



*Peter
and Polly*



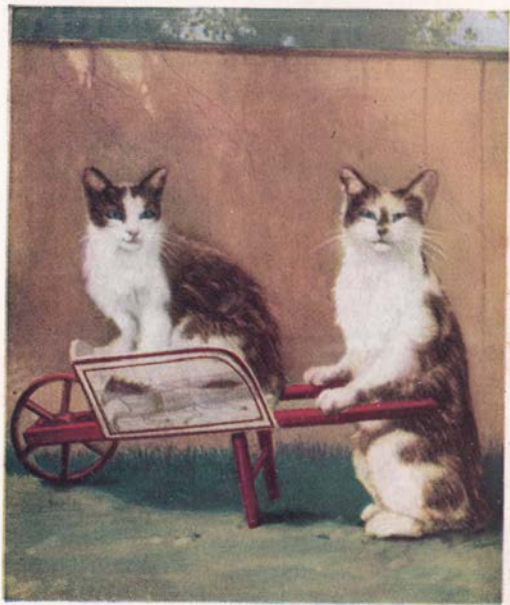






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PETER AND POLLY



Peter sometimes gave Polly a ride

PETER AND POLLY

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TO
MASTER CURLY LOCKS
WHOSE REAL NAME IS
JOHN KENNEDY PORTER



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ph

PETER AND POLLY



THE FIRST DAY

PETER was once a small kitten. He had a funny little black spot on his nose, and his eyes were very round and shiny. He was a curious little fellow, for, although there were lots of trees and grass in his own yard, he wanted to see what was in the rest of the world on the other side of the fence. So one day he crawled through the palings and ran along the road until he came to another

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yard with a fence around it. Then Peter had a great surprise, for there, sitting all alone in the sun, was another kitten. Peter stood looking through the fence for a moment, then he said:

“What’s your name?”

“Polly Primtoes,” the kitten answered. “What’s your name?”

“Peter Furrycoat. What are you doing?”

“Just sitting,” said Polly.

“Just sitting? Why don’t you play? Why don’t you chase your tail?” asked Peter.

“I never can catch it,” said Polly.

THE FIRST DAY

"You might, sometime. I often jump at my shadow," suggested Peter.

Polly looked interested. "Is it fun?" she asked.

"Yes; I'll show you how," said Peter, and crawled through the palings into Polly's yard.

At first Polly was rather timid, but jumping at one's shadow is such fun that she soon felt better acquainted.

"Now let's jump at each other's shadow," suggested Peter, and that was more fun than ever.

When the game was over they were both rather tired, so they

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crawled into an empty basket which was lying in the garden. There they rested happily.

"Where do you live?" asked Polly.

"A little farther down the road, with my father and mother."

"Haven't you any sisters?"

"Once I had two," said Peter.

"What happened them?"

"They were drowned."

"Oh!" said Polly, "have you any brothers?"

"I had one," said Peter.

"What happened him?"

"He was drowned, too."

"Mercy!" exclaimed Polly. "I'm



Peter and Polly crawled into an empty basket
to rest

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glad I never had any brothers or sisters. I should think you would be afraid of the water."

"Well," hesitated Peter, "I'm not exactly afraid, but I don't like it."

Just then some one called Polly.

"Will you come again to play, Peter?" she asked timidly.

"Yes," promised Peter, "I'll come to-morrow," and trotted home along the dusty road.

PLAY DAYS

POLLY lived with her aunt, Lady Tortoiseshell, in a pretty house with many windows. There was a large garden at the side of the house, and here Polly and Peter loved to play. They knew many games, but their favourite one was hide-and-seek. Polly was so tiny that she could hide behind a lettuce leaf, but Peter could scarcely hide behind even a huge pumpkin.

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Once, while Polly was waiting for Peter to find her, she had such a queer experience that she came running excitedly to tell him.

“Oh, Peter! Peter!” she cried. “I just saw the queerest little gray creature with sharp eyes and a long, thin tail! It was poking about among the cabbage leaves, and all at once I felt as if I must chase it; so I crept nearer and nearer and just as I had my paw on its tail it darted away and disappeared down a funny little hole in the ground. What could it be?”

“That,” said Peter, “was a mouse

PLAY DAYS

— a sly, wicked, greedy little mouse. It belongs to a race which is a set of thieves. I have heard my father tell about them. They hide in the sleeves of kittens' jackets and gnaw holes in them."

"The horrid things!" exclaimed Polly. "Now I know why I wanted to chase that one."

