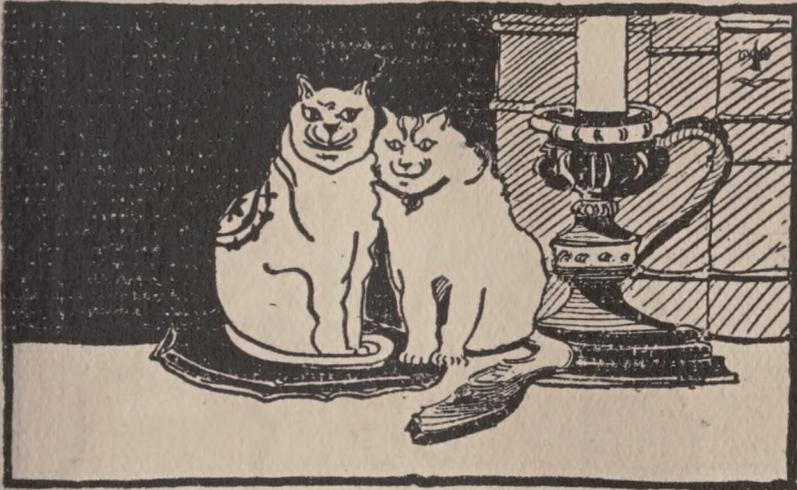


would say that it was a distorted print.

“I should like to go back there some time, however, and see the man that made me, and give him a few points.

“In the first place, I should tell him that if he *must* make cushions, to make them detachable. You have no idea of the mortification which I have suffered from the undignified appearance this undetachable cushion lends me when I walk about.

“Why, the first night I came here, when I joined my new friends, a few minutes after twelve, I was greeted with roars of laughter, and the Viennese cat



orchestra struck up 'Where Did You Get That Mat.'

"Of course, it was very painful for me to be submitted to their taunts, and the next day, in order to show my contempt for the low-bred felines who had insulted me, I turned my back to them all day long, but this did not have the desired effect, and all through the day I could detect their amused glances, and at night they laughed harder than ever at me.

"Fleurette, in whose kind heart had sprung up a feeling of pity for me—which has since ripened into one of un-



disguised admiration—whispered to me that night, that they were laughing at the flowers on my back, and I have since discovered, by means of a mirror, that the stupid Dutchman who made me has painted a wreath of flowers in the center of my back. Now, did you ever hear of anything so entirely inappropriate and so utterly foolish? It's enough to make one revile his maker. Ever since that night I've had to hold my nose higher than ever in the daytime, and to look as dignified and impressive as possible, for if I don't some of the ill-bred cats in the place are sure to take advantage of my unbending, and chaff me about my floral decoration, and if there's anything in the world I hate, it's undue familiarity from cheap cats.

“One day I really lost my temper. A paltry little cat of imitation bronze, standing in a ludicrous attitude on a billiard ball, was the latest addition to our circle; in his paws he held a billiard cue, and as soon as he discovered the



floral decorations on my back he took a position on the mantel near me, and, with an exasperating grin, stood pointing his cue at my back.

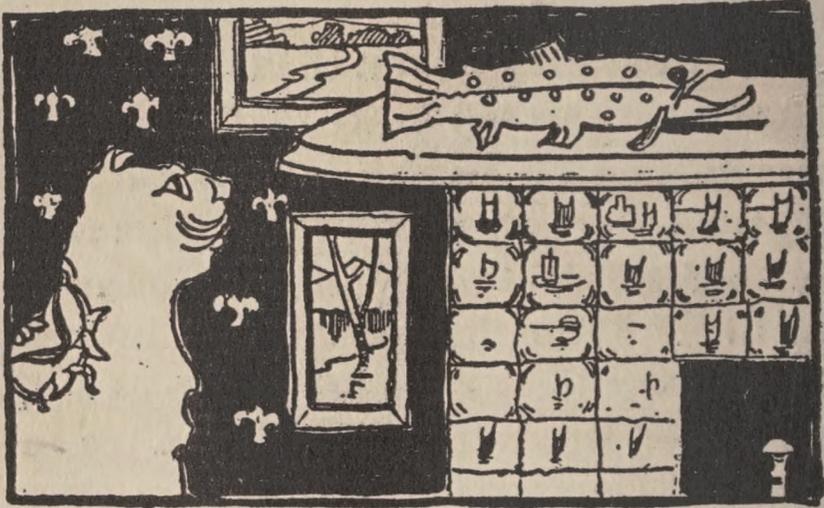
"I stood it as long as I could, but after two or three days it made me so nervous that I grew irritable and depressed, so I waited for an opportunity when the parlor maid was dusting us, to fall backward on him and break his tail off.

"Of course, no one could attach any blame to me, for every one supposed that the parlor maid had been careless and knocked me over. However, it was a

great triumph for me as Vignaux was deposed from his place on the mantel, and after having his tail treated with stratena, was locked up in a little dark cabinet on the other side of the room where no further accident would be apt to happen to him. If he had been real bronze his tail wouldn't have broken so easily, but blood will tell, and when you try to make bronze cats out of pewter they have to suffer for it sooner or later.

“Well, I must be going, for I promised to meet Fleurette on the library table at twenty-five minutes of one, to look at the rubber fish. You know manufactured cats never eat, but we have a much better way of enjoying food. We just devour it with our eyes. It's much the best way, as it does not destroy the food, and entirely does away with indigestion, which by the way, is what I heard your mother say you had when she put you to bed to-night.

