

Boney, however, was a wise little cat, and having got a peep into a house that promised more comforts than his various homes in the alley, did not intend to leave it till he proved its hospitality further; so when Mimpsy was warned for the third time by her mother to be off home, and had got up to go, the kitten leaped out of her pinafore in which it was being wrapped, and ran into the house. Mimpsy went after him. He ran into the hall and, unseen by Mrs. Murphy, Mimpsy tiptoed in, too. Up two steps, up four, up ten, ran Boney, and after him went Mimpsy, thinking that he would let her catch him at every step; but Boney was quite chirked up after his lunch, and just as she was about to put her hand on him away he would bound, tail in air, and a look of mischief in his big eyes. 'Oh, dear,' thought Mimpsy, 'where is he going? If I can only get him before anyone finds out we're here!'

Boney gamboled along the upper hall in high spirits. He had never walked on such soft floors before—he had not known till now that there were such things as carpets—and he saw an open door ahead of him with pretty, soft mats laid down here and there on the other side of it. In he went and, looking around, saw a beautiful sofa near the window. The pillows on it were of silk, pink, blue and gold, and with the prettiest tassels on them! Just the things to play with! And he knocked them up and down till Mimpsy, trembling at her boldness, came near. Then he gave a jump and, monkey fashion, went half way to the top of the window by way of the lace curtains. Mimpsy burst into tears.

'Oh, dear, Boney,' she sobbed, 'do come down and go home with me.'

Boney sprang down and looked at her invitingly, as if to say, 'Why don't you come and get me?' and Mimpsy rushed forward to seize him, but with a leap, he landed on the bed—and then Mimpsy saw, for the first time, the pale face on the pillows.

She held her breath! Oh, dear! this must be Mrs. Gray's sick son for whom the door-bell had been muffled and the voice of everyone in the house hushed into whispers. Trembling with fear as to the great amount of harm she had done she stood, her hands wrapped around and around in her pinafore and misery in her face.

Something far different from fear showed itself on Boney's saucy countenance. Gaily he gamboled up and down the ripples of the counterpane over Victor's very toes—and Victor—burst into a laugh!

'Little girl,' he asked feebly, 'is that your kitty?'

'Oh, please, yes, but I can't catch him to take him away!' she gasped, and once more, with outstretched hand, she crept towards the kitten. Boney turned his head and cast a withering glance at the coaxing hand and was off the bed like a shot. Around and around the room he tore like a mad thing, leaping over stools, jumping on the velvet chairs and down again, and at last, with a bound, up on the neadrest of the sofa again, at the best amusement of all, knocking the tassels of the dainty pillows about with his paw, while he kept sharp lookout from the corner of his eye for the enemy.

'What fun!' his whisking tail said very plainly and up the lace curtains he clam-

bered as Mimpsy came near. She shook the curtain gently, and Boney had to leap for life or tumble in her arms. He was equal to it, however, and shot clear over her head on the top of the low footboard of the bed, where spitting and spluttering he scrambled to an unright position, and sat looking at the sick young man with all the dignity and wisdom a ragged little rapsallion of an alley cat could scare up. For the second time Victor burst into a laugh.

Then his mother came hurrying in, and Mimpsy began to cry loudly, while the cause of this trouble turned his ears back as far as he could get them, which gave him an air of great surprise, and gazed up at the wall, the curtains, the pictures, anywhere but at the people around him, by which unruffled indifference he made himself appear the most innocent little rascal ever looked upon.

Victor held up a poor weak white finger and stayed the exclamations on his mother's lips. 'One of my alley friends, mother,' he whispered, as she bent over him; 'and there's another,' and he pointed to the cat, who took on a beautiful expression of innocence and goodness.

'Raise me up,' were the next words he said, 'and tell her not to cry,' meaning Mimpsy.

