



THE RETURN OF THE CAT. BY ELISA ARMSTRONG.

"CATS," remarked Mrs. Mott sententiously, "are a good 'eal like men. They require a lot of petting; they are very particular about their eating, and it's hard to keep them in the house at night."

As she was entirely alone, there was no one to contradict this somewhat extraordinary statement, so she dropped her eyes again on her work, the embroidering of a dress on a bit of linen. Suddenly, she heard the front door open and, turning her back, she whipped off her eyeglasses and slipped them in her pocket, before turning to greet her visitor. She was obliged to wear glasses when she read or sewed, but she would have felt eternally disgraced if anyone had seen her on her nose.

"That you, Melinda? Walk in and sit down—why, what's the matter? Anything wrong?"

"Humph! Lorilla Mott, what's this about you and Ezra?" Mrs. Mott's hand shook visibly in folding her work, but she answered, defiantly: "Don't know as I'll tell you."

"Well, you needn't, then. I know 'ready. And all I've got to say is, if you prefer a cat to a husband, why—"

"You don't know one thing about usbands, Melinda Thompson; why, you ever had one yourself?"

"That's just it; I know what it is to, without one. There's my taxes, now—"

But Mrs. Mott hastily interrupted; ten taxes were the theme, Miss Meda usually spoke loud and long. "You can't begin by giving in to a sband, Melinda. I know that, because I've in to Mr. Mott before we were married and the only comfort I got out of him in the 12 years we were married was in his last illness. Then, I could call on the doctor to help me. He always sided with me against Abner."

and he wanted—I forget what he did want—and neither of you would give in. Why didn't you have a wedding without singing?"

"Never thought of that. The choir took it real hard, too, after practicing for four weeks twice a week to be ready. They wanted to please us both and practiced the piece I wanted on Tuesday evening after the regular choir meeting and the one Ezra wanted on Friday. They did offer to sing 'em both, but we couldn't agree which was to come first, so that did no good."

"And the next time you quarreled over the way you meant to celebrate your golden wedding, didn't you? And now it's about a cat!"

"Melinda Thompson, it is not. It's about a dog, that's what! Ezra Mason has gone and bought a dog—a hunting dog—at his time of life! He wanted to bring it here, too, knowing how afraid Jason is of dogs. I told him flat, I wouldn't have Jason's life made a burden to please anybody. Then he said he'd never speak to me again, and I said I guessed I could talk to myself, if I got lonesome and wanted to hear the sound of a human voice!"

"There goes Ezra now, with the dog at his heels," remarked the visitor. "He's on the other side of the street. That's how I came to know he and you had quarreled. He only does that when he's mad with you."

Mrs. Mott tossed her head defiantly. "The pavement's free," she said. "Must you be going?" as Miss Melinda rose.

"Yes, I'm going to run in and see that strange family that's just moved here. The little boy's an invalid and they don't know a soul here yet, so I thought maybe they'd like to hear the news."

"Well, you're the one that can tell it to them," said Mrs. Mott, under her breath, as her friend walked away.

"Jason; here, sir, come back!" For the cat had slipped past her and out into the street, pretending not to hear her calls.

"Contrary as a man," she remarked, closing the door. "That's just the way Mr. Mott used to go out after supper."

The big chair looked very lonesome without Ezra's portly presence in it, and, stopping to beat up the cushion as she passed, she remarked: "I'm sorry now I told Melinda Thompson I'd give it to the cat, but it's too late now—he knows it 'ready. Anyhow, he needn't have said he wished the Lord, or whoever looks after cats, would take Jason!"

"Ezra Mason knows what has become of Jason!" she cried, bursting into tears. "And to think I had meant to marry him, in gray satin, on New Year's day!"

Late that afternoon Melinda Thompson bustled in, her bonnet gracefully encircling one ear. "Well, Lorilla Mott, what's that?" "Heard what?" said Mrs. Mott.

"That Ezra Mason feeds that dog of his out of the silver sugar basin he had bought for your wedding present, and lets him sleep in the silk quilt you made him for Christmas! What do you think of that?"

"Think?" said Mrs. Mott, slowly and deliberately. "Why, I think that a man who will commit murder will do anything."

"Murder?" gasped Melinda. "Yes, murder! For if Ezra Mason didn't kill my cat, why doesn't he come back?"

The strange family with the invalid boy had received her advances coldly and Miss Melinda's time and tongue were entirely at Mrs. Mott's disposal. By nightfall everybody knew that she had accused Ezra Mason of killing her cat. Later that evening, they also knew that Ezra had said he would never speak to a woman or a cat again.