“After Fleurette and I have satisfied



our appetites by looking at the rubber fish we are going to the paper theatre to see the Japanese paper cats in a new play. This is the first night and I am told it is to be very thrilling, with a beheading scene in it. After the theatre we shall refresh ourselves by seeing the little Delft milkmaid milk the Delft cow

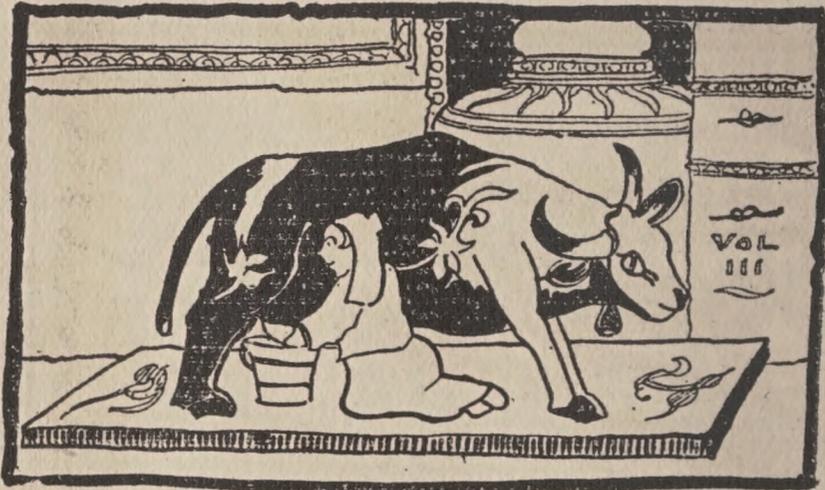
“If you should happen to be awake to-morrow night about this time I will tell you how the play went, and, by the way—if it isn’t putting you to too much trouble—if you could get a good fat bronze mouse for Fleurette and me to



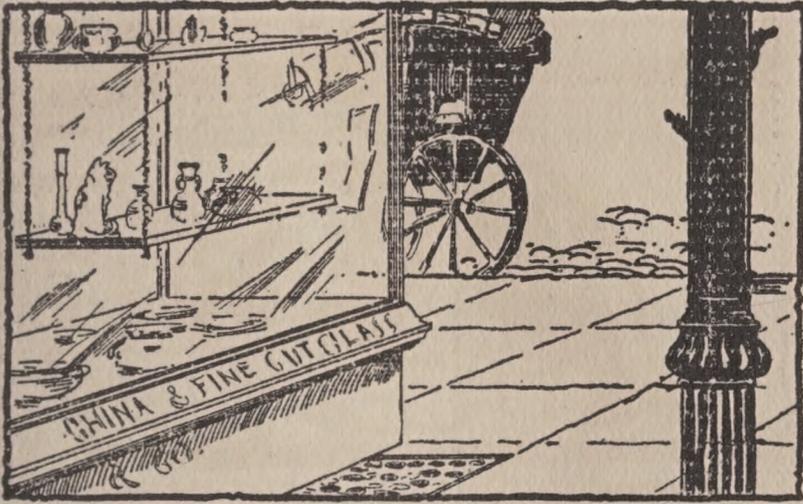
look at we would be awfully obliged, for, even when one eats only with one's imagination, a change of diet is desirable, and I haven't seen a decent mouse since I lived on a shelf in a Fifth Avenue store.

"Well, good-by. I'm awfully glad to have seen you, and you wont forget that mouse, will you? There's a good chap!"

With these words the Delft Cat vanished, and when the little chap awoke in the morning he was not quite sure whether he had dreamed that he had been talking to the Delft Cat, or whether he had really enjoyed the pleasure of



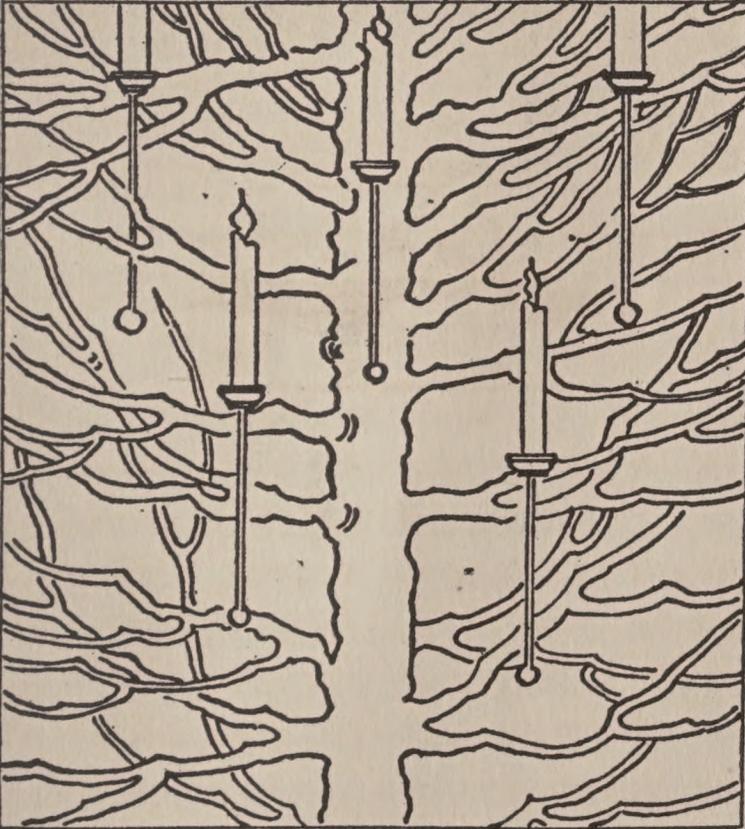
his conversation. He looked in the parlor and there was the cat on the mantel, with his nose in the air. He examined the blue and white cushion on which he sat, and found that it was not detachable, and on turning him round found that a wreath of flowers was painted on his back just as he had said. This, of course, served to convince the little chap that he had really been favored by a talk with him, and ever since he has tried to keep his eyes open until after twelve in order to hear about that play, but he gets so drowsy before ten o'clock that he falls asleep

