

The WHITE CAT

By W. W. JACOBS

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THE traveler stood looking from the taproom window of the Cauldflower at the falling rain. The village street below was empty and everything was quiet with the exception of the gurgling old man smoking with much enjoyment on the settle behind him.

It'd be a power o' good—said the ancient, craning his neck round the edge of the settle and turning a bleared eye on the window—I ain't like some folk. I never did mind a drop o' rain.

The traveler granted and, returning to the settle opposite the old man, fell to lazily stroking a cat which had strolled in attracted by the warmth of the small fire which smoldered in the grate.

He's a good mouster—said the old man—but I expect that Smith, the landlady, would sell 'im to anybody for art a crown, but we've ad a cat in Claybury once that you couldn't ha' bought for a 'undred golden sovereigns.

A white cat with one yaller eye and one blue one—continued the old man—sounds queer, but it's true.

It used to belong to old man Clark, young Joe Clark's uncle. He used to call it 'is blue eyed darling, and the fuss he made o' that cat was sinful.

Young Joe Clark couldn't bear it, but, being down in 'is uncle's will for five cottages and a bit o' land bringing in about £40 a year, he 'ad to 'ide 'is feelings and pretend as he loved it.

He used to take it little drops o' cream and tidbits o' meat, and old Clark was so pleased that he promised 'im that he should 'ave the cat along with all the other property when he was dead.

Young Joe said he couldn't thank 'im enough, and the old man, who 'ad been alling a long time, made 'im come up every day to teach 'im 'ow to take care o' it arter he was gone.

He taught Joe 'ow to cook 'is meat and then chop it up fine, 'ow it liked a clean saucer every time for 'is milk and 'ow he wasn't to make a noise when it was asleep.

"Take care your children don't worry it, Joe," he ses one day, very sharp. "One o' your boys was pulling 'is tail this morning, and I want you to clump 'is 'ead for 'im."

"Which one was it?" ses Joe.

"The slobbery nosed one," ses old Clark.

"I'll give 'im a clout as soon as I get 'ome," ses Joe, who was very fond o' 'is children.

"Go and fetch 'im and do it 'ere," ses the old man. "That'll teach 'im to love animals."

Joe went off 'ome to fetch the boy, and arter his mother 'ad washed 'is face and wiped 'is nose an' put a clean pinnyfore on 'im he took 'im to 'is uncle's and clouted 'is 'ead for 'im.

Arter that Joe and 'is wife 'ad 'im all night long, and next morning old Clark, coming in from the garden, was just in time to see 'im kick the cat right across the kitchen.

He could 'ardly speak for a minute, and when he could Joe ses plain wot a fool he'd been. Fust of all he called Joe every name he could think o'—which took 'im a long time—and then he ordered 'im out o' 'is house.

"You shall 'ave my money wen your betters have done with it," he ses, "and not afore. That's all you've done for yourself."

Joe Clark didn't know wot he meant at the time, but arter old Clark died three months arterward he found out. His uncle 'ad made a new will and left everything to old George Barstow for as long as the cat lived, providing that he took care o' it. When the cat was dead the property was to go to Joe.

The cat was only two years old at the time, and George Barstow, who was art crazy with joy, said it shouldn't be 'is fault if it didn't live another twenty years.

The funny thing was the quiet way Joe Clark took it. He didn't seem to be at all cut up about it, and when Henery Walker said it was a shame he didn't mind, and that George Barstow was a old man, and he was quite welcome to 'ave the property as long as the cat lived.

"It must come to me by the time I'm an old man," he ses, "and that's all I care about."

Henery Walker went off, and as he passed the cottage where old Clark used to live and which George Barstow 'ad moved into he spoke to the old man over the palings and told 'im wot Joe Clark 'ad said. George Barstow only granted and went on stooping and prying over 'is front garden.

"Bin and lost something?" ses Henery Walker, watching 'im.

"No; 'im finding," ses George Barstow, very fierce, and pecking up something. "That's the fifth bit o' powdered liver I've found in my garden this morning."

Henery Walker went off whistling, and the opinion he'd 'ad o' Joe Clark began to improve. He spoke to Joe about it that arternoon, and Joe said that if he ever accused 'im o' such a thing again he'd knock 'is 'ead off.

He said that he 'oped the cat 'ad live to be a hundred and that he'd no more think o' giving it poisoned meat than Henery Walker would o' paying for 'is drink so long as he could get anybody else to do it for 'im.

