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Frontispiece.

" 'DRAW AND DEFEND YOURSELF!' "

See page 11.

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The Robber Kitten

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THE KITTEN DECIDES TO BECOME A ROBBER

THE ROBBER KITTEN

CHAPTER I

*A kitten once to its mother said,
"I'll never more be good,
But I'll go and be a robber fierce,
And live in a dreary wood ;
Wood, wood, wood,
And live in a dreary wood !"*

THE kitten's mother was hem-
ming a pocket-handkerchief
when her wild little son
said this, and she looked up in
surprise.

"Be a robber, my kitten? fuff—nonsense, mew! hold your tongue."

"Yes, mother," said the kitten. "I'm determined to be a robber; I have not got everything that I want, and I feel that I must have everything that I want. I've been good so long that I'm tired of it, so I've made up my mind to be bad now—fuff!"

The kitten knitted its brows and looked fierce as it spoke.

"My child," said its mother, "alas! you know not what you say. It is wrong and unkind of you to speak in such a way to



your mother. You will be wretched and miserable if you are bad, and you will come at last to wish that you had never been born."

The kitten made no answer, but soon after retired to its own room.

Now, this kitten had never been a naughty kitten before. It had

2—The Robber Kitten.

always been good, and its mother was very fond of it—so fond of it, indeed, that she gave it too much of its own way, and was not careful enough to keep it out of bad company. So the little kitten was made to behave ill by some bad companions, and when at length it told its mother what it was going to do, she burst into a flood of tears and groaned for sorrow. Having cried till no more tears would come, she dried her eyes with the handkerchief she was hemming, and in doing so, pricked her nose with the needle. Then she went to her kitten's room and opened the

door and looked in. Great was her astonishment at what she saw. The kitten had put on a belt, in which were stuck two large horse pistols. A sword hung by its side; and a hat, with a feather in it, was stuck on one side of its head. Standing up before a large looking-glass, the kitten frowned savagely at its own image, and drawing its sword, cried out in a loud, angry voice,—

"Come on, villain! draw and defend yourself! your money or your life!—hurrah! me-a-ow—s-k-fuff!" and, making a plunge with the point of its sword, it almost broke the glass to pieces.

"My child!" exclaimed the astonished and terrified mother. "What means this?"

"Practice, mother. I'm just practicing a little before I begin. You see, when I come to stab people and beasts, and to cut off their heads, I must know how to do it, so that I may soon put them out of pain. I don't wish to be cruel, you know, although I'm determined to kill and rob them all. And now, farewell, dear mother. I shall look in on you sometimes, to see how you get on. Adieu."

The kitten planted its hat firmly over its brows, sheathed its sword

with a bang, sprang over the window, and disappeared; whereupon the cat sat down on its hind legs and roared aloud in anguish of spirit.

THE KITTEN MEETS A COCK

CHAPTER II

*So off it went to the dreary wood,
And there it met a cock,
And blew its head, with a pistol, off,
Which gave it an awful shock!
Shock, shock, shock,
Which gave it an awful shock!*

THE distance from the kitten's house to the wood was not great, but the wood was very large, and the poor mother knew that it would be of no use to try to find her little one there.

At first the kitten felt very sad,

and had almost turned back ; but the thought that its companions would laugh at it, induced it to go on. Foolish thing ! how much better it would have been to have braved the laughter of a few bad kittens, than to be hated, as a robber, by all the good kittens and cats in the country.

The sun was setting when it entered the wood, which looked very dark, dismal, and dreary ; but the Robber Kitten was a bold fellow. It knew that darkness could not hurt it, and that light could not save it from danger. Then it slapped the handles of its two

belt. In a few minutes a large game-cock strutted past.

"Stand and deliver !" cried the kitten, pointing the pistol at its breast.

"Deliver what ?" inquired the cock in much surprise.

"Your money, of course," replied the kitten ; "quick, sir, or you're a dead cock in two seconds."

"Ho ! ho ! ho ! cock a-doodle-doo," laughed the cock. "I haven't got a farthing — doodle-doo-doo-doo !"

The kitten frowned in anger.