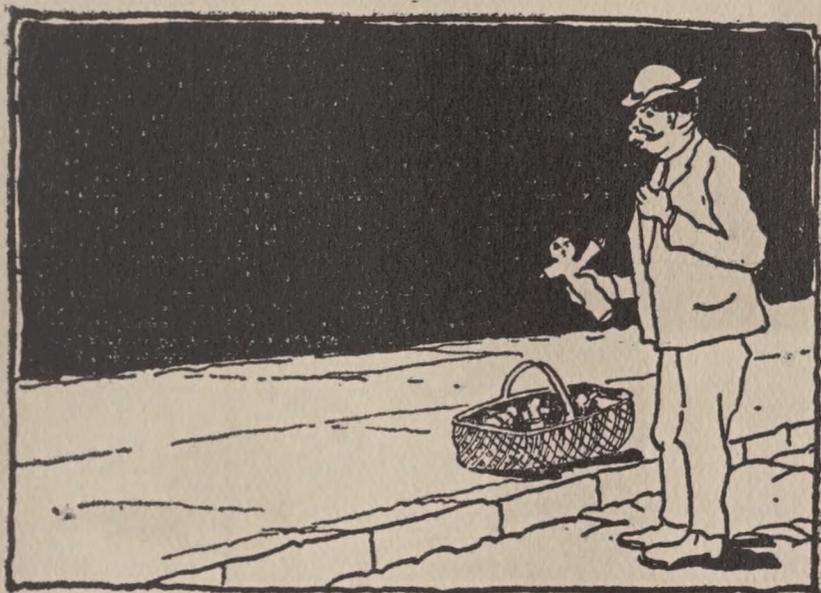


and does not wake up until morning, when the Delft Cat is back in his place on the mantel again, as silent as a sphinx.



ELEANOR'S
CHRISTMAS ~





ELEANOR'S CHRISTMAS.

The day was raw and cold; the street fakirs paused occasionally in their cries to promote their circulation by slapping their arms vigorously about their chests, or to blow little clouds of warm breath through their chilled fingers. Their trays, baskets and push-carts were laden with queer collections of toys, bric-à-brac and catch-penny devices from all parts of the world. One cart was filled with an assortment of gaily-painted tin cats, each pursuing a tiny



mouse, which was just beyond the reach of its nose. The pedlar would place them on the sidewalk, and then off they would go in a mad dash over the stones, only stopping when run down, when, by winding up a spring concealed in the anatomy of the tin cat, the mouse was made to jump again, and the cat to resume the hopeless task of overtaking it.

Further on were little equilibrists, who never lost their balance on top of rolling barrels, no matter how hard they were pushed. Another pedlar was sell-

ing remarkably small coins, with the Lord's Prayer engraved on them, suspended from golden swords by a bright bit of red ribbon, and looking for all the world like a distinguished foreign decoration, which could be had for the inconsiderable sum of five cents. The neighboring fakir, who may very possibly have been in partnership with the coin-vender, was offering powerful microscopes with which to decipher the inscriptions on the coins, for a like sum of money.

Near by was a basketful of tall, dignified looking Japanese storks, with wire legs and long bills; they had beautiful white wings, and red spots on their heads, while their backs were sprinkled with silver and gold, and their tails were trimmed in correct imitation of fashionably-cut swallow-tail coats. Another vender, further down the street, was shouting in a hoarse voice: "Here y'are, Popper and Mommer, two for a nickel; only fi' cents fer the two of

30 Eleanor's Christmas.

'em." At his feet lay a large clothes-basket filled with tiny little Japanese people, not more than four inches high, who looked very cold and uncomfortable with their gay paper gowns and bare feet, and the little man which the pedlar held between his thumb and forefinger gave a plaintive squeak whenever he was pressed in the middle, which seemed to be his only sensitive spot. I had already purchased a tin cat and a stork, but still had a capacious empty pocket in my overcoat, and the pretty little Japanese lady looked at me so entreatingly, although she could not squeak like her husband, that I thought it would be an act of charity to find a home for these two friendless little foreigners, and in a minute more they were snugly stowed away in the warm lining of my deep pocket.

I knew a poor little rich girl who had never owned a single inexpensive toy hat she could play and do as she liked

with. Her parents were so very rich that they only knew rich people, and as they always went to the most expensive shops they never even saw any



nice cheap toys, and all the people that sent presents to the poor little rich girl did not dare send any but the most expensive ones, because they knew that if



they sent any other kind her parents might not approve of it, so of course the poor little rich girl could not play with her toys, as the happy little poor children do, for fear that she would break them or muss the beautiful Parisian gowns of her handsome dolls. Whenever the poor little rich girl wanted to play, she had a nurse who did almost all of her playing for her. This nurse would get the handsome dolls out of their elegant doll-houses and set them in a row; then she would wind up the automatic toys and the musical boxes, while the poor little rich girl looked on and tried to imagine that she



was having a good time, but if she even lifted her hand to touch the dolls or the toys, her nurse would say: "Do be careful, Miss Eleanor; Mrs. Wealthy Smith sent you that, and I don't know what your mamma would say if you should break it." And the poor little rich girl would sometimes think that she would like to break something just to see what her mamma would say, for she very seldom had the opportunity of hearing her mamma say anything, for what with operas and theatre parties and dinners and balls her mamma had very little time to devote to her, and



sometimes she would hardly see her for days at a time. So, of course, the poor little rich girl was rather afraid of her mamma's displeasure, as she did not know her very well, not nearly so well as she knew her nurse, because she had to spend the most of her life in company with her nurse, and had not had the opportunity of being much with her mamma, although they lived in the same house.

