

A PUSSY CAT'S TALE.

The winter that Jack Barker was "eight, going on nine," he felt that he would like to have something that was alive to pet and call his own; therefore his mother got from a neighbour who had several, a kitten, and it was given to Jack as his own special pet. He was told by his mother to feed and take care of it himself, as she had other things to do. Of course Jack went to school. On some mornings he was late, ate his own breakfast in great haste, and forgot all about his kitten. Then the poor kitten would go about mewling until somebody, perhaps the cook, remembered to give it a little milk.

This kitten did not have a happy time. Jack's mother said she "never had liked cats," so when this one, purring as hard as it could, came near her when she sewed or read and tried to lie on the edge of her dress or climb into her lap—it had no bed of its own—Mrs Barker pushed it away, and put it out of the room, declaring that it was "a regular nuisance." She did not remember that the kitten was a baby, a baby animal, and needed love and kindness as all young things do, and a soft bed of its own to sleep in, such as all babies ought to have, and such as baby creatures do have when they are in a wild state. Mother birds make comfortable nests for their little ones, and mother animals make nice beds of dried leaves or grass in quiet places for their babies. Whether we are young or old, we like to have beds, and so do all the animals that live with us.

Jack Barker was not a cruel boy, and would not have tried to hurt or make his kitten unhappy. He did it by being careless. He did not see to it that there was water where the kitten could always get it, so she was very thirsty sometimes. One day when she jumped into the kitchen sink and tried to get a few drops the cook was very angry, and said she "did not want a nasty cat in her sink, where she washed dishes." Jack heard her, and that time the poor kitten got all the nice, clean water it wanted. On Saturdays and at other times when Jack was at home he played with his kitten and showed it to other boys and girls who came to see him. This made the kitten unhappy, because it got such rough handling and hard squeezing. But

Frances Ward, who never was rough, and who used to sit down quietly and take the kitten in her lap and gently stroke its soft fur. How happy it was then, and how loudly it sung its pussycat song!

But Jack did not understand gentleness, and so he used to chase his kitten when he wanted her, and catch there was one little girl, her name was her up roughly, and one day, when he had caught her he squeezed her tight, and she was so frightened and hurt that she scratched him. Then he threw her down and scolded, and his mother said "that was what to expect, as cats were treacherous."

Now Jack could read very well, but he did not know the meaning of the word "treacherous," so he went into the house and looked for it in his father's big dictionary, and found that to be treacherous was to be "like a traitor, to betray a trust, to be false, or to be a plotter." Sometimes Jack sat down for just a few minutes and thought, and he did it this time. He had learned something about traitors at school, and he could not see that any of them were like kittens, or that his kitten had done any of the things that traitors do. Then he thought about betraying a trust. He put his head in his hands and said to himself, "If my father or mother asked me to do something and I said I would, and then just on purpose didn't, I guess that would be betraying a trust." He could not see that his kitten had done anything like this either, nor, after considering some more, did he think it was "false" or "a plotter." He remembered how roughly he had picked it up, and at last, being an honest boy, he said to himself, "Well, I guess I'd scratch, too, or kick, or something, if I was collared that way, and I s'pose a kitten don't know as much as me."

By the time winter was over and warm weather had come the kitten had grown to quite a good-sized cat, and Jack had become fond of her, and was rather more careful about getting food for her, and of such kinds as she liked. Besides this, there was a new cook, who was kinder to animals than the other had been. The kitten had grown up very pretty, and was gentle and loving and glad to be where Jack was. He had given her a name, it was "Frisk." But now Jack's father and mother began to talk of going away for the summer.

The house was to be closed, and they were to board in some distant place in the mountains. A time of great confusion and disturbance began. Men in heavy boots stamped about, carrying carpets; women with buckets went from room to room, and there was no place in the house where a cat could hope to remain undisturbed; therefore, Frisk ran out and hid herself so that no one in the family could have found her without walking about and quietly calling her. But no one thought of this. Jack was so full of plans for having a good time during his holiday that he did not give any thought to his cat for days, nor ask any questions as to what was to become of her. On the last morning the carriage came to the door, Jack and his parents got in, and they had begun to move off when Jack happened to look back, and there was Frisk's head peeping out from under a porch!

"Oh, mother," cried Jack, "we've forgotten Frisk. We must take her with us. Let's turn back."

"Take her with us? Nonsense," said Mrs Barker. "The hotel does not include cats among its guests."

"But, mother," said Jack, "she can't get into the house, and then, who's going to feed her?"

"She does not need to get into the house," replied his mother, "and as to feeding, she can look out for herself."

"P'raps she don't know how to look out for herself," persisted Jack. "She'll be hungry——"

"When she's hungry she'll learn," said Mrs Barker sharply. "Anyway, we must catch the train, so there's no more to be said about it."

Jack said no more, and the interest of the journey soon caused him to forget all about his cat.

As soon as the carriage was out of sight, and everything was quiet, Frisk crept out from under the porch. She had had no breakfast, and for days before only an occasional scrap, which the cook threw to her if she happened to see her in the evening, and that had not happened every evening. She was now very hungry. She crept about in an uncertain half-frightened manner, looking up at the closed house, which seemed so strange and still. She began to mew piteously, for she was lonely as well as hungry. She spent all that day going about the house, hoping that at last the door would open. Sometimes she sat