"And," continued Peter, "they gnaw holes in people's cupboards and eat their cheese. If our fathers and mothers and aunts and uncles and cousins didn't all try to catch them, they would eat up all the cheese in the whole world!"

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“How greedy they must be, Peter!” exclaimed Polly, who was quite overcome by this appalling statement.

“My Grandfather Sharpclaws was a famous mouser,” boasted Peter. “He caught *hundreds* of mice and hung all their tails in rows upon the wall. Members of our tribe came from everywhere to see them—even from Wildcat Hollow.”

“How did he happen to catch so many?” asked Polly.

“Well,” said Peter, “when he sat watching a mouse’s door and wondered, ‘Will Lady Mouse ever come?’ he remembered that Lady



Grandfather Sharpclaws was a famous mouser

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Mouse was wondering, 'Will Master Cat ever go?' And then he just sat and *sat* and SAT, until Lady Mouse got so curious that she peeped out of her door. Then Grandfather caught her!"

"Did you ever catch one, Peter?" asked Polly.

"No, but I intend to very soon," answered Peter. "And when we grow up and are married ——"

"Will Aunt Tortoiseshell let us be married?" interrupted Polly.

"Of course," answered Peter, "and we'll have roast mouse for dinner every day in the year."

PLAY DAYS

“With catnip sauce,” added Polly.

“Yes,” agreed Peter.

“Um-m!” said Polly. “You do think of the loveliest things, Peter.”

Now while Peter was talking he had been playing with his new red ball, rolling it up and down the path. Suddenly it began to roll faster and faster. Peter tried to stop it, but couldn't, and it rolled straight through a tiny hole in the fence. Peter was puzzled for a second, then he stood looking up at the fence.

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“Polly, Polly!” he cried. “Please hold my jacket!”

The jacket was a green one with tiny gilt buttons, and while Polly held it carefully Peter scrambled up to the very top of the fence. He stood looking down at his little red ball lying in the grass.

“It’s a rather high jump,” he thought, and the next second Polly saw him disappear — even to the tip of his tail. She waited breathlessly and very soon Peter peeped over the fence with the little red ball in his mouth. Polly was so glad to see him that she ran to

PLAY DAYS

get some mud and plastered the hole up so tight that Peter never had to jump the fence again.

There was a tiny red wheelbarrow in the garden, and in this Peter sometimes gave Polly a ride. They would play that Polly was a cat princess whom Peter was rescuing from a huge dragon. Peter would run very fast — so fast that when he turned quickly round a corner and the barrow tipped, Polly would hold on tight and think the dragon was surely after her.

But Peter would shout, "Don't be scared, Polly. We've passed the

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dragon and he's lashing his tail against the cherry-tree." Then they would rest a while in the shade, and sometimes Peter would fall asleep after his long run.

One day a strange thing happened to Polly, for she grew tired waiting for Peter to waken, and wandered off by herself. She ran along the fence past the currant bushes and the sunflowers and the strawberry patch. She had great fun chasing a butterfly and listening to an old woodpecker who sat perched in a cherry tree. She scared a toad who had hopped on to the path and sat

PLAY DAYS

watching an ant-hill. She did many other interesting things and then suddenly thought she would return to Peter. But the grass looked so long, and there were so many weeds, and everything seemed so still that a queer feeling came over Polly — *she was lost!*

Just then a cross little dog came running toward her. He was very little, to be sure, with long ears and a short tail, but he began to bark shrilly.

Polly called, "Peter! Peter!" and shrank as far into the corner of the fence as she could.

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Now Peter had missed Polly very soon after she disappeared, and he was hunting for her everywhere. When the little dog barked Peter heard him and turned that way at once, because he knew that dogs are not friendly to the Cat Family. He came running very fast, with his fur all bristling, and when he reached the naughty dog he arched his back and spit at him *five times without stopping*. The dog was so frightened that he turned back his ears and ran even faster than Peter, who chased after him. He soon disappeared behind a wood pile. Then

PLAY DAYS

Peter came back and found Polly crying in a corner of the fence. Peter took her dainty little handkerchief and dried her tears.

“Don’t cry!” he said. “The next time a cross little dog comes near just spit at him as I did. How funny he looked with his little stumpy tail! Oh my!” laughed Peter.

But Polly did not laugh at all; and after that she never got lost or scared any more, because she always stayed quite close to Peter.