Sometimes the poor little rich girl would stand in the window of the elegant drawing-room and look out enviously at the happy little poor children

who were playing in the streets and throwing snowballs at each other, for she had never even made a snowball in her life, although she longed to do so, but, of course, when she went out in the street she had to be dressed up in very fine clothes and had to wear little kid gloves, and her nurse would not let her touch the snow because it would have ruined her gloves, not to speak of her beautiful clothes.

I was sorry for the poor little rich girl, and so I sent her the tin cat, the stork, and the two little Japs, all done up carefully in a box. When her nurse opened the box and saw what inexpensive toys they were, she turned up her nose at them and let the poor little rich girl have them to play with as much as she pleased, hoping that they would soon be destroyed, as she considered such inexpensive toys a disgrace to the nursery; but the poor little rich girl was delighted with them, for she had never had any toys before that

36 Eleanor's Christmas.

she could do as she pleased with, and after she had played with them all day she placed them on a table at the side of her bed, so that she could see them the moment she awoke in the morning.

When she had said good-night to them, and had fallen asleep, the nurse went down stairs to talk to the new butler and left her all alone, and then the strangest thing happened. She was awakened by hearing the little man squeak several times, and looking over at the table, she saw that the tin cat, whose spring had not quite run down, was poking the tin mouse at the lower ribs of the little Japanese man, and although he did not seem to be afraid of the mouse, or of the cat either for that matter, he was so constituted that he simply had to squeak when anything touched him there, and so he was simply obeying a law of his nature. The poor little rich girl was surprised at this performance, and, sitting up in bed, she said:

"Seems to me you are making a great deal of noise."

"I beg a thousand pardons, Madame," said the little Japanese man, bowing to the ground. "Allow me to introduce myself, in order that I may offer you a suitable apology. My name is Koto-biki, which in Japanese means 'long life.' This is Miné, my wife, and I can assure you that neither of us would have willingly disturbed you for the world. It was all the fault of Shari Neko, the Tin Cat over there."

"Well," said the Tin Cat, "I like that; didn't you get right in front of me when I wanted to run down? Somebody left me half wound up, and I can never sleep when I am wound up, and I was just letting myself run down when you got in the way. I'm never so happy as when I'm run down, and that's why I can't understand why people who are run down go to the doctor's. Why, every day I see advertisements in the papers saying, 'Do you feel run down?'"



ES



If so, take Good's Sarsaparilla for that tired feeling.' If people only knew they could be happier if they were run down instead of wound up, they wouldn't buy patent medicines or pay doctors' bills."

"Ker-choo! Ker-choo! Perhaps you could tell me what to do for a cold in the head," sneezed Kotobiki. "I knew I should catch one; in fact, I told Miné so when we were lying in the basket on that cold sidewalk yesterday. If you would examine me, you would see that there are only two things that I can catch very well—chilblains and colds"



in the head. You see, I haven't any body, but my clothes are just stuffed with paper from my head to my feet, so, of course, having only my head and my feet to get ill with, the variety of diseases to which I am liable is limited; but when I do get a cold in the head I have a frightful time. Quinine pills do me no good, for if I take them they only fall through the bottom of my neck and drop on the top of my feet, where they rattle about and annoy me."

"Well," said the Tin Cat, "you're better off than I am. It's much better not to have any body than it is to have



one which is filled with springs and wheels and cogs, which squeak and rattle so that you can't hear yourself think. Why, only last week my mainspring was paralyzed so that I couldn't move, and I had to be strapped down on my back in a machine shop and have it removed and a new one inserted. How's that for torture? I never suffered so since the day I was soldered."

"I suppose we all have our troubles to bear," said Miné, "and that reminds me that Nagai, the Stork over there, seems to have something on his mind which is troubling him very much. I

42 Eleanor's Christmas.

called him Nagai Hashi, which means 'long legs,' yesterday, and I think that annoyed him, but I am afraid he has a more serious trouble to-day, he looks so sad and depressed."

"I'll ask him what's the matter," said the Tin Cat, and with a little whirr of his wheels, he crossed the table where Nagai was standing and questioned him.

Nagai shook his head dolefully as he answered: "I've been thinking——"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the Tin Cat. "This is really too good; you've been thinking, have you? Well, take my advice, and never do it again, for if your head should get heavy from thought you'd topple over and break your neck; you're too tall to risk thinking."

"When you have finished with your irrelevant and discourteous interruption," said the Stork, coolly, "I will continue."

"Oh, that's all right, old chap," said the Tin Cat. "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, but the idea was rather

ridiculous. Come, now, wasn't it?"

