

## FOR CHILDREN AT HOME.

By Mary Appplewhite Bacon.

Preparations for the cats' dinner were going on apace. Nan had put three tiny squares of ham and two cubes of bread on each of the flowered china plates, and Lottie was placing them on the low round table with its clean white cloth. Bertha was hunting about the big play-room for the six red chairs in which the cats always sat. Wassy-wees and Janet, the eldest cats in the family, were all ready for dinner. Their pink-tipped ears showed daintily through their lace caps. Eye-bright and Mink had at last resigned themselves to their crimson collars, and Alice had taken in hand the restless Comet, when a faint squeak was heard at the door.

"Bertha, did you shut up those six other cats in the hen-house?" Alice asked, holding Comet firmly between her knees as she tied a narrow blue ribbon around his white neck. "Did you lock the door? You know how you forget things."

"Yes I did," Bertha answered. "That isn't a cat you hear. It isn't anything."

There came another little sound at the door, this time more a whine than a squeak. Nan was at the corner cupboard filling plates for the next table. She dropped her knife ran across the room, and opened the door. Then she gave a little cry, went outside, and shut the door after her. When she came back the cats were at the table and her sisters were deep in the exciting task of keeping each one in its own chair and occupied with its own plate. Wassy-wees and Janet had learned good table manners long ago, but not much could be said for the rest.

"Where on earth have you been, and what is that you've got?" Lottie said, looking up at Nan, who stood in the middle of the floor, her cheeks flushed, her gray eyes shining. She held in her arms a long brindled cat whose bones seemed scarcely covered by its brownish-black fur.

"It's a cat," Nan said excitedly, "a poor starved cat. Somebody got it something to eat quick. Bertha, you do it. There's a bowl of milk there in the cupboard. Don't you all see it's a cat?" she said again.

"I thought it was just a pen-and-ink sketch of one," Alice said provokingly. "It's so black and bony." But Bertha left Comet to his own devices and got the milk and the scattered bits of bread and meat and put them in a tin plate on the hearth. The strange cat leapt from Nan's arms and began to eat ravenously.

Meantime the banquet at the round table came to an end. Wassy-wees and Janet went off in their lace caps to the cushion in the south window; Lottie began to clear the table, and Bertha to relieve Eye-bright and Mink of their unwelcome finery. Alice went over to the fireplace and looked down at Nan severely.

"You know you can't keep that cat, Nan," she said.

Nan drew the ugly stranger a little closer to her.

"How many cats are out in the old hen-house now?"

"Six," Nan answered doggedly.

"And how many in this room?"

"Seven."

"There are six," Alice affirmed loftily. "I don't include that—that animal with our cats."

"He is a cat," Nan contended. "Maybe he's a foreign cat, he's so long. The largest animals are found in Asia and Africa," she quoted.

"This isn't a geography lesson, Nan Lewis. Come back to what we are talking about. How many kittens did Big Tom drown last week?"

Bertha gave a little gasp. She thought that question too cruel. Nan was silent.

"Do you think it is honorable," Alice persisted, "to want to keep this strange cat, this African cat, or whatever it is, when five of our own family, five beautiful Lewis kittens, were drowned last week?"

Nan would not endanger her cause by a direct answer. "It's wrong to be dishonorable, and it's wrong to be hard-hearted," she said. "Good people won't be either."

"We might play he's a visitor and let him stay till supper," suggested Bertha the peacemaker; "and then we can name him Vidmar. We've been wanting to name something Vidmar a long time."

Poor Vidmar had nothing in looks or manners to win him friends, but Nan managed to keep him a week; then it was found that he ate chickens, and Mrs. Lewis ordered Big Tom to take him off to the woods and leave him.

That evening Nan went up the lot where Tom was feeding the horses. "Big Tom," she asked anxiously, "do you know anything about my cat?"

"You don't mean jes one cat, I know," Big Tom answered. "You mean does I know anything about that regiment o' cats out in the ol' hin' ouse. Yes'm, it's a fine regiment, an' keerful about who comes in to 'sociate with it."

"Big Tom," cried Nan wofully, "did you drown Vidmar?"

"Ain't been a cat drowned on this lot in a week," Tom said with conviction. "I don't say how many oughter been drowned."

"Well, where is he then?"

"Where is who?" Tom began, but he could not long resist Nan's persistence, and he finally told her the truth.