SCHOOL DAYS

AT LENGTH school days came for Peter and Polly. They set off together every morning. First they went through a big field, then through a hole in the fence, and then along a little crooked path to the schoolhouse. On their way they talked over their lessons, for Polly studied very hard, and Peter had a great many ideas of his own. There was to be a spelling match this particular



Polly on her way to school

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morning, and Polly was having a hard time over some of the words.

"I think words are very queer, anyway," said Peter. "Just think what a big, long word 'grasshopper' is for that tiny green fellow with spindle legs; and what a little wee word 'cow' is for that big creature with a long tail and horns. It's very strange."

"Oh, Peter, how funny you are!" said Polly. "I never thought of that."

"Of course the ant, the bee, and the fly," continued Peter, "all have names of the right size. I don't



Polly studied very hard

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see how they made such a mistake over 'grasshopper'."

"What would you call him?" asked Polly, who thought Peter was the cleverest kitten in the whole kingdom.

"Why," said Peter, puckering his brows, "I'd — I'd call him 'Pip'!"

"Oh!" exclaimed Polly, tripping along delightedly, "that's a lovely name, Peter. How did you ever think of it?"

"That's easy enough," answered Peter, tossing his head and thinking how very bright Polly was growing to be. "When I grow up I intend

SCHOOL DAYS

to write a dictionary, and every word will fit. A big tree will be a 'treopidus'; and a little tree ——”

“Peter,” asked Polly, almost in a whisper, “what would you call the earth?”

Peter hesitated a moment, then he said: “I’d always write ‘earth’ with a period after it—then everybody would know it was an abbreviation.”

“What would it stand for?”

“All the letters in the alphabet written backward,” declared Peter, and wrote it on his pad for Polly to see. This the way it looked:

“Earthzyxwvutsrqponmlkjihgfedcba.”

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"But nobody could pronounce it," objected Polly.

"Of course not," said Peter; "that's the beauty of it!" Just then they came to the hole in the fence.

Peter held Polly's books and helped her through the fence, as he always did every morning. Then they ran down the little crooked path to the schoolhouse.

Peter sat in the first seat of the third row, and Polly sat just behind him. The master wore a brown suit, a green cravat, and spectacles. Peter thought he would wear spec-

SCHOOL DAYS

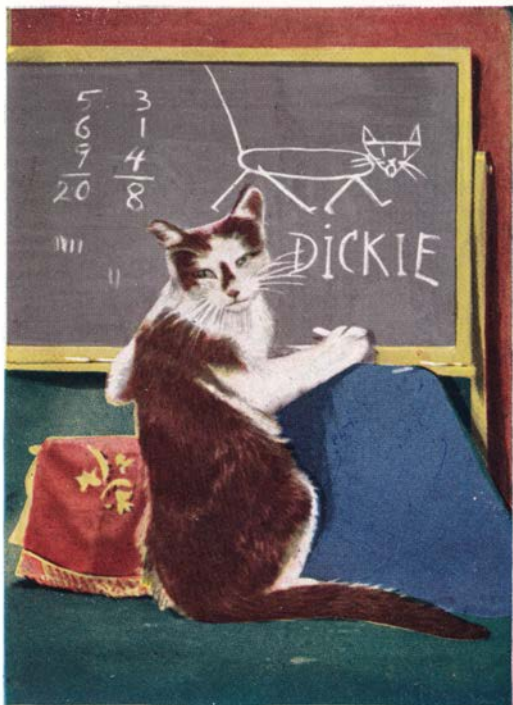
tacles, too, when he grew up, for once he had seen Master Longtail without his and he didn't look nearly so wise and imposing. Peter thought then that he would not be a bit afraid to tell him about throwing a ball through the cellar window and asking permission to get it; but at that moment Master Longtail put on his spectacles again, and Peter just opened his book and studied as hard as he could.

Many things happened at school. Once when Peter was doing some arithmetic on the blackboard a bad kitten, named Dickie Gray, pulled

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his tail. Peter was so cross that he slapped Dickie with his paw and then drew a funny picture of him on the blackboard. Master Long-tail saw it all, and that day neither Dickie nor Peter had any recess.

On this particular morning, when the spelling match was called, all the kittens stood in two rows, one on each side of the room. Peter was chosen captain of his line, and Polly stood just about in the middle of the other. The first word was spelled correctly by Flossie Flinders, who stood at the head of Polly's line.



Peter drew a funny picture of him on the blackboard

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Then "Grain," said Master Long-tail.

"G-r-a-n-e," spelled Tabitha Tibbet.