"To a thoughtless and frivolous person, like yourself, it may have appeared so," returned Nagai, sternly; "but to resume my statement: I was thinking that the man who would not buy me because I was not *for* anything was right. You see, just before I was bought and brought here with the rest of you, a man came along and was going to buy me. He held out the money for me to the pedlar, who was wrapping me up, and was about to take me, when he suddenly withdrew his hand and asked the pedlar what I was *for*.

"'Nothing,' said the pedlar.

"'Well, if he isn't *for* anything, I don't see how I can use him,' said the man, and passed on.

"Since then I have been terribly depressed, for I think it was true, and I am not *for* anything. If I were I think I should know it. I have tried to stick pins in my breast, to see if I were a pin-cushion, but I'm not; and this after-

44 Eleanor's Christmas.

noon it occurred to me that I might possibly be a paper weight, so I climbed up on the desk and stood on some papers for an hour, when somebody opened the library door and the draught blew me over and I fell into the waste-paper basket, although the door did not make enough wind to disturb the papers. It has since occurred to me that my bill, which is made of two pieces of bamboo; might have been intended for toothpicks, but if that is so, what was the use of making the rest of me?"

"Dear me," said the Tin Cat, "some people are never satisfied. If you only knew it, you are much better off than I am. Look at me; nobody can say that I am not *for* something, for my vocation is plain. It is to run after that mouse. Nobody ever sees me that he doesn't wind me up and start me off again, and I never stop until I run down or bump into the leg of a chair. They all know just as well as you and I do that it is a physical impossibility for me to catch

the mouse, for he is held in place by a strong wire that always keeps him an inch ahead of my nose, but they never tire of starting me afresh on the useless, hopeless chase, and sometimes I get so awfully sick of it all that I wish somebody would step on me and break my wheels so that I could never run again. You don't have anything like that to worry you. All you have to do is to stand still and do nothing."

"Say," interrupted Kotobiki, "it's nearly twelve o'clock, and it will be Christmas in a minute. Miné you watch the long hand on the clock, and when it points to twelve o'clock we'll all say 'Merry Christmas' together to Miss Eleanor, and thank her for the beautiful home we have now, for it is certainly much more comfortable for us to be here, than on that cold sidewalk."

Just then the hands of the clock reached twelve, and the Stork opened his bill wide, and they all shouted "Merry Christmas" together, and then



the poor little rich girl tried to say, "The same to you, and many of them," but the words would not come, no matter how hard she tried, and she could feel her head nodding and her eyelids closing up tight, and then she didn't know anything of what went on until the next morning, when her nurse waked her and showed her lots of new expensive toys that had been brought to her by the Santa Claus that brings presents to little rich girls; but she turned her back on all of them, and kissed the little Japanese woman, and the little Japanese man, and petted the Stork, and

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held the Tin Cat in her arms, for she felt that she knew them better than the others, and besides, hadn't they all sat up until very late the night before, just to wish her a Merry Christmas?





JACK'S
FOX-HUNT





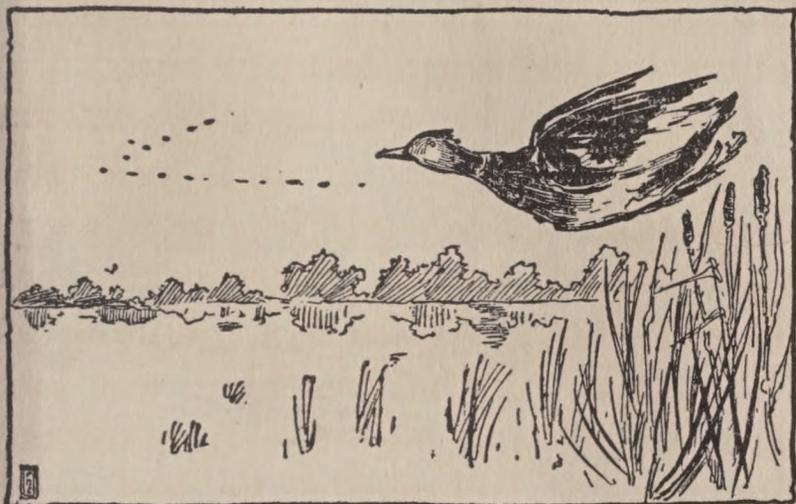
JACK'S FOX-HUNT.

Jack Dale was a city boy, and the greater part of his years, which numbered fifteen, had been spent between walls of brick and mortar; consequently, when one day a letter arrived from Jack's uncle, Col. Phillips, inviting him to come down to his plantation in Virginia and make him a visit, Jack did not rest until he had obtained permission to go.

So one bright morning found Jack snugly stowed away in the cushioned chair of a Pullman car, watching the panorama of woods, rivers and fields, as

the train sped along toward Baltimore, where his uncle was to meet him.

Col. Phillips was waiting at the station as the train came in, and Jack was whisked into a cab and was on his way to the boat before he fairly knew what he was about, his uncle explaining as they drove on that the train was late and that it was past the time for the boat to sail. However, he had telephoned to his friend, the captain, asking him to wait until he arrived, before sailing. As the cab drove to the end of a long covered dock stored with cotton, Jack saw that his uncle had not relied on the good nature of the captain for nothing, for there the big boat lay all cleared away and ready to start, but with a plank out for Jack and his uncle. As soon as they were on board, the plank was hauled in, and with a hoarse screech the steamer backed out into the Patapsco and pointed her prow for the Old Dominion. After supper Jack turned in, to dream of the rides and the