They 'ad bet up at this 'ere Cauldflower public 'ouse that evening as to 'ow long that cat 'ad live. Nobody gave it more than a month, and Bill Chambers ad and thought o' so many

ways o' killing it on the sly that it was wonderful to hear 'im.

George Barstow took fright when he 'eard o' them, and the care he took o' that cat was shunt up in the back bedroom, and the other art George Barstow was fussing arter it till that cat got to hate 'im like pison. Instead o' giving up work, as he'd thought to do, he told Henery Walker that he'd never worked so 'ard in 'is life.

"Wot about fresh air and exercise for it?" ses Henery.

"Wot about Joe Clark?" ses George Barstow. "I'm tied 'and and foot. I dursent leave the house for a moment. I ain't been to the Cauldflower since I've 'ad it, and three times I got out o' bed last night to see if it was safe."

"Mark my words," ses Henery Walker: "if that cat don't 'ave exercise you'll lose it."

"I shall lose it if it does 'ave exercise," ses George Barstow, "that I know."

He sat down thinking arter Henery Walker 'ad gone, and then he 'ad a little collar and chain made for it and took it out for a walk. Pretty nearly every dog in Claybury went with 'em, and the cat was in such a state o' mind afore they got 'ome he couldn't do anything with it. It 'ad a fit as soon as they got indoors, and George Barstow, who 'ad read about children's fits in the almanac, gave it a warm bath. It brought it round immediate, and then it began to tear round the room and up and down stairs till George Barstow was afraid to go near it.

It was so bad that evening, sneezing, that George Barstow sent for Bill Chambers, who'd got a good name for doctoring animals, and asked 'im to give it something. Bill said he'd got some powders at 'ome that would cure it at once, and he went and fetched 'em and mixed one up with a bit o' butter.

"That's the way to give a cat medicine," he ses; "sneer it with the butter and then it'll lick it off, powder and all."

He was just going to rub it on the cat when George Barstow caught 'old o' 'is arm and stopped 'im.

"How do I know it ain't pison?" he ses. "You're a friend o' Joe Clark's, and for all I know he may ha' paid you to pison it."

"I wouldn't do such a thing," ses Bill. "You ought to know me better than that."

"All right," ses George Barstow; "you eat it then, and I'll give you 2 shillings instead o' 1. You can easy mix some more."

"Not me," ses Bill Chambers, making a face.

"Well, 3 shillings, then," ses George Barstow, getting more and more suspicious like; "4 shillings, 5 shillings."

Bill Chambers shook 'is 'ead and George Barstow, more and more certain that he 'ad caught 'im trying to kill 'is cat and that he wouldn't eat the stuff, rose 'im up to 10 shillings.

Bill looked at the butter and then 'e looked at the 10 shillings on the table, and at last he shut 'is eyes and gulped it down and put the money in 'is pocket.

"You see, I 'ave to be careful, Bill," ses George Barstow, rather upset.

Bill Chambers didn't answer 'im. He sat there as white as a sheet and making such extraordinary faces that George was art afraid o' 'im.

"Anything wrong, Bill?" he ses at last.

Bill sat staring at 'im, and then all of a sudden clapped 'is 'andkerchief to 'is face.

Joe Clark was hunting for it 'igh and low, and so was 'is wife and the boys. In fact, I believe that everybody in Claybury 'elieving the parson and Bill Pretty was trying to get that £10.

O' course we could understand the parson—'is pride wouldn't let 'im; but a low, poaching, thieving rascal like Bob Pretty turning up 'is nose at £10 was more than we could make out.

Even on the second day, when George Barstow made it £10 down and a shilling a week for a year besides, he didn't offer to stir; all he did was to try and make fun o' them as was looking for it.

"Have you looked everywhere you can think o' for it, Bill?" he ses to Bill Chambers.

"Yes, I 'ave," ses Bill.

"Well, then, you want to look everywhere else," ses Bob Pretty. "I know where I should look if I wanted to find it."

"Why don't you find it, then?" ses Bill.

"Cos I don't want to make mischief," ses Bob Pretty. "I don't want to be unneighborly to Joe Clark by interfering at all."

"Not for all that money?" ses Bill.

"Not for £50," ses Bob Pretty. "You ought to know me better than that, Bill Chambers."

"It's my belief that you know more about where that cat is than you ought to," ses Joe Gubbins.

"You go on looking for it, Joe," ses Bob Pretty, grinning. "It's good exercise for you, and you've only lost two days' work."