"Next!" shouted Master Long-tail.

Polly's heart beat faster. She knew that word. Peter had told her it was just like "rain" with a "g" in front of it.

Down, down, down the line came the word straight to Polly. She gave a little laugh.

"G-r-a-i-n," spelled Polly, and went up next to head.

Peter looked over and smiled

SCHOOL DAYS

proudly, and Polly's little heart beat faster than ever.

"Cream," said Master Longtail to the other side.

"C-r-e-e-m," spelled Peter.

"Next!" shouted the master.

"C-r-e-m-e," spelled Tommy Tip-toes.

"C-r-e-m," spelled Benny Blinker.

"C-r-i-e-m," spelled Sammy Silvertail.

Polly's heart kept sinking lower and lower. Soon it would be in her boots, she thought. But no. Down, down, down, travelled the word clear to the end of the line,

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spelled in every possible fashion but the right one, and Peter was saved!

He smoothed out the pucker in his forehead, and Polly purred happily, but her head was still dizzy with excitement.

"Grasshopper," announced the master to Polly's side.

"G-r-a-s-h-o-p-e-r," spelled Flossie Flinders.

Polly didn't hear her; she was busy watching Peter chase a fly across the window pane.

"Grasshopper," said Master Longtail suddenly to Polly.

SCHOOL DAYS

“P-i-p,” spelled Polly, and every single, solitary person laughed, except Peter, who looked very much embarrassed, and the schoolmaster.

“Take your seat!” commanded Master Longtail; and Polly cried bitterly.

Peter tried to explain, but Master Longtail would not listen, and although Peter spelled down everybody in the whole room, he was not a bit proud — not a bit, or happy either—because of Polly. But Polly was delighted and said she didn’t care at all so long as Peter won.

COURTING DAYS

LADY TORTOISESHELL was very aristocratic. She always wore a lace collar and a coral pin. When she went to a party she put on a dainty frilled cap, and in summer she carried a fan.

Although Peter called every evening to see Polly he always had to send in his card. It read:

SIR PETER FURRYCOAT, Rambler Road, Catville



Peter called every evening to see Polly

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The maid, Kitty, carried it to Lady Tortoiseshell on a silver tray. Then Lady Tortoiseshell came downstairs, with her silk train rustling behind her. As she stood in the parlour door she would say:

“Good evening, Peter Furrycoat.”

Peter would bow and say “Good evening, Lady Tortoiseshell. I hope you are well. Is Miss Polly Primtoes at home?”

“Thank you, Peter Furrycoat,” Lady Tortoiseshell would answer. “I have a pain in my right forepaw and a twinge in my left ear, but I will call Polly Primtoes.”

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Peter would bow again and remain standing until Lady Tortoiseshell disappeared. Polly was usually listening at the top of the stairs, but one evening she was not quite ready. She waited to put on her best bow of lavender ribbon and to brush her eyelashes. She looked very pretty, indeed, when she finally came into the parlour. Peter thought so, too, and wished Tommy Tiptoes would not come to call that evening, as he was very apt to do.

Polly sat in a green plush rocker and told Peter all about her visit that day with her cousins on a



One evening Polly was not quite ready

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nearby farm, and how she and Flossie Flinders had found a little stray kitten and had taken it home to its parents. Peter told Polly about the dispute between Sammy Silvertail and a cat across the border. They each claimed a certain barn in which to hunt mice. Peter thought Sammy Silvertail was going to take it to court and hoped that he, Peter, would get the case, for Peter, you should know, now had the degree of A. C., "Attorney for Cats." He and Polly had so many things to discuss that he found it hard to leave early. In-

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deed it was shockingly late when he went home.

So the next morning, when Lady Tortoiseshell knocked at Polly's door and called, "Polly, breakfast is almost ready," Polly was asleep and did not hear her. A little later Lady Tortoiseshell knocked again and called:

"Polly, breakfast is ready!" Still Polly did not hear her. The next time Lady Tortoiseshell knocked she called:

"Polly, *breakfast is over!*" This time Polly heard; so she dressed as quickly as she could and hurried

COURTING DAYS

downstairs. She peeped into the dining room, where Kitty was dusting some tea cups and putting them back on the shelf again. Just then the clock struck nine.

“Where is my bowl of bread and milk?” asked Polly.

“In the pantry, Miss,” answered Kitty. “Lady Tortoiseshell ordered it put there.”

So Polly had to eat her breakfast all alone in the pantry, which she thought was very hard, but I think she was lucky to get any at all, don't you?