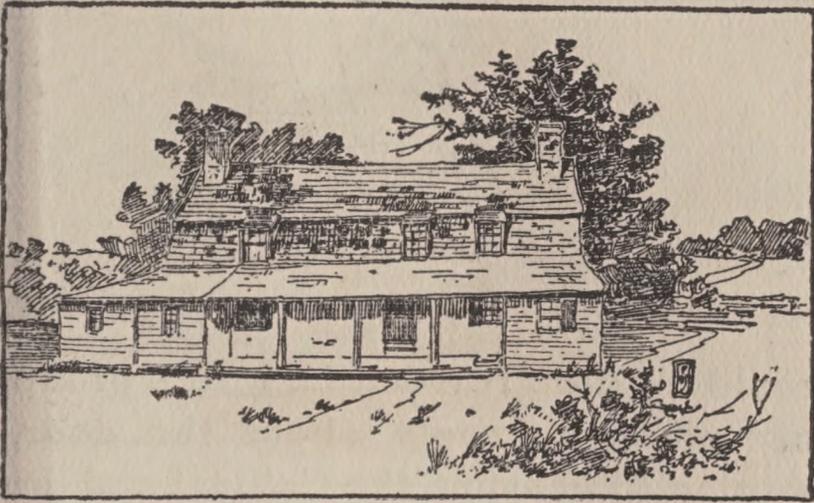


shooting which his uncle had promised him. Soon after daybreak the next morning the whistle announced that the boat was nearing some landing, and peering out of the state-room window Jack saw in the red glow of the morning sun the little round stone fort known as the Rip-raps, which lies at the entrance to Hampton Roads. Dressing quickly, he was on deck before the boat had reached the wharf. Before him were two great hotels, and beyond he could see the parapets and earthworks of Fortress Monroe, and some soldiers



in bright uniforms just coming out of the sally-port.

After breakfasting at the hotel, Jack and his uncle were off again in a smaller boat. As they steamed up the bay, innumerable ducks, disturbed at their feeding-grounds, arose and flew to the right and left, with startled cries. Soon Jack could see long stretches of shining sand, and points covered with pine woods, and here and there on the bay the triangular sail of a fleet Virginia anoe



Presently the boat landed at a long wooden wharf, where Jack and his uncle were piled with bag and baggage into a large canoe manned by good-natured-looking darkies, which was waiting for them, and a sail of a mile or two brought them to the point where the Colonel's carriage was waiting to take them to the house.

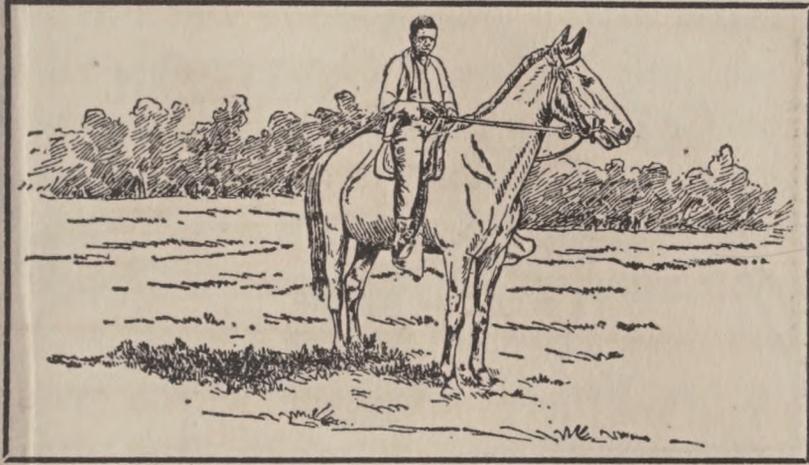
After driving through long lanes, which skirted the wooded swamps where the air was fragrant with the odor of pine trees, they came to an avenue of magnolias, at the end of which Jack



could see the great house, with a group of colored servants about the door, waiting to welcome the Colonel and his nephew.

Col. Phillips had not forgotten them, and soon the whole retinue, from Esther the cook, and Victoria the housemaid, down to the smallest pickaninny, were smiling over some trifle that he had brought forth from his capacious carpet-bag.

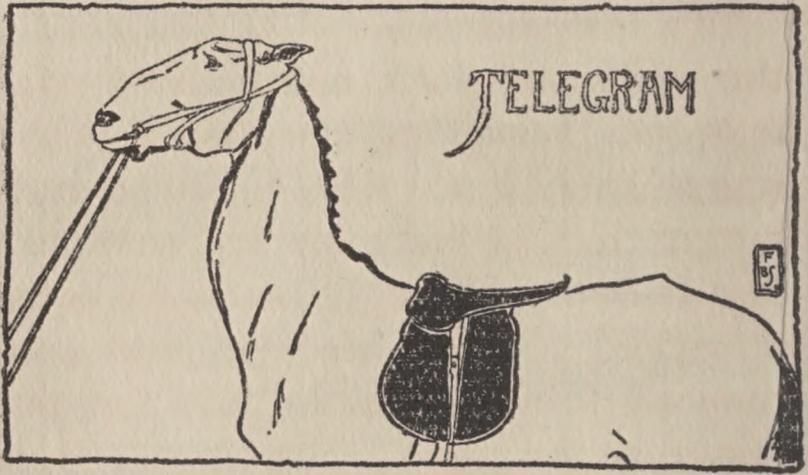
While they were at breakfast the fair sound of a horn was heard. Col. Phillips's superintendent was on his feet at once. "I declare," said he, "if I hadn't clean forgot that I promised to meet Major Yancy at Hickory Forks this morning, with my dogs, for the fox-hunt.