"I'll give you art a crown if you let me search your 'ouse, Bob," ses Bill Chambers, looking at 'im very 'ard.

"I couldn't do it at the price, Bill," ses Bob Pretty, shaking 'is 'ead. "I'm a pore man, but I'm very partikler 'im I 'ave come into my 'ouse."

O' course everybody left off looking at once when they heard about Bob, not that they believed that he'd be such a fool as to keep the cat in 'is 'ouse, and that evening as soon as it was dark Joe Clark went round to see 'im.

"Don't tell me as that cat's found, Joe," ses Bob Pretty as Joe opened the door.

"Not as I've 'eard o'," ses Joe, stepping inside. "I wanted to speak to you about it. The sooner it's found the better I shall be pleased."

"It does you credit, Joe Clark," ses Bob Pretty.

"It's my belief that it's dead," ses Joe, looking at 'im very 'ard, "but I want to make sure afore taking over the property."

Bob Pretty looked at 'im, and then he gave a little cough. "Oh, you want it to be found dead," he ses. "Now, I wonder whether that cat's worth most dead or alive?"

Joe Clark coughed then. "Dead, I should think," he ses at last.

"George Barstow's just 'ad bill

"Oh!" ses Joe, staring.

"Give that to your little Jimmy," ses George Barstow, giving 'im a shilling. "I've give 'im one, but I thought arterward it wasn't enough."

"What for?" ses Joe, staring at 'im again.

"For bringing my cat 'ome," ses George Barstow. "Ow it got out I can't think, but I lost it for three hours, and I'd about given it up when your little Jimmy brought it to me in 'is arms. He's a fine little chap, and he does you credit."

Joe Clark tried to speak, but he couldn't get a word out, and Henery Walker, wot 'ad just come up and 'eard wot passed, took hold o' 'is arm and helped 'im 'ome. He walked like a man in a dream, but artway he stopped and cut a stick from the hedge to take 'ome to little Jimmy. He said the boy 'ad been asking him for a stick for some time, but up till then he'd always forgotten it.

At the end o' the fust year that cat was still alive, to everybody's surprise, but George Barstow took such care o' it he never let it out o' 'is sight. Every time he went out he took it with 'im in a hamper, and, to prevent its being poisoned, he paid Isaac Sawyer, who 'ad the biggest family in Claybury, sixpence a week to let one o' 'is boys taste 'is milk before it had it.

The second year it was ill twice, but the horse doctor that George Barstow got for it said that it was 'ad as nalls and with care it might live to be twenty. He said that it wanted more fresh air and exercise, but when he 'eard 'ow George Barstow come by it he said that p'raps it would live longer indoors arter all.

At last one day, when George Barstow 'ad been living on the fat o' the land for nearly three years, that cat got out again. George 'ad raised the front room window two or three inches to throw something outside, and afore he knew wot was 'appening the cat was outside and going up the road about twenty miles an hour.

George Barstow went arter it, but he might as well ha' tried to catch the wind. The cat was art wild with joy at getting out again, and he couldn't get within art a mile o' it.

He stayed out all day without food or drink, follering it about until it came on dark, and then o' course he lost sight o' it, and, hoping against 'ope that it would come 'ome for 'is food, he went 'ome and waited for it.

He sat up all night dozing in a chair in the front room with the door left open, but it was all no use, and arter thinking for a long time wot was best to do he went out and told some o' the folks it was lost and offered a reward o' £5 for it.

You never saw such a hunt then in all your life. Nearly every man, woman and child in Claybury left their work or school and went to try and earn that £5. By the arternoon George Barstow made it £10, provided the cat was brought 'ome safe and sound, and people as was too old to walk stood at their cottage doors to snap it up as it came by.

Joe Clark was hunting for it 'igh and low, and so was 'is wife and the boys. In fact, I believe that everybody in Claybury 'elieving the parson and Bill Pretty was trying to get that £10.

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"George Barstow's just 'ad bill

printed offering £15 for it," ses Bob Pretty.

"I'll give that or more when I come into the property," ses Joe Clark.

"There's nothing like ready money, though, is there?" ses Bob.

"I'll promise it to you in writing," ses Bob, ses Joe, trembling.

"There's some things that don't look well in writing, Joe," ses Bob Pretty, considering. "Besides, why should you promise it to me?"

"O' course I meant if you found it," ses Joe.

"Well, I'll do my best, Joe," ses Bob Pretty, "and none of us can do no more than that, can they?"