The next evening when Peter

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came Polly suggested that they have a game of chess. Lady Tortoiseshell was very fond of chess, and had taught both Polly and Peter how to play. After they had each been playing very earnestly for a while Polly said:

“I saw Tommy Tiptoes to-day. Just as I was coming out of Madame Ann Gora’s shop it started to rain, and I had on my best bonnet. Tommy Tiptoes came along and held his umbrella over me all the way home and ——”

Peter frowned and suddenly upset some of the chessmen on the board.



Peter frowned and suddenly upset some of the chessmen

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"You are not very polite, Peter," remarked Polly.

"I'm tired of chess," said Peter, pushing back his chair and still frowning.

"Peter!" exclaimed Polly, rising from her chair in astonishment. "I think you are very *impolite*!"

"Excuse me, Polly, I suppose Tommy Tiptoes would behave better," he answered.

"I am sure he would," said Polly, wondering what Tommy Tiptoes had to do with it.

"It is getting late," said Peter

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stiffly, "and it is still raining. Good night, Polly."

"Good night," answered Polly proudly, and waited until she heard Peter close the door. Then she sat down and wept.

"Oh, Peter! Peter!" she cried, "why did we play that stupid game? I never did like it! I wish Aunt Tortoiseshell ——"

Just at that moment Lady Tortoiseshell stepped into the room. She, too, had heard Peter close the door.

"Hoity, toity! what's all this?" she asked.



Then Polly sat down and wept

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“Oh, Aunt Tortoiseshell,” sobbed Polly, “the — the chessmen are all spilled!”

“And Peter didn’t wait to pick them up? Where are his manners?” demanded Lady Tortoiseshell, as though Polly had them hidden in her pocket.

“Oh, Aunt Tortoiseshell, Peter — Peter just forgot! He has *beautiful* manners.”

“Umph!” said Lady Tortoiseshell, and bade poor Polly go to bed.

The next day Peter was gloomy, and when evening came he decided not to call upon Polly. He finally

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strolled past the house, however, on the other side of the road. As he did so he saw Tommy Tiptoes, who was carrying a new cane, ascend Polly's steps and ring the bell. But very soon Tommy Tiptoes appeared again and walked rapidly down the road. Polly had not seen him, for she had a bad headache.

"Aha!" thought Peter, "what does that mean?"

The next minute he was standing on Polly's very steps and ringing the bell. Kitty opened the door as usual, holding a silver tray. Peter felt in his pocket, then he realized



Polly had a bad headache

PETER AND POLLY

that he had not expected to call upon Polly.

“I’ve — I’ve forgotten my card,” he stammered. “Just say that I am here.”

Kitty was wondering whether she dared announce a visitor without a card to Lady Tortoiseshell. Lady Tortoiseshell was very particular about such things. But Kitty was spared the difficulty, for she met Polly at the top of the stairs.

“Is it Sir Peter Furrycoat?” she whispered.

Kitty nodded.

“I shall be down — presently,”

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said Polly, and to Kitty's surprise, returned to her room.

Kitty would have been more surprised had she peeped through the keyhole, for on a low stool sat Polly calmly addressing a little clock which she held in her lap.

"He deserves some punishment," she was saying. "I shall not go down for fifteen minutes."

In the parlour sat Peter also watching a clock, only this one happened to be on the mantel. Peter glanced every few seconds toward the door. At exactly six minutes past eight he imagined he

PETER AND POLLY

heard Polly's step on the stairs; at nine minutes past he thought he heard the rustle of her dress; at eleven minutes past he was sure he saw her shadow; and at fourteen minutes past he actually turned the face of the tantalizing little clock toward the wall, and sat back in his chair resignedly. So when Polly really appeared promptly at fifteen minutes past eight Peter was not expecting her.

"Good evening, Peter," spoke Polly, coolly from the doorway.

Peter stood up immediately.

"Good evening, Polly. I called

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to see if you would go for a saucer of cream. It's — it's such a beautiful evening."

"After the rain," said Polly.

"Yes," said Peter, and made an heroic effort. "Polly, I am very sorry I was so cross over Tommy Tiptoes ——" he began.

"Tommy Tiptoes!" exclaimed Polly. "He didn't upset the chessmen."

"He did," said Peter bluntly. And although he contradicted her, this time Polly did not tell him he was impolite. Instead she purred merrily.