Perhaps Jack would like to go along and see how we kill foxes in Virginia."

"I am not going to have Jack go on a fox-hunt the very first day he gets here, sir, and break his neck," said the Colonel. "I don't even know that he knows how to ride a horse. Do you, Jack?"

Jack's entire experience as an equestrian had been limited to rides in the park, at ten cents a ride, on the backs of ponies led by boys, and as he had outgrown the ponies, even this experience was not recent; but never doubting that this was a sufficient training,



Jack unhesitatingly answered, "Oh yes, sir! I commenced very early."

"Well, then, Mr. Taylor," said the Colonel, "tell Cæsar to pick him out a quiet horse, and let him go along with you; but mind, he is not to leave the road and try any neck-breaking performances at riding cross country, so if you start a fox, send Jack home. However, I reckon he will get enough riding by the time you get to the meet, and be ready to come home in a wagon. So have Cæsar hitch up the cart and drive after you, so that he can ride Jack's horse home."

In a few minutes the horses were at the door, and Jack, not without some fear, was surveying the animal which was to carry him. He looked so much bigger than he had expected, somehow, and Jack even thought he could detect a wicked look in his eye, and commenced to wish that he had not professed to be a good horseman. However, there was no time to think it over, and Jack had to decide at once, and being a plucky little chap at heart, he had the horse brought beside the block and bestrode the saddle, while Cæsar adjusted the stirrups for him.

It was pretty hard work for Jack at first, as they went along at a sharp trot, and many times he had narrow escapes from falling off, and when the road was hard the jolting would bring tears to his eyes; but nevertheless he managed to stick on, and to give to Mr. Taylor, who was riding ahead with the dogs, a cheery answer when he called back to know how he was getting along.

Arrived at the cross-roads they found the hunters assembled, only waiting for Mr. Taylor's arrival to put the dogs into the woods. To Jack's eye it was a curious sight. His conception of fox-hunting had been formed by looking at the colored prints in such books as Hanley Cross, Sponge's Hunting Tour and Mr. Facey Romford's Hounds in his father's library; but here were no red coats, varnished boots, top hats and white ties, but men of widely varying ages dressed in their farming clothes, with slouch hats and heavy calf boots, and, strung under their arms, old cows' horn trumpets on which to sound the blast when the fox was away.

The horses were a motley collection of every color and in every stage of apparent decrepitude, although there was not one among them who would not prick up his ears and set a good pace across country at the sound of the dogs in cry. Several negro sportsmen were riding mules on which they had strapped

the remnants of old army saddles, worn to the tree and re-enforced by many mendings of string and leather.

The dogs were also a miscellaneous collection, as the county did not support a pack, but every man who hunted kept two or three, and for the meet every man brought his best dog, and each boasted that for sagacity, speed and keen nose his particular hound was unequalled.

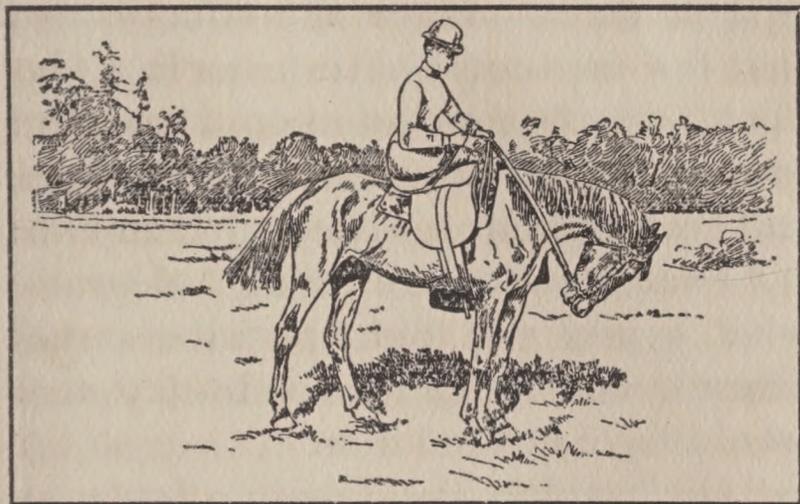
Jack was introduced to Major Yancy one of the oldest fox-hunters in the country, and as they rode along toward the strip of pine woods where they were to put the dogs in, the old fellow gave Jack some kindly hints which he followed as best he could, and found that he obtained a much better seat in his saddle in consequence.

Arrived at the woods the Major addressed the dogs. "Hie in there, you Music! Hush, you Blunder! Whoo-ooop, you Echo! you come heah, you rascal! Thunder! Venus, you all of you

git in there! Git him out! Git him out! Hie away! Hie away!" And the dogs, obedient to his call and eager for the chase, bounded into the woods, and with short low yelps commenced to quarter the ground for a hot scent.

The hunters took positions where they could survey the road and the surrounding fields, and from time to time urged on the dogs with shouts and calls.

Once the hounds started in full cry, and away went the riders helter-skelter over the low Virginia snake-fences and into the woods, only to reappear in a few minutes, and reply to Jack's excited questioning that it was "nothin' but an ole har'." False starts and long searches in damp woods took up the morning, and it was long past midday when the hunters, finding themselves near the head of one of the many estuaries of the Chesapeake which divided the county into a series of peninsulas, adjourned to a fine old colonial house



which stood near the water, and enjoyed a lunch of biscuit, and delicious raw oysters just out of the river. Then mounting their horses the party started for home. Jack, although somewhat stiff, was commencing to consider himself quite a horseman by this time, and cantered to the side of a charming young lady who had joined them for the ride home.

