



## MRS. CHINCHILLA.

BY KATE WIGGIN.

MRS. CHINCHILLA was not a lovely lady, with a dress of soft gray and a chinchilla muff and boa. Mrs. Chinchilla was a beautiful cat, with fur like silver-grey satin, and a handsome tail to match. She had a comfortable home in a fine drug-store, with one large bay window to herself and her kittens.

She had three cunning fat dumplings of kittens, all in soft gray like their mother. She didn't like any other color in kittens so well as a quiet lady-like gray; but sometimes they had four snow-white socks on their gray paws. Mrs. Chinchilla didn't mind that, for white socks were really a handsome finish to a gray kitten, though it was a deal of trouble to keep them clean.

At the time my story begins the kits' eyes had been open only a day or two, so Mrs. Chinchilla had to wash them every morning herself. She had the most wonderful tongue! It had in it a hair-brush, a comb, a tooth-brush, a nail-brush, a sponge, a towel, and a cake of soap! And when Mrs. Chinchilla had finished those three little catkins, they were as fresh and sweet, and shiny and clean, as any baby just out of a bath-tub.

One morning, just after the little kits had had their scrub in the sunny bay window, they felt, all at once, old enough to play; and so they began to scramble over each other, and run about between the colored glass jars, and began to chase and bite the ends of their own tails. They had not known they had any tails, and of course it was a charming surprise. Mrs. Chinchilla looked on lazily. It had been a good while since she had felt gay enough to chase *her* tail.

Now, while this was going on, some one came up to the window and looked in. It was the Boy who lived across the street. Mrs. Chinchilla disliked all boys, but she was afraid of this one. Instead of stroking cats, he rubbed their fur the wrong way, and hung tin kettles to their tails, and tied handkerchiefs over their heads.

When Mrs. Chinchilla saw the Boy she humped her back, and said "Sfit!" three times. When the Boy found that she was looking at him, and lashing her tail, and yawning so as to show her sharp white teeth, he suddenly disappeared. So Mrs. Chinchilla gave the kittens their breakfast, and they cuddled themselves into a round ball, and went fast asleep. They were rolled so tightly, and so tied up with their tails, that you couldn't have told whether they were three or six. When their soft purr-r-r-r had died away, Mrs. Chinchilla jumped down out of the window, and went for her morning airing in the back yard. At the same time the druggist passed behind a tall desk to mix some medicine, and the shop was left alone.

Just then the Boy (for he had just stooped out of

sight) rushed in the door quickly, snatched one of the kittens, and ran away with it as fast as he could. Pretty soon Mrs. Chinchilla came back, and of course she counted the kittens the first thing. She always did it. To her surprise and fright she found only two instead of three. She knew she couldn't be mistaken. One chinchilla gone! What should she do?

She had once heard a lady say that there were too many cats in the world, but she had no patience with people who made such wicked speeches. Her kittens had always been so beautiful that they sometimes sold for fifty cents apiece, and none of *them* had ever been drowned.

Mrs. Chinchilla knew in a second just where that kitten had gone. It makes a pussy-cat very quick and wise to train large families of frisky kittens, with very



THE BOY WHO LIVED ACROSS THE STREET.

little help from their father in bringing them up. She knew that Boy had carried off the kitten. Looking at her claws, she found them nice and sharp, and Mrs. Chinchilla slipped out, with one backward glance, as much as to say, "Gone out: will be back soon."

Then she dashed across the street, and waited on the steps of the boy's house. Soon a man came with a bundle, and when the door opened Mrs. Chinchilla walked in. She hadn't any visiting card with her; but then the Boy hadn't left any card when he called for the kitten.

It was a very nice house to hold such a heartless boy. The parlor door was open, but she knew the kitten