

Bespoke the wisdom of his years,
Anon he paused with thoughtful stroke
To part his beard while thus he spoke:
"My son, what hours of secret we
Your faults have caused me none may know.
Since you to thoughtful years have grown,
I now have hopes your wild oats sown,—
"Wild oats" you know's a term man uses
When making virtues of abuses—
You'll honestly strive to understand
The duties that your years demand.
Think not the homely tricks you've learned
Will make folks stare: one thing discerned,
When cats and men first look about them,
Is that the world could do without them.
And furthermore, remember that
You are no vulgar, common cat.
Your ancestors, I have been told.
Were mousers to a lord of old.
Then bring no shame upon the brood
By corresponding with the rude.
Come they, however, in your way
Drop them a courtesy you may.
But with such dignity and state
That shows the lineage of the great.
'Tis difficult at times, I know,
To draw the line 'twixt high and low,
For spiteful Nature made the masses
Resembling much the upper classes.
No doubt, you'll meet with cats whose bearing
Will argue sense and noble rearing,
But bubbles that the surf has made
Display the diamond's ev'ry shade.
'The shallow'st pool reflects the sky
And looks as deep as heaven is high,
Sure cats, then, can't be too discreet
When Nature, even, shows deceit.
By this the other, serious grown,
Replied: "Your council, sir, I own
Is good, but, faith, it strikes me that's
Ungrateful towards the self-made cats,
If they'll be lost, who'll take their places
To teach and save the feline races.
And do it gratis? Such behaviour
Should prompt exceptions in their favour."