"You're going home, I suppose ?"

pistols, and shook the sword in its scabbard, and strode like a lion into the gloomy shades of the forest. Here the kitten was greatly taken up with the new and wonderful things it saw ; the blooming flowers and the bright green sward ; the immense trees, and brooks, and ponds with water-lilies in them ; the singing birds, and the curious insects that crawled about in all directions. Everything was most beautiful. Suddenly a sound was heard, as if of approaching footsteps. The kitten forgot all the beauties of nature ; sprang behind a tree and drew a pistol from its



"BLEW THE COCK'S HEAD ENTIRELY OFF ITS BODY !"

"Yes; cock-a-doo!"

"Fuff! It's a long way, I fancy?"

"Rather; doodle-doo!" replied the cock.

"Then I'll show you a shorter road," said the kitten; and, pulling the trigger, it blew the cock's head entirely off its body!

"That was rather a good hit," remarked the naughty kitten, as it lifted the body of the poor cock on to its shoulder and continued its journey. "I'll have a nice roast for supper to-night; but I must look for a cave to sleep in. Dear me—mew!—how heavy that crea-



ture is. Fuff! how dark it's getting.

Talking to itself in this way, the kitten trudged on for half an hour. At length it found a small cave, with a low, narrow entrance, into which it went and prepared to spend the night. Here it discovered, to its sorrow, that it had for-

gotten to pick up its pistol and powder-horn after firing at the cock. This was a great loss. However, it consoled itself by thinking that it still had one loaded pistol left, and also its good sword.

THE KITTEN MEETS A CAT

CHAPTER III

Soon after that it met a cat :

*"Now give to me your purse,
Or I'll shoot you through, and stab
you too,
And kill you, which is worse!
Worse, worse, worse,
And kill you, which is worse!"*

NEXT morning the kitten
awoke from a sound sleep
and rubbed its eyes once
or twice, and tried to remember
where it was. For a few seconds
it was quite bewildered as it gazed

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36 THE ROBBER KITTEN

around at the dark stone walls
and roof of the cave; but when
its eyes fell on the bones and
feathers of the cock, all that had
passed the night before came into
its mind again.

"I'm a robber now,—ha! ha!
ha! very good, ho! capital!" it
cried, springing up and buckling
on its sword. "Where is my pis-
tol? ah! here it is; all right. Now,
then, to business! hurrah! fuff!"

Speaking thus it put on its hat,
very much over one eye, and sallied
forth, swaggering through the
wood, with its naked sword in one
hand and the pistol in the other.

THE KITTEN SINGS LUSTILY

CHAPTER IV

*Oh! a life for me in the wild woods
free,
And a good blade sharp and
true;
To rob and fight both day and
night,
And to laugh, sing, dance, and
mew-oo!
And to laugh, sing, dance, and
mew.*

BUT although the Robber Kitten sang lustily, it felt heavy at heart, for it knew that it was doing wrong, and could not for-

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40 THE ROBBER KITTEN

get the wretched look of its poor mother when it bade her farewell.

Now, as it walked along it heard a sound like purring in the distance, and in a few moments a large cat came sauntering along. The kitten instantly sprang forward and held the point of its sword to the cat's mouth and the point of its pistol to its nose.

"Hallo! me-a-ow! fuff!" cried the cat, bristling up, starting back and gazing with terror down the pistol barrel. "What do you mean? eh? fuff! Turn that pistol aside, will you? It'll go off of its own accord."

THE ROBBER KITTEN 41



"TURN THAT PISTOL ASIDE, WILL YOU?"

"Just so, my good lady," said the kitten; "it will go off entirely of its own accord unless you give me your purse."

"My purse!" replied the cat, trembling with terror. "I have no purse, no money, no nothing. Now do point that pistol away from my nose. It's sure to go off in a minute. I see it smoking already."

The kitten stopped the cat short by giving it a poke on the chin with its sword, which caused it to caterwaul fearfully, and beg, with tears in its eyes, that it might be spared and not killed.

bad, for it missed the cat, which sprang three times its own height off the ground, scratched the air wildly, shrieked with terror, and then fled with glaring eye-balls from the spot.

For at least five minutes the sound of the cat's voice filled the woods while it darted madly through bush and brake; then it died away in the distance, and a dead silence reigned around.