Peter treated Polly to a saucer of cream

COURTING DAYS

“Oh, Peter, how foolish you are!” she answered. “But I shall enjoy a saucer of cream. I’ll get my bonnet and shawl.”

Kitty would have been even more surprised had she peeped through the keyhole into Polly’s room this time, for Polly was standing before the mirror purring and exclaiming:

“Tommy Tiptoes! Tommy Tiptoes! My gracious, how funny! Dear Peter,” she added, tying her bonnet under her chin, and went downstairs looking prettier than ever.

“Aunt Tortoiseshell is greatly ex-

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cited," announced Polly to Peter the next evening, when he called.

"What's the matter?" asked Peter.

"A very strange thing has happened," said Polly. "Last evening, when Aunt Tortoiseshell left the parlour, everything was in its place on the mantel-shelf. She remembers looking at it particularly; and this morning, when she came downstairs, the clock was turned to the wall! Aunt Tortoiseshell says it is very mysterious. She declares something is going to happen."

"Good or bad?" asked Peter, who had read law, you remember,

COURTING DAYS

and had learned that it is sometimes wise to be silent.

“I don’t know,” said Polly.
“Which do you think, Peter?”

“Good,” answered Peter, “for the happier we are the less we think of time. It is very easy to read that riddle.”

“Do tell Aunt Tortoiseshell that,” said Polly. “It will ease her mind.”

But Peter’s thoughts were not with Lady Tortoiseshell, as his next remark proved.

“Polly,” he said, as they both sat comfortably by the hearth, “I’m growing hungry for roast mouse.”

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Polly only turned and looked at him in a puzzled fashion.

“With catnip sauce,” he added significantly.

“Peter,” said Polly, “you have a wonderful memory. Now, I had forgotten all about the dish.”

“But don’t you think it would be good?” persisted Peter.

“Ye — es,” agreed Polly faintly, and looked into the fire.

“Polly,” cried Peter joyously, “I believe you are hungry too! Oh, Polly! Polly!”

Thereupon Peter kissed Polly, and as every one knows, when one cat



Thereupon Peter kissed Polly

PETER AND POLLY

kisses another, it is a truly sign — a sign that they are going to be married.

“I knew something would happen,” declared Lady Tortoiseshell, when Peter and Polly told her the great news. “Well, my dears, I give you my blessing. Kitty! Where’s Kitty?”

“Here, Lady Tortoiseshell,” answered Kitty, coming in from the pantry.

“Miss Polly’s going to have a wedding! We must begin dusting at once. Start in the northeast corner of the attic and ——!”

“Oh, Aunt Tortoiseshell,” laughed

COURTING DAYS

Polly. "Wait until we have bidden the guests. Besides, there will be some sewing to do."

"That's true!" exclaimed Lady Tortoiseshell, and immediately sent Kitty to purchase three dozen papers of needles!

"Peter," said Polly one evening, "Aunt Tortoiseshell has given me a beautiful lace veil. She found it in a chest in the attic and it belonged to somebody long, long ago. But she never wore it because something happened. Do you suppose it will bring bad luck?"

PETER AND POLLY

“No!” answered Peter promptly.
“Don’t you know that every bride
should wear

“ ‘Something old and something new,
Something borrowed and something
blue?’ ”

“Sure enough; then the veil will
be just the thing. I asked Aunt
Tortoishell if the poor lady died,
and she said ‘No! she wasn’t so
foolish!’ in that short way of hers,
and I didn’t dare ask any more
questions. But I would love to
know her history. Oh, Peter, isn’t
it romantic?”

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“Very,” said Peter, who had grown rather thoughtful.

“Perhaps she lived in an old castle,” continued Polly, “and perhaps her lover was killed. Oh, Peter! I’m glad you never were killed!”

And thereupon Aunt Tortoiseshell was forgotten.

THE WEDDING DAY

AT LAST the wedding day arrived. It was spring, and Cherry Lane was gay with blossoms. The wedding guests came in their best frills and tuckers — the ladies carrying silk parasols and the gallants silver-headed canes. Lady Tortoiseshell's house had clean curtains at every window, and the walls and mantels were prettily decorated with pussy-willows.

Parson Jeremiah Whiskers per-



Peter and Polly on their wedding day

PETER AND POLLY

formed the ceremony, and Polly was a lovely bride in her first train dress and old lace veil. Peter looked very fine in a new suit with silver buttons, and purred proudly as the guests crowded around to congratulate them both. All their friends were there, even Master Longtail, who, now that he knew the story, teased Peter about his dictionary.