They sat talking and armysifying over it for over an hour, and twice Bob Pretty got up and said he was going to see whether George Barstow wouldn't offer more. By the time they parted they was as thick as thieves, and next morning Bob Pretty was wearing Joe Clark's watch and chain, and Mrs. Pretty was up at Joe's 'ouse to see whether there was any o' 'is furniture as she 'ad a fancy for.

She didn't seem to be able to make up 'er mind at fust between a chest o' drawers that 'ad belonged to Joe's mother and a grandfather clock. She walked from one to the other for about ten minutes, and then Bob, who 'ad come in to 'elp her, told 'er to 'ave both.

"You're quite welcome," he ses. "Ain't she, Joe?"

Joe Clark said "Yes," and arter he 'ad helped them carry 'em 'ome the Prettys went back and took the best bedstead to pieces, cos Bob said as it was easier to carry that way. Mrs. Clark 'ad to go and sit down at the bottom o' the garden with the neck o' 'er dress undone to give herself art, but when she saw the little Prettys each walking 'ome with one o' 'er best chairs on their 'eads, she got up and walked up and down like a mad thing.

"I'm sure I don't know where we are to put it all," ses Bob Pretty to Joe Gubbins, wot was looking on with other folks, "but Joe Clark is that generous he won't 'ear o' our leaving anything."

"Has 'e gorn mad?" ses Bill Chambers, staring at 'im.

"Not as I knows on," ses Bob Pretty. "It's 'is good 'artedness, that's all. He feels sure that that cat's dead and that he'll 'ave George Barstow's cottage and furniture. I told 'im he'd better wait till he'd made sure, but 'e wouldn't."

Before they'd finished the Prettys 'ad picked that 'ouse as clean as a bone, and Joe Clark 'ad to go and get 'e'en straw for his wife and children to sleep on; not that Mrs. Clark 'ad any sleep that night, for Joe neither.

Henery Walker was the fust to see wot it really meant, and he went rushing off as fast as 'e could run to tell George Barstow. George couldn't believe 'im at fust, but when 'e did he swore that if a 'bit of that cat's head was harmed 'ed 'ave the law o' Bob Pretty, and arter Henery Walker 'ad gone 'e walked round to tell 'im so.

"You're not yourself, George Barstow, else you wouldn't try and take away my character like that," ses Bob Pretty.

"Wot did Joe Clark give you all them things for?" ses George, pointing to the furniture.

"Took a fancy to me, I s'pose," ses Bob. "People do sometimes. There's something about me at times that makes 'em like me."

"He gave 'em to you to kill my cat," ses George Barstow. "It's plain enough for anybody to see."

Bob Pretty smiled. "I expect it'll turn up safe and sound one o' these days," he ses, "and then you'll come round and beg my pardon. P'raps—"

"P'raps wot?" ses George Barstow, arter waiting a bit.

"P'raps somebody 'as got it and is keeping it till you've drawned the £15 out o' the bank," ses Bob, looking at 'im very 'ard.

"I've taken it out o' the bank," ses George, starting. "If that cat's alive, Bob, and you've got it, there's the £15 the moment you 'ad it over."

"Wot d'ye mean—me got it?" ses Bob Pretty. "You be careful o' my character."

"I mean if you know where it is," ses George Barstow, trembling all over.

"I don't say I couldn't find it, if that's wot you mean," ses Bob. "I can gl'rally find things when I want 'em."

"You find me that cat, alive and well, and the money's yours, Bob," ses George, 'ardly able to speak, now that he fancied the cat was still alive.

Bob Pretty shook 'is 'ead. "No, that won't do," he ses. "S'pose I did 'ave the luck to find that pore animal, you'd say I'd 'ad it all the time and refuse to pay."

"I swear I wouldn't, Bob," ses George Barstow, jumping up.

"Best thing you can do if you want me to try to find that cat," says Bob Pretty, "is to give me the £15 now, and I'll go and look for it at once. I can't trust you, George Barstow."

"And I can't trust you," ses George Barstow.

"Very good," ses Bob, getting up. "There's no 'arm done. P'raps Joe Clark'll find the cat is dead and p'raps you'll find it's alive. It's all one to me."

George Barstow walked off 'ome, but he was in such a state o' mind he didn't know wot to do. Bob Pretty turning up 'is nose at £15 like that made 'im think that Joe Clark 'ad promised to pay 'im more o' the fust was dead. And at last, arter worrying about it for a couple o' hours, he came up to this 'ere Cauldflower and offered Bob the £15.

