

A PAGE for the CHILDREN



SOONER than I expected I encountered the ungrateful young Weta. . . . I had tied my horse at the roots of a Ti-tree and was taking a delight in the view from the rising ground, when I heard the cry of the unruly young rascal. . . . Turning to acknowledge the greeting, I was surprised to see him preparing to do me bodily harm: the great legs were flung high, the head lowered, and altogether his appearance was terrible. . . . Many, to be sure, under such conditions would have lost their heads, and so perhaps their lives, but keeping cool I hit upon an excellent method of subduing my adversary. . . . The precise reason for my success, I have never solved: my plan was to blow steadily upon his head, and as steadily to fix him with my right eye. It was just a matter of time, and at last he came to his knees begging leniency. . . . To have spared him would have been a wrong to his thoughtful foster-mother and to the building of his character, and I so earnestly scolded him that he will never again misbehave. . . . At times I leaned over him screaming, at times I leapt shrieking in the air, whilst he, begging me to be merciful stretched his chin out upon the dust.

DING! DONG! BELL!
PUSSY'S IN THE WELL

by M. M. Fenton

IT might never have happened had I been an ordinary cat; but I had one paw white and the other black, and there was a green spot on the tip of my nose; that is what I looked like when I went to live with the Green family. The children decided on painting me green after I had been there two days a mere kitten, "to show that I belonged to the family," they said.

As I grew up I was much admired by the grown-ups, who declared I was a fine cat, but I was not so vain as might be supposed; for I was high-spirited, and loved nothing better than to romp and scramble about on the trees and over fences with the

children. I was introduced as time went on to their little friends, and people called me the children's favourite.

The story I am going to tell is about my adventures.

I had been petted and teased and cared for by turns. And then it happened—on the show day—Cat Show Day.

Of course, Johnny didn't mean to put me in the well; I knew that; he was so small.

Among my friends and neighbours I was known as "Tibby," but the children always called me "Pussy Patch." I had three kittens—Tip, Top and Tap.

I was watching in my usual corner in the old barn for mice, and presently the stable boy came in for chaff for Pinkie, the pony, and went out, leaving the door open. Well, in walked Johnny, looked straight at me, bun-

dled me up in his short, fat arms, and carried me to the well, for somebody had left the cover half off. Johnny chuckled as he dropped me into the well. I only gave a cat-like scream.

What a commotion there was when it was discovered that I was missing! I knew that I had stood a great chance of the prize; people had been talking, and, besides, I was the village favourite among the children.

At last the Prince arrived; for a real Prince was to be the Judge at the show. Everybody searched high and low for me, and even Johnny, as much as anybody. He had forgotten, and couldn't tell anybody where I was.

The well I was in was full of frogs, beetles and other nasty things that crept round and made me shiver. Luckily for me, it was summer-time, and there wasn't much water, only

plenty of mud, which smelt like mouldy cheese in an old mouse trap. If it had been a treacle well they would never have been able to dry me out.

Every minute of the day, sometimes far, sometimes near, I could hear, "Pussy Patch, dear," or, "Pussy Patch, where are you?" or, "Pussy, Pussy," or, "Patch, Patch, Patch," to each of which I answered with a low and plaintive mew; but I knew nobody could hear me down there.

All at once the church bells began to ring out. "Hark! Ding, Dong, Bell! Pussy's in the Well!" Such a din was never heard before; everybody came running towards the village green.

What did it all mean? Not one of the grown-ups knew, but Tommy Trout said: "Listen, the bells are saying, Ding, Dong, Bell! Pussy's in the well!"

Then the children shouted and scampered off, singing the words at the top of their voices as the bells clanged out the news. I could hear the pit-a-pattering of many feet, coming nearer and nearer.

They came up to the well, with all sorts of things to drag it with, but nobody thought of the proper thing to do.

I strained my neck and stretched myself on my hind legs to my utmost. A garden rake nearly took my ears off, a broom grazed my nose, a telescope toasting fork poked my eyes. It was all in vain. They could not rescue me.

I heard a man say: "Here's a long pole," but what use was that? How could I keep my hold on to that? I am not a monkey.

AT last they gave up and went away: and then Tommy Trout came along with his fishing rod; he threw the line down the well, and called soothingly, "Bite, Pussy Patch." Of course I bit as hard as I had ever bitten anything, and held on with my teeth while Tommy drew me up.

Oh, the delightful feeling of fresh air and safety out of that horrid well! How Tommy stroked and caressed me! I curled myself round on his shoulder, and rubbed my head hard against his face and neck.

He took me straight into the crowd, till he stood facing the Prince. I was placed upon a box, high enough to be seen above the heads of the men and women, all of whom were cheering and clapping.

The Prince stepped up to the box and began to speak. He asked me why I had given so much trouble that day. How I got into the well? I answered with the softest, most pleading mew I could give.

He seemed quite satisfied at that, then raised first my black, then my white, paw, afterwards he touched the tip of my nose with his little finger.

There was a little group of men near, and the Prince spoke to them, and one said: "What a fine tail, so bushy and glossy! Another hung a big card around my neck on which was printed in red: "First Prize." I felt a proud cat indeed.

"May I take the cat away with me?" asked the Prince, after all the speeches had been made.

The people answered with a shout that they would have great pleasure in presenting me to the Prince. The children were silent. Johnny began to weep.

The Prince then picked me up, and said quite loudly, "I present this cat to Tommy Trout and all the children in the village."

Then there were great cheers for the Prince, and the cat, and there were great rejoicings.

So I became the village cat again, to the children's great delight, and my own gratification. I do not wish to be any other cat, not for all the world.

Tommy Trout was rewarded with five shillings, and he bought a clock-work mouse.

Boys are queer things.