

hind legs, actually fought to prevent Poppie from putting the key into the lock. In the scuffle, the key was dropped, which seemed at the time to be a great mishap, because in the darkness it would be no easy matter for the little girls to discover it. But cats can see in the dark, and quick almost as lightning, Pussy picked it up in her mouth, and darted away back into the dark recesses of the chamber with it. They could hear her mew for them to follow, and they could tell where she was by the glitter of her two eyes, but they hesitated to move. They believed that the door was their only safety.

Just then came the Witch panting along, dragging the boiling pot from which clouds of steam arose, while in the other hand she bore aloft a huge and glaring torch, and, amid the flame, and smoke and steam, the hag's gaunt form looked loathly indeed. The two poor terrified children, clinging to each other, rushed from their place of danger, but, to their astonishment, the cat, now coming boldly forward, stationed herself directly where the torchlight, streaming through the bars, lighted up a space on the earthen floor. The Witch gave a howl of dreadful joy, and dipping her hand into the boiling broth, she splashed it through the grating, and the children saw with wonder that the Jewelled Cat, instead of trying to escape the scalding shower, stood on her hind legs to receive it, stretching out her forepaws as if to welcome the burning drops. And as the liquid fell upon the animal, the Witch muttered:

"Ere I burn you in this place,
Take your wonted form and face,
Stand erect, my hated Queen—
Then burn, and never more be seen."

And, lo, before the astonished gaze of the little girls, there arose, as if from the earth where the cat stood, a most lovely lady wearing