"Not killed!" replied the kitten, with a frown; "listen to me, cat; you're a villain!"

"Yes, I know that," said the cat, meekly; "but villains don't like to be killed, please."

"You deserve to be killed," continued the kitten, "because—because—I want to kill you; but first I'll shoot and then stab you, so look out." Saying these words, the kitten pulled the trigger, the cat gave an awful yell, and the pistol exploded with a sound like a cannon-shot in the silent wood. The kitten was knocked over by the shock, but its aim had been

THE KITTEN BEMOANS HIMSELF

CHAPTER V

*It climbed a tree to rob a nest
Of young and tender owls;
But the branch broke off and the
kitten fell,
With two tremendous howls!
Howls, howls, howls,
With two tremendous howls!*

AFTER the cat was gone the kitten sat down at the foot of a tree and bemoaned itself thus:—

“O, dear, mew! alas! fuff! me!
I've missed that wicked cat; and

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48 THE ROBBER KITTEN

if I hadn't been bad and disobedient to my dear mother I wouldn't have tried to hit it. And the worst of it is that I have lost my powder-horn, and won't be able to do any more murders except with the sword. O, mew, alas! what a bother!”

“Ho! ho! ho!” laughed a very small voice high up in the tree. The kitten started and looked up, and there it saw two little round heads and four big, round black eyes peeping down at it through the leaves.

“What are you laughing at?” cried the kitten, angrily.

THE ROBBER KITTEN 49



“At your shooting,” answered one of the young owls. Ho! ho! ho! capital. You're not much of a shot, it would seem. Ho! ho! here's a chance for you.” As the owlet spoke it thrust its head over the side of its nest and winked with solemn gravity at the kitten.

—The Robber Kitten

"Where's your mother?" inquired the kitten.

"Gone out. Not at home. She doesn't want to see you, I think; ho! ho!"

"Do you know," said the kitten, "that I can climb?"

"You don't mean it, do you?" answered the owlets, winking to each other. "That's very surprising. We don't think it would improve your appearance to climb. It's not a graceful thing to do."

"Perhaps not, but I'll do it, and eat you up." Hereupon the kitten sprang up the trunk of the tree and soon came near to where the

nest was built. Now, it chanced that the mother of the owlets returned to her nest at this moment, and while the kitten was climbing up the tree, it sat down on a branch and hid itself among the leaves. When the kitten reached the nest, the two owlets gave a squeal, and the mother owl thrust her large face and her enormous black eyes suddenly before the kitten.

"Hallo! me-a-ow—s-k-fuff!" cried the kitten, as it shrank back in terror on beholding this wonderful sight. "Oo—oo—oo—boo-hoo!" said the owl.

The kitten slipped its foot and fell backwards. It caught at a branch in falling, but the branch was decayed. It broke off, and down went the kitten, head foremost,—down with a terrible crash through leaves and branches, until it came to the ground with a heart-rending bump!

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the owlets with their little voices.

"Ho! ho! ho!" echoed their mother in a deep bass.

For an hour and a half the Robber Kitten lay on the ground quite motionless; then it began to recover, and, looking up, it saw



"THE KITTEN FELL BACKWARDS."

the owls on the tree still laughing at it.

"If I had a shot in my pistol I would kill you," said the kitten.

"Ho! ho! ho!" said the old owl, "you've run away, have you? And you're determined to be bad and won't be good. Ha! very well, my friend; but depend upon it that you'll never be happy and always be wretched. 'Bad and wretched, bad and wretched! ho! ho! good-bye—' and the kitten slunk away while the owl's warning voice was ringing in its ears.

THE KITTEN MEETS ANOTHER ROGUE

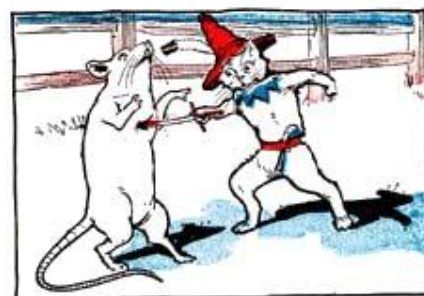
CHAPTER VI

*One day it met a Robber Dog,
And they sat down to drink;
The dog did joke, and laugh and
sing,
Which made the kitten wink!
Wink, wink, wink
Which made the kitten wink!*

FOR many days after this the Robber Kitten wandered about in the woods in search of animals to plunder; but it did not find many, and the few that it found never had any money.

