

The Cat and the Old Rat

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A story writer of our sort
Historifies, in short,
Of one that may be reckoned
A Rodilard the Second,
The Alexander of the cats,
The Attila, the scourge of rats,
Whose fierce and whiskered head
Among the latter spread,
A league around, its dread;
Who seemed, indeed, determined
The world should be unvermined.
The planks with props more false than slim,
The tempting heaps of poisoned meal,
The traps of wire and traps of steel,
Were only play compared with him.
At length, so sadly were they scared.
The rats and mice no longer dared
To show their thievish faces
Outside their hiding places,
Thus shunning all pursuit; whereat
Our crafty General Cat
Contrived to hang himself, as dead,
Beside the wall with downward head,
Resisting gravitation's laws
By clinging with his hinder claws
To some small bit of string.
The rats esteemed the thing
A judgment for some naughty deed,
Some thievish snatch,
Or ugly scratch;
And thought their foe had got his meed
By being hung indeed.
With hope elated all
Of laughing at his funeral,
They thrust their noses out in air;
And now to show their heads they dare;
Now dodging back, now venturing more;
At last on the larder's store
They fall to filching, as of yore.
A scanty feast enjoyed these shallows;
Down dropped the hung one from his gallows,
And of the hindmost caught.
"Some other tricks to me are known,"
Said he, while tearing bone from bone,
"By long experience taught;
The point is settled, free from doubt,
That from your holes you shall come out."
His threat as good as prophecy
Was proved by Mr. Mildandsly;

For, putting on a mealy robe,
He squatted in an open tub,
And held his purring and his breath;—
Out came the vermin to their death.
On this occasion, one old stager,
A rat as grey as any badger,
Who had in battle lost his tail,
Abstained from smelling at the meal;
And cried, far off, "Ah! General Cat,
I much suspect a heap like that;
Your meal is not the thing, perhaps,
For one who knows somewhat of traps;
Should you a sack of meal become,
I had let you be, and stay at home."
Well said, I think, and prudently,
By one who knew distrust to be
The parent of security.