

went toward the cellar door, and, as he looked down into the darkness, he shrank back somewhat, but finally mustered up courage like a little man and started down the stairs.

'Here I am, papa, two steps down.'

'All right, little man. Papa is here.'

'Here I am, half-way down, and I can see a little light from the window.'

'That's a brave boy. Go on, and papa will talk to you.'

'Here, papa, I'm clear down now, I'm going over to the barrel. Are you there, papa?'

'Oh, yes, dear, I'm here.'

'Papa, here I am at the barrel. Do you want a big one? I can feel the apples.'

'Yes, yes, my darling; bring papa a big red one.'

'Here, papa, I'm coming up now. I've got two big ones.'

Pretty soon the father heard the hurried footsteps of the manly little fellow on the stairs, and soon a shining face with big blue eyes appeared at the cellar door, and there was Johnnie, with two large red apples, one for papa and one for himself, his little bosom heaving with conscious pride because he had won a great victory.

'I went down into the dark cellar all alone, didn't I, papa?'

'Yes, my darling,' said the father, as he drew the precious child near him and kissed him. 'Papa's little man was very brave to do it.'

'But you talked to me, and that helped me to go down into the dark cellar, didn't it, papa?'

Thus the little fellow gained his victory, because of his faith in his father, and because the father talked to him.

What a lesson for children of larger growth! That father's heart was touched, and, though a minister, he said to himself: 'This precious boy has preached a great sermon to me to-day.' And then he offered up this prayer in his heart:

'Oh, God, help me to make thee as real a help and to trust thee as fully as my boy has trusted me to-day. If thou wilt talk with me, I can go down into the dark experiences of life and fear no evil. Thou, Lord, art a very present help in trouble.'—O. H. Cessna, in 'Young People's Weekly.'

What It Was.

The thirteen black and yellow cats had their opinions on the subject, and the old hen with the big brood of chickens had hers. The cow didn't trouble her head about the matter, and the pig couldn't see over the side of his pen, so it was decided between the cats and the chickens.

'It' was a squat, fat, black-painted decoy duck, made of wood and perfectly flat on the bottom. Some one had painted his eyes white, and his bill a pale pink, in such a skilful fashion that he seemed to be simpering to himself as he squatted in the tall grass beside the dahlia bed.

'A foolish black duck—that's what he is,' said madame the grey hen, and she led her brood of chickens straight up to where he sat in the grass, and all the chickens had a look and a guess.

'He hasn't any feet,' said one.

'And he can't walk,' said another.

'His eyes won't wink,' chirped a third.

'Ho, get up, Mister Duck!' cackled a fourth.

But the decoy duck only smiled serenely, with his wooden head resting on his fat wooden breast, and never budged.

'Wonder if he's good to eat?' queried one of the black cats.

'Tough as leather,' answered a puss whose back looked as if it had been spattered with scrambled eggs.

'I'd like to sink my teeth into him,' ventured McKinley, a fire black puss with shining yellow eyes.

'Well, you'd better not try it,' purred the sportive Angora kitten, Miss Puff, as she jumped into the air after a butterfly that fluttered past.

'You don't dare touch him anyhow,' chuckled the grey hen, who was keeping a little aloof from the assembled cat family.

'You dare me, did I understand?' asked McKinley, a light snapping from his yellow eyes like flame. 'Just watch me.'

At first the hens and the cats did not think McKinley was in earnest, for even those who made a great show of boldness were really afraid of that funny duck with its fixed smile and unwinking eye.

'Stand back, all of you!' sneered McKinley.

Back they all pushed to a safe

distance. The spry young cats dashed up trees and watched from among the leaves.

With his tail the shape of a Christmas tree, the black cat waited, and then made a dash for the poor decoy duck. Not a hen-soul or a cat-soul dared breathe.

Down upon the duck sprang the black cat—

But hens and cats suddenly disappeared—whisk! For from the bushes ran a little boy who had been watching them, and he picked up the duck and ran away with it.

They gossip about the duck a great deal even now, but the black cat will never tell them anything. He is not going to give it away that his fierce foe was made of wood, and hurt his paws, though it hadn't a speck of life.

The little boy took the duck home, and had a beautiful time watching it swim about in the tub. And I really do not blame the cats and hens for being puzzled, for as I watched him with the little boy in the tub, I thought he had a more sprightly eye than many a live duck I've seen on the pond.—'The Examiner.'

The Difference.

(By Mai Stevens.)

A little girl sat by the window one day,

With very cross face, I'm sorry to say,

And cried, as she looked through the clear window-pane:

'I think it's too hateful, this tire some old rain!

I can't go outdoors,
Because it just pours;
I'll have to stay in till it's pleasant again.'

She'd books, this same girl, and she'd games, and she'd toys;
She'd pictures, and paints—oh, she'd plenty of joys;

But, pouting and sulking (of course, all in vain),

She said: 'It's too hateful, this tire some old rain!

I can't go outdoors,
Because it just pours;
I think it might stop, and be pleasant again.'

Now full of delight every leaf, every flower,

As down fell the drops of that charming, cool shower;

Glad robins and bluebirds chirped out a refrain;

The grass danced for joy, and the upspringing grain;

All Nature's dear voice Sang: 'Let us rejoice!

Rejoice in this beautiful, beautiful rain!'

—'The Independent.'