Sometimes it was all but starved for want of food. At other times it caught a little bird or a mouse, and fared well. Once it met a very large rat and fought with it for more than an hour, and was very nearly killed, for the rat was fierce and strong. However, the kitten ran its sword right through the rat's heart at last, and so killed it.

One day, as the kitten was walking along in a very sad frame of mind, it met a dog which carried a small round bottle at his side and an enormous club over his shoulder.



"Stand and deliver!" cried the dog.

"Your money or your life!" shouted the kitten.

Each looked at the other in great surprise.

"Why, you're a robber," said the dog.

"So are you," replied the kitten.

Hereupon the dog burst into a loud fit of laughter.

"Come now," said he, "that is very funny, to think that you and I should meet and threaten to rob each other. Capital! ha! ha! ha! excellent! Give us your paw, old boy; you and I shall be good friends, and we'll hunt and rob in company."

The kitten did not at first feel at ease in the presence of this new friend, but he was such a gay, laughing, hearty, and altogether funny dog, that it could not help shaking paws with him; so they sat down under a tree to talk.

"Here you are!" cried the dog, as he swaggered towards a tree. "Here's a fine, shady spot. Now then, mister kitten, sit down and tell me your history. But first wet your mouth with a drop of this. It's only milk, and won't hurt you."

"After you," said the kitten, with a wink, as it sat down on the root of the tree and folded its paws across its breast.

"Your good health, bow, wow!" said the dog, nodding. "Ha! ha! ain't it jolly to meet a friend in the woods? eh? Now then, take a good pull at the bottle, and go on."

The kitten took so good a pull that it finished the milk, every drop, and then related all its history to the dog, who sat laughing, and winking, and rubbing his paws with glee all the time. After that the dog told his story to the kitten, but it was very short, for he had only run away from his master that morning, and had seen no one till he met the kitten.

"And now tell me, kitten, have you got any money about you?"

The kitten winked slyly. "Yes, I have, and I've hid it in the barrel of my pistol; for if I should be overcome at any time, no one would look

64 THE ROBBER KITTEN

there for it, as every one is so much afraid that the pistol will go off!"

"O, capital! bow, wow, wow! most amusing!" said the dog, rolling himself about in the strength of his delight.

"Yes, mew! fuff! isn't it funny?" said the kitten, with a smile of satisfaction.



"'YOUR GOOD HEALTH,' SAID THE DOG."

THE KITTEN AND THE
DOG QUARREL

CHAPTER VII

*At last they quarreled ; then they
fought,
Beneath the greenwood tree,
Till puss was felled with an awful
club,
Most terrible to see !
See, see, see,
Most terrible to see !*

AFTER they had talked together for a little longer, the dog turned to the kitten and said :

"My friend, I very much wish

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68 THE ROBBER KITTEN

that you would give me all your money."

The kitten looked surprised and felt very uneasy, for the dog spoke in a grave, determined tone of voice.

"And," continued the dog, "if you don't give it to me, I'll take it from you by force ! bow, wow, wow !"

On hearing this, the kitten sprang to its feet, and drawing its sword, cried, "Me-a-ow ! fuff ! come on, you traitor, and fight if you dare."

"Bow, wow, wow !" roared the dog, as he leaped up and flourished his awful club in the air. "I am

THE ROBBER KITTEN 69

no traitor, but you are a bad, wicked creature. I only ran away from my master, but you ran away from your mother. Bad thing. Come on and die. Bow, wow, wow ! roar !"

"Me-a-ow ! fuff ! squeal ! Defend yourself ! fuff ! me-a-ow !"

It was an awful sight to behold that Robber Dog and that Robber Kitten as they stood facing each other in the wood, under that green tree. Their eyes blazed like balls of fire. The hair bristled on their backs. Their teeth glittered, and the breath came hissing through between them.

