POETRY IN THE PRIMARY GRADES.

THE RETIRED CAT.

Who has a pet cat? Hands up. Let us hear some of the things you have noticed about your cat. Is she fond of you? How do you know? Is she quiet and sober, or frisky and mischievous? How old is she? Does she like to be with you, or with other cats, or does she like to be alone? There is a verse that says

"The dog will come when he is called
   The cat will walk away."

Is that true? Where does your cat like to sleep? Do you ever find her sleeping in queer places? A cat that we had liked to curl up in the kitchen dipper, until she got too big. Once we found her asleep in a man's boot, and once we saw a gray tail hanging down from the roller towel, and there was pussy lying in the towel, as if it were a hammock.

More than a hundred years ago there lived a very good man named Cowper, who wrote beautiful poetry. He was ill a good deal of the time, and had to live very quietly in the country but he was not lonely, for he loved animals, and always had pets. He took very good care of them, and noticed all their funny ways. Listen to this story, that he wrote about his cat:

A poet's cat, sedate and grave,
As poet well could wish to have,
Was much addicted to inquire,
For nooks to which she might retire;
And where, secure as mouse in chink,
She might repose, or sit and think.
Sometimes ascending, debonnair,
An apple-tree, or lofty pear,
Lodged with convenience in the fork,
She watched the gardener at his work;
Sometimes her ease and solace sought
In an old empty watering pot.
But love of change, it seems, has place
Not only in our wiser race:
Cats also feel as well as we,
That passion's force, and so did she.
Her climbing, she began to find,
Exposed her too much to the wind,
And the old utensil of tin
Was cold and comfortless within;
She therefore wished instead of those
Some place of more serene repose.
Where neither cold might come, nor air
Too rudely wanton with her hair,
And sought it in the likeliest mode,

Within her master's snug abode.
A drawer, it chanced, at bottom lined
With linen of the softest kind,
A drawer impending o'er the rest,
Half open in the topmost chest,
Of depth enough, and none to spare,
Invited her to slumber there;
Puss, with delight beyond expression,
Surveyed the scene, and took possession.
Recumbent at her ease, ere long,
And lulled by her own humdrum song,
She left the cares of life behind,
And slept as she would sleep her last,
When in came, housewifely inclined,
The chambermaid, and shut it fast;
By no malignity impelled,
But all unconscious whom it held.
Awakened by the shock (cried Puss)
Was ever cat attended thus?
The open drawer was left, I see,
Merely to prove a nest for me.
For soon as I was well composed,
Then came the maid and it was closed,
How smooth these kerchiefs, and how sweet!
O what a delicate retreat!
I will resign myself to rest,
Till Sol, declining in the west,
Shall call to supper, when, no doubt,
Susan will come, and let me out.
The evening came, the sun descended,
And Puss remained still unattended,
The night rolled tardily away,
(With her indeed, 'twas never day)
The sprightly morn her course renewed,
The evening grey again ensued.
And Puss came into mind or more,
Than if entombed the day before,
With hunger pinched, and pinched for room,
She now presaged approaching doom,
Nor slept a single wink, nor purred,
Conscious of jeopardy incurred.
That night, by chance, the poet, watching,
Heard an inexplicable stratching;
His noble heart went pit-apat,
And to himself he said, "What's that?"
He drew the curtain at his side,
And forth he peeped, but nothing spied,
At length a voice which well he knew,
A long and melancholy mew,
Saluting his poetic ears,
Consoled him and dispelled his fears;
He left his bed, he trod the floor,
And 'gan in haste the drawers explore,
The lowest first, and without stop
The rest in order to the top,
Forth skipped the cat, not now replete,
As erst, with airy self-conceit,
Nor, in her own foud apprehension,
A theme for all the world's attention,
But modest, sober, cured of all
Her notions hyperbolical,