After the ceremony a fine supper was served. Parson Whiskers took Lady Tortoiseshell to the bride's table. Tommy Tiptoes took Tabitha Tibbet; Benny Blinker took Flossie Flinders; and Sammy Silvertail took



After the ceremony a fine supper was served

PETER AND POLLY

Miss Muffet, who had recently come to Catville, and was very popular. Later there was dancing, for Lady Tortoiseshell had engaged three fiddlers, two harpists, and a fluter.

Peter and Polly received many lovely gifts. Best of all, Peter's father and mother gave them a little six-room house in which to live, and Lady Tortoiseshell presented them with a beautiful chest like the one she kept in her attic. Tommy Tiptoes, Benny Blinker, and Sammy Silvertail had together sent them a china cream set; Master Longtail had sent them a silver

THE WEDDING DAY

mouse-platter; Flossie Flinders had given Polly a pretty looking-glass; and Tabitha Tibbet had made her a pink satin cushion.

Peter and Polly were delighted with everything, and thought there had never been a prettier wedding in Catville. When they went away all the cats threw funny old shoes after them for luck, and even the little kittens threw their slippers.

HOUSEHOLD DAYS

POLLY was a very tidy house-keeper and did all her own work. On Monday she washed and hung the clothes out on the line to dry; on Tuesday she ironed and was very careful not to leave even a wrinkle in Peter's shirts and handkerchiefs. Lady Tortoiseshell had taught her how to air the beds before making them, and had told her always to have a clean duster ready for the



Polly did all her own work



Polly hung the clothes out on the line to dry



Polly was very careful not to leave even a wrinkle
in Peter's clothes



Polly aired the beds every morning

HOUSEHOLD DAYS

furniture. So Polly got along very well with her housekeeping — all except the cooking. She sometimes wished Lady Tortoiseshell would come that she might ask her whether to use sugar or salt.

One evening, when Peter came home, she met him at the door, wearing a gingham apron.

“Oh, Peter!” she cried, “I’ve made a fig pudding and forgotten the figs!”

Peter laughed.

“I’m glad it was the figs and not the pudding you forgot, Polly.”

“But it won’t be good,” she protested



Polly sometimes wished Lady Tortoiseshell
would come

HOUSEHOLD DAYS

“How do you know?” asked Peter. “You have not tasted it.” When at supper he declared it was a famous pudding, and ate every single bit in his saucer.

Another evening Peter was later than usual getting home. Polly was watching at the window, and he finally came along the road limping.

“What’s the matter?” called Polly, running on to the porch.

“I’ve hurt my foot,” answered Peter. “I think there’s a piece of glass in it.”

PETER AND POLLY

“Mercy!” exclaimed Polly. “We’ll send for Benny Blinker.”

Benny was now the best doctor in Catville. He came hurrying along, carrying his medicine case with him. He examined Peter’s foot.

“It’s a very bad cut,” he said. “We must have some bandages.”

Polly ran to Lady Tortoiseshell’s to get the bandages. Lady Tortoiseshell was having company to supper, but she hurried upstairs and got some strips of old muslin.

The next day she came to see Peter.

HOUSEHOLD DAYS

“My, my!” she exclaimed, “you always were a lucky cat.”

“I don’t call this luck,” said Peter.

“I should think not!” said Polly.

“Umph!” said Lady Tortoiseshell. “You have four feet and have hurt only one of them. It’s quite possible you might have hurt them all!” which was very true, you know, so Peter laughed and felt better.

After a while Polly was both busier and happier than ever, for she had Littlepeter and Littlepolly to feed and care for. They were



"I don't call this luck," said Peter

HOUSEHOLD DAYS

both very tiny and very cunning. Littlepeter had a funny little black spot on his nose, just as his father had, and Littlepolly was even prettier than her mother.

“They are the dearest kittens in the whole world!” Polly would say a dozen times a day; and Peter would purr proudly, for, although he did not say so, I’m sure he thought it, too.

They grew so rapidly that it kept Polly busy letting out tucks in Littlepolly’s petticoats and making Littlepeter new trousers. She always sewed in the evenings while she and Peter sat together and talked.



“They are the dearest kittens in the whole world!” Polly would say

HOUSEHOLD DAYS

“Whoever thought I’d be out-rivalled by a needle who has only one eye and always has to borrow a tail!” teased Peter, who claimed that Polly paid more attention to her sewing than she did to him.

Polly purred.

“You always were a tease, Peter,” she answered, and took another stitch in Littlepolly’s petticoat.