"Vidmar doesn't feel out in the woods as you would, Nan," her father said to her that night, trying to soothe her grief. "Cats are not afraid of the dark, and I don't think they mind the rain."

"It isn't just that," Nan said, hiding her face on her father's shoulder and sobbing again.

"What is it then?"

"He will think I did not respect him, because he was a stranger and not like Comet and the rest. He may even think it was I that sent him away." Her shoulders shook under her little white gown.

"Did you ever treat him with disrespect?" her father asked.

"Papa! when he was so poor and shabby and had never had any good times in all his life before!"

"I don't believe he thinks you sent him off," Dr. Lewis said, carrying Nan over to the little bed where Lottie was sleeping soundly; "but to-morrow we will go and see if he has found another home."

They drove quite through the woods the next day and to the little settlement beyond without seeing anything of Vidmar. At last they stopped before a two-room house with strings of red peppers hanging over the rough door and red prince's-feathers growing in the uneven yard. A little negro girl sat on the doorstep in the sun, a long brindled cat asleep in her lap and half covered with her torn apron.

"It's Vidmar, papa," Nan whispered, trembling with excitement. "I just know it is. Tell her to bring him here."

Dr. Lewis stopped his buggy before the gate which was sagging on one hinge. "Have you seen anything of a lost cat around here?" he asked the little girl on the step.

"Yes, sir," little Sally assented glibly. "Dis is hit. Dis was a los' cat. De win' an' de rain druv it home last night. Hit was heap fatter'n 'twas buffo' hit went off, but I knowed it. An' hit knowed me," she added with a comical twist of her small black head. "Maybe you didn't feed it enough," said Dr. Lewis.

"No, sir, I didn't," Sally showed her white teeth. "I wanted hit to ketch rats. I didn't feed it enough, but I's gonten fum dis time on."

The doctor lifted Nan from the buggy. She went into the yard and up to the child on the doorstep, carrying a paper sack full of rolls and fried chicken.

"He's been visiting our cats," Nan said as Vidmar crawled out of Sally's lap and began to rub himself against her dress, whining for her to take him. "I thought he was lost and brought him something to eat. I didn't

## SUMMER COMPLAINTS DEADLY TO LITTLE ONES.

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know he would be at anybody's house when I brought so much," she added apologetically.

Little Sally looked down into the paper sack and her black eyes glistened. "Come back here, Bony-babe," she called to her cat. "Come back here an' let's eat our breakfuss. Ain't hit a good breakfuss, Bony-babe?"

## HOW YOU MAY HELP.

Several years ago some children read in their missionary magazine of five little girls in Africa. Their mother asked: "Would you not like to pray for them?" "Let us choose one," they answered. So they chose one name, "Mgomba."

They did not forget Mgomba. Night after night they asked God to help her to be good. Years passed. One day a missionary from Africa came to their house. "Do you know anything about Mgomba?" they asked.

"Mgomba! why, what do you know about her?" They told her how they had read about her in their little magazine, and had prayed for her so long; and what a wonderful story she had to tell!

Mgomba had been a scholar in this lady's school. She had been disobedient and careless. She would not even try to learn or to please them. But a change came.

"Oh, when was that?" asked the girls, for they were no longer children. The missionary remembered the very month, and—yes, that was the very time—it was when they began to pray for her! Mgomba became a happy christian, and now she is teaching her people about God.

## DURING THE HOT-WAVE.

Only those of us who live in the temperate zone have the health-building advantage of extremes of hot and cold weather. Our physical health and accomplishments, as compared with those who live where it is always warm or always cold, prove the gain of the very conditions about which we are inclined to grumble. It is unquestionably of benefit to us to be plunged suddenly from cold into hot weather, and back again, as we are in our swiftly changing seasons. Just now many of us are meeting the hot-weather test. If we take it as something that is in every way good for us, adapting ourselves sensibly and cheerfully to the weather conditions, we shall reap the benefit that Nature intends, and enter the winter season better off in every way for the summer experiences. We need to take life quietly, move slowly, avoid unnecessary effort, refrain from over-exertion of body or mind, and "keep sweet." All of this we can do if we will. But let us remember that hot weather is endured better if we are busy than if we are idle. Its burden rests heaviest upon those who have no other burden to think about than the heat.—S.S. Times.

The Pharisee's morals were doubtless quite as good as he said they were; it was the publican's confession of failure that won him justification.