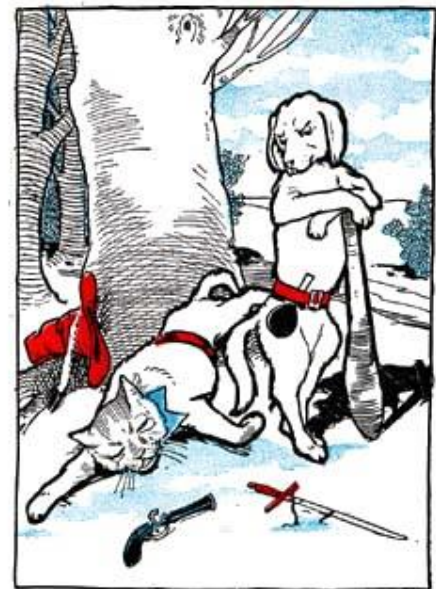
"Bow, wow! growl!" Down came the huge club; the kitten sprang nimbly aside, and it fell with a crash upon the turf; while the kitten's sword went like lightning through the dog's tail. A dreadful yell followed, and again the heavy club descended and felled the kitten's hat to the ground. This enraged the kitten so much that it uttered a yell mingled with a puff of the most awful description, and made a plunge at the dog's face, but only thrust the sword through his ear. The two robbers now lost all command of themselves. They found that when they tried to hit



they always missed, therefore they both shut their eyes and struck and stabbed everywhere and anywhere, each hoping that by chance he might succeed in killing the other. The awful club went banging and crashing against trees and bushes, and the sharp sword went gleaming and glancing through them, while yells

and fuffs, growls and roars, mingled in horrid confusion. Once the sword cut a deep slice into the dog's nose, and once the club knocked the kitten head over heels. But the kitten rose again and rushed to renew the fight with greater fury than ever. O, it was awful! Suddenly the club fell with a stunning blow on something soft. The dog opened his eyes to see what it was, and beheld the kitten lying flat on its back upon the ground, and quite insensible!

Lowering the awful club, the dog gazed for a few seconds at his fallen enemy.



"THE DOG GAZED AT HIS FALLEN ENEMY."

"It's all well that ends well," he said, with a sigh; and then, taking up the pistol, he drew all the money out of it and put it into his milk bottle. Having done this, he threw the pistol down, and shouldering his club, walked away.

THE KITTEN MEWS WITH PAIN

CHAPTER VIII

*When puss got up, its eye was shut,
And swell'd, and black, and blue;
Moreover, all its bones were sore,
So it began to mew!
Mew, mew, mew,
So it began to mew!*

NO wonder that it mewed, poor thing, for its left eye was black and quite shut, and its cheek was swelled to twice its usual size.

"O, mew! O me! me-a-ow! fuff! O dear, what a business"

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Only think! My eye! Mother wouldn't know me if she saw me. Dear, dear! O, fuff!"

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed the old owl, who had watched the fight from the tree-top. "So you've got a thrashing, have you? Serves you right. Bad and wretched! bad and wretched! Very good, ho! ho! ho!"

"Pray don't laugh at me," said the kitten, beginning to sob.

"O ho!" said the owl. "Your spirit is broken, is it? Would you kill me now if you had a shot in your pistol?"

"No I wouldn't," answered the kitten. "I'm sorry I said that. And



I'm sorry I ever ran away from my dear mother."

"Then why don't you go back?" said the owl. "Better late than never, you know, eh? late than never! late than never! ho! ho! ho!"

"I don't know the way back," sobbed the kitten. "It must be a

long, long way,—O dear! mew! and I've only got one eye to see with, and my bones feel as if they were all broken, and I'm sure my heart is—for I feel so miserable inside."

Here the kitten sobbed aloud, and the owl opened her eyes remarkably wide and looked dreadfully solemn.

After a little the owl gave a cough and said, "Kitten, I am sorry for you, ho! I see that you must have been led away and made to do wrong by bad companions; but that does not excuse you, ho, ho! You have been



"I'VE ONLY ONE EYE TO SEE WITH."

6—The Robber Kitten.

very naughty and deserve to be whipped, if not hanged. However, ho! I'll see what I can do for you. If you promise to do what I bid you, I will conduct you home."