Lady Tortoiseshell came every Wednesday to spend the day. Littlepeter and Littlepolly’s were always watching at the window for her, because she usually had a story to tell

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them when she came. They always tumbled excitedly downstairs to greet her, and after she had kissed them both, they would cry:

“Aunt Torsie, tell us a story!
Tell us a story!”

So as soon as she took off her bonnet and got settled comfortably in a big chair with Littlepolly on her lap and Littlepeter on a stool at her feet, she would begin. And this is one of the stories she told — the one they liked best. It is called:

“WHY THERE ARE SO FEW WHITE
MICE IN THE WORLD.”

HOUSEHOLD DAYS

“A great many years ago,” Aunt Torsie would begin, “all the mice in the world were white. That did not make so much difference in summer; but in winter, when the ground was all covered with snow, it did make a difference — a great big one — because no one could see the naughty mice as they scampered about; they and the snow were just one colour, and nobody could catch them. It was very inconvenient, too, for then the cats had to depend mostly on traps, and that made marketing rather dangerous.

“There was one wise old cat in

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town who spent a whole summer catching mice, but he never killed one. Instead he chased them all into a big barn and closed the door. As the barn was all made of hard mortar and stone, not a single mouse could gnaw his way out. My, what a squeaking and scratching they kept up! The neighbours thought Master Wisecat had gone crazy, but he just shook his head and smiled and said nothing.

“He was very busy all through the autumn. No one saw him except on Sunday, when he went to church. And still he said nothing

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— nothing at all. But when winter came again, and the snow lay on the ground, Master Wisecat opened the barn door, and — behold! a whole army of brown and gray mice came scampering out. They tumbled over each other on the door-sill and jumped out of the window which Master Wisecat had opened also. They ran everywhere, with their long tails trailing behind them in the snow. But they couldn't hide so easily, for, of course, every cat and kitten in town could see them plainly in their dark coats of brown and gray.

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Then all the inhabitants gathered around Master Wisecat and cheered him heartily.

“‘How did you do it?’ they cried.

“‘Just painted them,’ he replied blandly. And ever since then their children and their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren have been just like them. It was only the few timid mice that hid in the garrets and cellars that summer who escaped. Their descendants are still white; but then, you know, there are so few of them.”

FIRESIDE DAYS

BUT Time never tarries even for the happiest of cats, so Peter and Polly both grew older. Then they liked nothing better than to sit by the fire and talk over their own lives and those of their children. Many things had happened during all these years. Peter now carried a cane and wore spectacles — as he had once envied Master Longtail for doing. Polly wore spectacles also and a



Peter now carried a cane and wore spectacles

FIRE SIDE DAYS

little frilled cap; but she never seemed to be old. She still read the newspaper and knew all that was going on in Catville. Littlepeter and Littlepolly were both grown up — just think of it! Littlepeter had now succeeded to his father's practice. Littlepolly was married and had a cozy house of her own. But she lived near by and came every day to see her father and mother.

“Peter,” said Polly one day as they sat by the fire, “do you know that the sixteenth will be our wedding anniversary?”



Polly still read the newspaper

FIRESIDE DAYS

"No!" said Peter, who never did remember dates very well.

"It will be our silver wedding anniversary, you know," continued Polly.

"I can't believe it!" exclaimed Peter, and sat thinking a minute.

"Polly," he said suddenly, "let's have a party!"

Polly seemed surprised.

"You don't mean it?" she asked.

"Why not? We'll invite everybody that was at our wedding, and — everybody else besides!"

"I should need a new gown," said Polly, "and ——"

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"Of course," said Peter, who was already writing the list of names on his pad.

"Peter," said Polly, "let's keep it a secret until the invitations are out. It will be such a surprise."

"That's a good idea," said Peter, smiling. "Gracious, Polly, I feel as though we were kittens again, playing a game in Lady Tortoiseshell's garden!"

So the invitations were sent and it was truly a wonderful party. Gray cats, white cats, yellow cats, black cats, tabbies and mousers, and climbers and prowlers — all the

FIRE SIDE DAYS

inhabitants of Catville came to the celebration.

Peter and Polly stood in the hall by the queer old clock that had belonged to Grandfather Sharpclaws and greeted one and all as they arrived. Lady Tortoiseshell now walked with a cane and had grown rather deaf, but when she received the invitation she sent word:

“I have a pain in my right forepaw and a twinge in my left ear, but I’ll come to the party.” And she did.

FINIS