So the poor mother put a pillow under his shoulders and then went to poor Mimpsy with words of reassurance; while Boney made up his mind that there was a very soft spot higher up in the bed which would be just the right place for a tired kitten; so up he walked, tickling Victor's toes on the way with his uncertain wanderings along the bed coverings. Before he got to the cuddling down place, under the pillow edge, he saw a handkerchief that had been dropped on the bed by Victor's mother, and he pawed it around so curiously and suspiciously that Victor smiled again in glee. He was very weak, of course, but the faint flush on his cheeks and the brightness of his eyes gladdened his mother's heart, and she liked the little, saucy kitten that had called so much life back to her boy, and she got a ball of cotton and tied a string to it, and then wasn't Boney in his glory! Backwards and forwards, up and down, with all the somersaults he had ever practised on the roofs, after the ball as it swung to and fro, he went, and even Mimpsy forgot the whipping she was likely to get at home and joined in the merriment.

But presently Boney felt a pang under his ribs and he gave a hungry miaouw. He had played his cold lunch away and it was time to go to the kitchen again.

Victor understood. 'Get him something good, mother,' he whispered. 'Get Mimpsy some, too.'

Then he enjoyed the pleasure of seeing two hungry little creatures feasting on such dainties as they had hardly dreamed of before—jellied chicken, custard, creamy milk and eggs beaten up together; Mimpsy finishing up on white grapes.

Before they were through Victor fell asleep from weakness, and then his little unbidden guests were taken home, but neither were even scolded when Victor's mother told of how the sick son had smiled and talked a little for the first time in many days. Moreover, Mimpsy was invited to come again in the morning and

to be sure to bring Boney with her! Perhaps Boney wasn't watched all the rest of the afternoon and evening! He was shut up in a box over night so he couldn't run away, and he was wrapped so tightly in Mimpsy's apron the next morning on the way to the avenue house that when he was let out his fur was so ruffled up that he looked just like an old moth-eaten muff! Milk and cold chicken quite restored him to good nature, however, and then he followed Mimpsy quite willingly up stairs to the pretty room again.

The doctor was there and he stood for a while to watch Boney's antics, and when he went away he said to Victor's mother, 'That is a wonderful cat—he has saved your boy's life.' Then the little alley cat had a new experience. He was picked up in a lady's arms, pressed against her soft cheek, and felt tears of joy dropping on his rough fur, which so sobered him that he crept into a wrinkle of the bedclothes under Victor's hand and sang himself to sleep with a rasping, roaring purr that set the listeners to laughing again.

'Oh, mother, I had really forgotten all about my alley people,' Victor murmured, as he lay with one white hand on Boney's happy head and the other arm around his mother's neck, for mamma had laid her face on his pillow to hide the rest of the tears that Boney had objected to. 'I must hurry and get well and strong again for their sake. I can do so much now with Aunt Betsy's money to make the alley a better place. I don't know how I could have forgotten. Why, to live to do good to my old friends will be far better than winning a gold medal. Mimpsy shall go to school, we shall have such a pretty kindergarten room, shan't we, motherie?' Then he added, 'Send to the grocery, mother, dear, for the Thanksgiving feasts for them. Oh, I must get up—how I wish I could get up!'

But Boney didn't wish so. He was so comfortable! How he stretched out his thin legs and curled them up again in the blissful warmth he had never known before. Oh, if he could but live here all the rest of his life!

He did. Mrs. Gray adopted him and got Mimpsy a lovely little dog to take Boney's place in her heart, which quite suited her, for the dog learned to carry her school books right to the door of the school and to call for her again when lessons were done to accompany her home. Boney could never have done this—indeed, he liked looking after his own comfort first, and if you could see him now, basking in the sunshine in the drawing-room window of Victor's home, a great, lazy, soft and very thick-furred cat, weighing twelve pounds and not an ounce less, you would say he had looked after it pretty well. But doesn't he deserve every bit of his happiness? Go down to Victor street (it used to be Slimmon's alley, mind you), and peep into the little, cosy brick cottages, the kindergarten room done in blue and gold tintings, the factory at the end of the block, where every man living in the street has been given good work and good wages, and ask the rosy children, the happy mothers, the grateful fathers, if Boney didn't do it all, just by that saucy jerk of his saucy tail in his gay kittenhood, the day before a Thanksgiving such as Slimmon's alley had never enjoyed before.