"What am I to promise, dear owl?"

"That you will never run away again; that you will never steal milk or cream; that you will be a robber no longer; that you will not again be naughty in any way whatever; that you will love your mother more than anybody else in the world,—I do not say obey her, because if you really love her you cannot help obeying her." The

owl looked so tremendously wise at this point that the kitten was quite awe-struck. "Then," continued the owl, "you must promise to remember that those who are bad are always wretched, and you must write the words BAD AND WRETCHED in large letters over your door when you get home. I had almost said you must write them in your heart, but that would be difficult."

"Yes," sobbed the kitten, "and rather painful, don't you think?"

"Now," said the owl, "look me straight in the face and promise, ho!"

The kitten turned its swelled visage towards the owl and sobbed violently as it said, "I promise, mew! fuff!"

THE KITTEN GOES HOME

CHAPTER IX

*Then up it rose, and scratch'd its
nose,
And went home very sad;
"O, mother, dear, behold me here!
I'll never more be bad!
Bad, bad, bad,
I'll never more be bad!"*

SLOWLY and sadly did the Robber Kitten walk along through that dreary, dismal wood. The owl flew a short distance in advance and alighted on the branch of a tree, where she

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waited till the kitten came up to her; then she flew farther on and again waited; and so they went along for that day. At night the kitten and the owl sat down to supper under a tree, and after they had finished the kitten slept at the foot of the tree—the owl on the top of it.

Their supper usually consisted of mice and birds which they caught during the day's march. Thus they went along till they came to the edge of the wood.

"Now," said the owl, pointing across the field, "yonder is your mother's house. Go home,



and don't forget your promise, ho! ho!"

"Good-bye, fuff! mew! dear owl," replied the kitten, "and thank you very much for all your kindness to me. A friend in need is a friend indeed. I will never forget you, and I will do all that you have commanded."

So saying, the kitten kissed the owl on its chin, not being able to get at its mouth on account of the beak. The owl stared in silence at the kitten, and then winked slowly with both eyes; which wink squeezed two tears out of them. At the sight of this tenderness the kitten burst into tears, and hurriedly saying farewell, it turned away and ran home.

The kitten's mother happened to be home when her penitent son arrived.

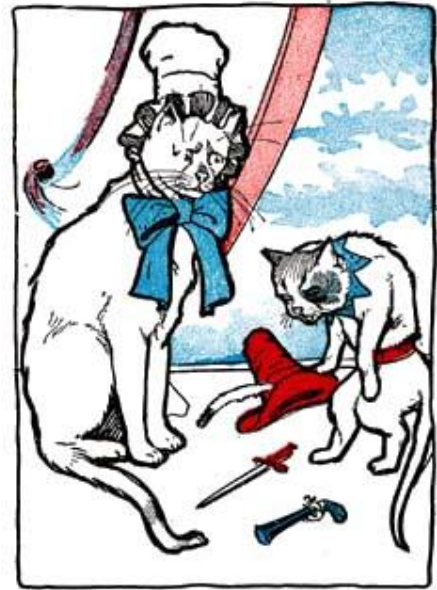
"Bad boy," she said, with a frown, "what brings you here? fuff!"

"Oh, mother! mew! I am so sorry. I'll never be bad again. Whip me, mother; darling mother, do whip me, and, perhaps, it will make me good."

The kitten came forward with its head hanging down and the tears streaming from its eyes. Flinging its pistol and sword on the ground, it said: "Take them, mother, and put them into the fire. Mew! Oh, forgive me, mother!"

The kitten's mother felt her heart grow soft; the frown went away and tears filled her eyes.

"Darling child!" she cried, "my son! my dear, good son! my kit-



"I'LL NEVER BE BAD AGAIN."



ten! come to me!" and in another moment they were locked in a loving embrace. Oh, happy hour! The Robber Kitten was good once more.

"And did it come home to its mother? dear pet!" said the cat, "and was it miserable? And did it get a nasty black eye, poor dear?"

Kiss its mother, mew! And give
it another, fuff!"

Happy, happy were the mother
and kitten now, and happy did they
continue; for the kitten kept its
promise to the owl, and never was
naughty any more after that, but
always was good, good, good.