Miss Carter was twenty-one, six years older than Jack, but Jack's heart had gone over to her in boyish admiration when Mr. Taylor had told him, before presenting him to her, that she was the

best horsewoman in the county, and that few men could outride her in a fox-hunt. She was mounted on a beautiful jet-black mare which she called Lenore, and as Jack rode up she called to him:

“I see that you are riding Telegram; what a pity you did not have a run! There's not a horse out to-day that would have headed him.”

“Oh,” said Jack, “I had no intention of following if they had started a fox. Why, I have never jumped a fence in my life.”

“You will soon learn down here. Why, it is the easiest thing in the world. All you have to do is to ride straight at the fence, and before you know it you are over.”

Just then Mr. Taylor rode up and called to Jack: “Say, Jack! you ride along with Miss Carter. I'll catch up with you before you get to Pointer's store. Major Yancy and I are going to put the dogs in this little strip of woods for a last try. There used to be a big

gray in there last winter, and he may be there yet."

The Major and Mr. Taylor rode across to the woods, followed by all of the hunt excepting Jack and Miss Carter, who kept on down the sandy lane. They had not gone far before Miss Carter reined Lenore up sharply, and listened.

"Hark!" said she; "the dogs are running. They are going towards Chappahoosic. You must see some of the run. Now follow me, and we will cut over to the end of the woods where they must come out, and we can get there before any of them. There is only this one fence by the road, and Telegram will take you over that before you know it. Come on!"

And before Jack could remonstrate, Miss Carter, with sparkling eyes and the color in her cheeks, had touched Lenore with her crop, and Jack was left alone in the lane; but only for a moment, for if Jack was undecided Tele-

gram was not. With ears pricked forward and nostrils dilated he had waited a minute, until he saw Lenore's heels disappear over the fence, and then, with a little snort, as though a trifle vexed at being outdone at the start by a lady, he made a dash at the fence.

Jack never remembered exactly how it was, but he found himself seated on Telegram's neck, holding on to his ears, and crying, "Whoa, sir! Whoa, sir!" But Telegram did not stop. The fence was behind, and Lenore was half a field ahead, and he must catch her. With great effort Jack managed to slide back into the saddle and get his feet in the stirrups, and by the time they reached Miss Carter's side he had the reins in his hand again, and showed no signs of his discomfiture excepting that he was slightly out of breath and his heart was beating very hard.

"Well done, Mr. Dale," said Miss Carter. "We will make a fox-hunter of you yet."

Fortunately for Jack, she had not turned to see him take the fence, or she might have laughed at him instead of praising him, and he never would have won the reputation he did that day.

The hounds were now rapidly nearing the head of the woods, and Miss Carter, who knew the voice of each, listened with growing excitement.

“Old Thunder is in the lead! Just listen to his notes! And Music is not far behind. Now watch, and we shall see them come out near that tall pine.”

The words had hardly left her lips when Jack saw a magnificent gray fox break from the woods, with the dogs close behind. Telegram saw them, too, and before Jack could stop him he was off with a mad rush, and was flying at the fence ahead. Jack's heart was in his mouth, but he managed to keep his seat this time, and having found that he could not stop Telegram, he devoted himself to doing his level best towards

keeping on his back. On they flew, through ploughed fields, over fences, across ditches, with poor Jack bouncing up and down in the saddle, with the breath nearly shaken out of his body. His feet had lost the stirrups, which were dealing blows as they swung about, first to Jack's ankles and then to Telegram's sides, urging him on.

Jack shut his eyes as a bigger fence than usual appeared in front of him, and opened them again as they landed, with a jolt, in a big field of corn. The high stalks hit Jack in the face, and threatened to brush him off the saddle, so he bent low and put his arms around Telegram's neck, and shut his eyes again, when of a sudden Telegram stopped short. Jack felt himself flying through the air, and before he knew it he had landed on his back in an open ploughed field, and the whole pack of dogs were around him, barking and jumping about as though they intended to eat him.



Jack felt something 'soft and warm under him, and springing up, he discovered the gray fox.

The dogs had just killed him, and Telegram, emerging from the cornfield, had stopped short, in order not to trample on the hounds, and Jack had been thrown in the midst of them upon the fox himself.

Jack had just picked up the fox and was beating back the dogs when Miss Carter rode up.

"Well, such a chase as you have led me!" she exclaimed. "And to think

of your telling me that you never rode across country! Why, there is not a man in the county who would dare ride at that fence with the broad ditch in the last field, and I had to go around it myself to get here."

Jack concluded that discretion was the better part of valor, and tried to wear his newly won honors modestly when the rest of the hunt came up to congratulate him upon his skill and daring riding; but as he rode home in the dusk beside Miss Carter, who wore the brush which he had gallantly presented to her, he was a very proud though very tired boy.

Arrived at the house, the news of his achievement had preceded him, and the Colonel stood on the porch to welcome him home.

"Jack, you rascal," said he, "didn't I tell you not to follow the hounds? What do you mean, sir, by disregarding my commands and trying to break your worthless neck, you scoundrel! I

shall send you back North to-morrow."

But Jack could see a merry twinkle in the old gentleman's eye, for in fact Jack himself was not half so proud of what he had done as was his uncle. Cæsar understood this also, and when the Colonel called him up and threatened him with all sorts of terrible things for having given Jack Telegram to ride instead of some quiet old horse, all he answered was:

"Fo' de Lawd, sir, I done knowed he cud ride as soon as I sot eyes on him."





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