"Wot's this for?" ses Bob.

"For finding my cat," ses George.

"Look here," ses Bob, handing it back. "I've 'ad 'ough o' your insults. I don't know where your cat is."

"I mean for trying to find it, Bob," ses George Barstow.

"Oh, well, I don't mind that," ses Bob, taking it. "I'm a 'ardworking man, and I've got to be paid for my time; it's only fair to my wife and children. I'll start now."

He finished up 'is beer, and while the other chaps was telling George Barstow wot a fool he was Joe Clark slipped out arter Bob Pretty and began to call 'im all the names 'e could think o'.

"Don't you worry," ses Bob; "the cat ain't lost yet."

"Is it dead?" ses Joe Clark, 'ardly able to speak.

"Ow should I know?" ses Bob; "that's wot I've got to try and find out. That's wot you gave me your furniture for and wot George Barstow gave me the £15 for, ain't it? Now, don't you stop me now, cos I'm goin' to begin looking."

He started looking there and then, and for the next two or three days



His 'ands in 'is pockets looking over garden fence and calling "Puss."

George Barstow and Joe Clark ses 'im walking up and down with 'is 'ands in 'is pockets looking over garden fences and calling "Puss." He asked everybody he see whether they 'ad seen a white cat with one blue eye and one yaller one, and every time he came into the Cauldflower he put 'is 'ead over the bar and called "Puss," cos, as he said, it was as likely to be there as anywhere else.

It was about a week arter the cat 'ad disappeared that George Barstow was standing at 'is door talking to Joe Clark, who was saying the cat must be dead and he wanted 'is property when he sees a man coming up the road carrying a basket and speak to Bill Chambers. Just as he got near them an awful "misow" come from the basket, and George Barstow and Joe Clark started as if they'd been shot.

"He's found it!" shouts Bill Chambers, pointing to the man.

"It's been living with me over at Ling for a week pretty nearly," ses the man. "I tried to drive it away several times, not knowing that there was £15 offered for it."

George Barstow tried to take 'old o' the basket.

"I want that £15 fust," ses the man. "That's only right and fair, George," ses Bob Pretty, who 'ad just come up. "You've got all the luck, mate. We've been hunting 'igh and low for that cat for a week."

Then George Barstow tried to explain to the man and call Bob Pretty names at the same time, but it was all no good. The man said it 'ad nothing to do with 'im wot he 'ad paid to Bob Pretty, and at last they fetched Policeman White over from Cudford, and George Barstow signed a paper to pay 5 shillings a week till the reward was paid.

George Barstow 'ad the cat for five years arter that, but he never let it get away again. They got to like each other in time and died within a fortnight of each other, so that Joe Clark got 'is property arter all.

Wisdom of Infants.

A correspondent of the Manchester Guardian gives a good childish definition: "I once overheard a little boy talking to his younger sister. At length she interrupted him with the question, 'What is a solid?' He paused a few seconds, and then, his eyes brightening, he replied, 'Why, a solid is all one piece, with no empty place inside.' You will not be surprised to hear that the boy is now a B. Sc. and science teacher in one of our Liverpool schools."

A little philosopher defined darkness. He was accustomed to having a small light in his bedroom all night. One night he shared his father's room, and the light was turned out altogether. "Oh," he exclaimed in awestruck tones, "what a big 'ole!"

Walt Whitman—And After.

How is it that Walt Whitman has no following among the young poets of America today? That with one accord they have flung up their gorgeous prospects and gone back to the old allegiance and the old fetters? The young American poets of today are, as far as form goes, anything but revolutionary. They are the born aristocrats of literature, careful of form, and fastidious to a fault in their choice of language. So far from being "Sanskrits," they are most particular about the arrangement of their draperies, many of them preferring the classic mode to any other. They refuse to be half fellow well met with every subject, and are aware of the imperishable value of selection.

May Sinclair in Atlantic.

Notice of Final Settlement.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned, administratrix of the estate of E. P. Coleman, deceased, has filed her final account in said estate and the first Monday, the 6th day of May, 1907, has been set for final hearing by the County Court of Lane county, Oregon.

MARY A. COLEMAN, Administratrix.

Walton & Ness, Attorneys.

Registration of Land Title.

In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon for the County of Lane.

In the matter of the application of Jost D. Petrie to register title to the land in said application described, to-wit:

West one-half of the west one-half of section 26 in township 29 south range 5 west of the Willamette Meridian, containing 160 acres of land in Lane county, Oregon.