

DESULTORY NOTES ON CATS



A N · E S S A Y

—CATS WERE FIRST invented in the garden of Eden. According to the Rabbins, Eve had a pet cat, called Pusey, and from that circumstance arose a sect of cat-worshippers among the Eastern nations, called Puseyites, a sect which, it is said, is still in existence somewhere. When rats began to be troublesome, Adam gave the first pair of cats six lessons in the art of catching them; and since then the knowledge has been retained. The Greeks spelled cat with a *k*, and the French put an *h* into it; the pure English scholar will not heed such ignorance, but will keep to the right orthography. In the time of Chaucer, cataract was spelt caterect; but what analogy there is between a cat getting up in the world and water falling down in it, it is difficult to say. The introduction of the cat into cat-aplasm, category, &c., is unauthorized; it is without the knowledge or consent of the parties, and has no meaning. Cat-nip, on the contrary, has a signification; it bears the same relation to the animal economy of the cat that Pease's hoarhound candy does to that of the animal economy of man. It is mentioned that a gentleman in the pursuit of knowledge under difficulties, wishes to know what is the reason that cats which have that within them which contains such divine

melody, should make such execrable music themselves? The answer to this, perhaps, is simple. Cats are modest. They make no show of accomplishments. You never hear of a learned cat. Learned pigs, bears and dogs, who can tell what time of day it is, and how many spectators are present (which last is easily told, to the sorrow of the showman,) are common. But who ever heard of a learned cat? A cat pretends to no knowledge, not even to that of the piano and singing. If you kill her you may prepare a physical essence, so to speak, which, if stretched and resined, may have a divine effect. It is probably the departed spirit refined down to a single string, and making simple melody, whereas, in the original, the strings were interlinked and confused, so that they produced necessarily discordant sounds; to say nothing of their being vulgarly alive, and in a raw state of nature.

This explanation seems clear. A young cat or kitten is graceful; her chief occupation is chasing her tail, but her tail will not stay chased. Very little children adore very little cats. But when the children, if boys, grow bigger, and learn the humanities at school, all about Draco, Alexander and Cæsar, they change towards cats, and kill them whenever sport prompts them to do so. Among the saws, is one that persecution makes that thrive which it seeks to subdue. This is a slight mistake. In the case of rats, which cats persecute, persecution ever thins their numbers. It is only when persecution is half way, or has a spice of charity, that it does what the saw says. Not only in the case of rats, but of Indians, is this shown to be a false saw. The Indians have been persecuted with fire, whiskey and sword, and they are nearly exterminated. It is only when the cat is in love that she makes a fool of herself. It is then, that, forgetting all other considerations in the fullness of her heart, the cat plays, unconsciously, the troubadour. (We apply the feminine gender and pronoun to cats, because all cats are she; in the same way that all sluts and mares are called he, a peculiar beauty of the English language.) The serenading cat makes a noise like an infant with the cholic, for which it is often mistaken. Both sexes of cats sport whiskers and moustaches; whether the actual she cats will ever change the fashion, as it applies to them, after it has so long prevailed, is doubtful. One of the brightest pages in English Annals, is the History of Whittington and his Cat. We know a boy, who has a cat, and says he intends hereafter to be Mayor of Philadelphia. Not the slightest objection to it.

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