And this was the 29th of December, and the gray satin gown in which Mrs. Mott was to have been metamorphosed into Mrs. Mason hung ready in her wardrobe, while the ring, once more exchanged for a larger one, lay forgotten in Ezra's pocket.

It was New Year's morning and Mrs. Mott felt forlorn and miserable seated before her untasted breakfast. For the first time, she regretted her quarrel with Ezra.

"If I hadn't quarreled with him he'd never have killed Jason," she sighed, "and I'd never have known he'd commit murder. Now—come in!" she hastened to open the door.

There stood a shy little girl, and—Mrs. Mott cried aloud—Jason, alive and in the fur, was rubbing against her legs and purring.

"He didn't kill him after all!" she cried; then, seeing the child's amazed look, she said: "Where on earth did you find him, my dear? Was—he was he much hurt?"

"He wasn't hurt at all, ma'am. He come to us five days ago; my brother's sick and we didn't know the cat was yours—my brother kept him in his room all the time. The butcher boy saw him this morning and told us—"

"I suppose he tried hard to get away and come home?" faltered Mrs. Mott.

"No'm. He wanted to stay and I had to carry him part way."

As the child was going away with the dollar Mrs. Mott had thrust upon her, that lady stood on the doorstep with the door closed to prevent Jason from following his new friend. She saw Ezra approaching across the street and said, bitterly: "To think I quarreled with him over an ungrateful beast that forgot me in five days! Nancy!" she called, suddenly.

"Yes'm," said the child, stopping. "You can have the cat if you want him. I don't." Then she went into the house and shut the door.

Five minutes later a tremendous knock brought her to the door. There stood Ezra with the now weeping Nancy, who held Jason in her arms.

"Here's your cat," he said, shortly, "what is bad says a nice crazy lady gave him to her."

"I gave her the cat, Ezra Mason; I guess I can do as I like with my own—"

"You gave Jason away?" gasped Mrs. Mott. "Lorilla, the wedding is to be at seven, ain't it?"

"Yes, Ezra, and—and you may bring your dog."

"Bain't got him, snapped Ezra; man I bought him from had stolen him, and—"

"A Happy New Year to both of you!" said Melinda Thompson.



TIME never drags save as when one is in prison, or, say, while waiting for a railroad train, or upon the eve of one's marriage. All the pictures of old Father Time show him having wings, and very long ones, too. He flies faster and faster as age wears on, so fast, in fact, that towards the decline and down it one may not be able to count the mile-posts. The year 1897 has gone and to older ones it seems but as yesterday since first it was here.

Yet during its little hour how many the friends that went to their long home, how many the hopes unfulfilled, how many the vows that were broken, how many the disappointments, aye, and how many the pleasures, and gladnesses, how much happiness we communicated, and how much we bestowed upon others. Sitting busy for retro-spection, it was a very busy year after all. Had we begun on the first day with a diary of large dimensions, how easily we might have filled its every page, and still have left many, many things unrecorded.

Gone the old year altogether—save its memories, which will remain forever, precious or reprobativ, as they troop up in passing review before one. Gone its spring of unfolding flower and stalk and grass; its summer of developing beauties of field and wood; its autumn of harvest, full fruition and many-tinted leaves; and gone its winter of hoar-frost, iridescent ice and snow of immaculate whiteness. Gone is it in its glory and pride, its shame and weakness, and we hail the new with its certain record of good

Every mother feels an indescribable dread of the pain and danger attendant upon the most critical period of her life. Becoming a mother should be a source of joy to all, but the suffering and danger of the ordeal make its anticipation one of misery. MOTHER'S FRIEND is the remedy which relieves women of the great pain and suffering incident to maternity; this hour which is dreaded as woman's severest trial is not only made painless, but all the danger is removed by its use.

California. Personally-Conducted Tours in Pennsylvania Railroad. America is a great country. Its variety and grandeur of natural scenery is unrivaled. Its wooded heights, its fertile valleys, its broad plains, its rugged and rocky mountains, its great lakes, its balmy slopes are a great country, to behold its diversities and its wonders, is a liberal education, a revelation to the unimpaired metropolitan citizen. The Personally-Conducted Tour to California under the direction of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company which leaves New York on January 8, 1898, affords a most excellent opportunity to view the vast variety, and boundless beauty of this marvelous land.

WEDDING YEAR. 'Twas time the count and ghostly stars hung round and low on Woe'ser's rim. Along a line of dappled bars like yellow apples from a limb, they two sat watching from the night to mark the old year plane his flight. Hand clasped in hand, the far moon's gold, capped over by each flying cloud, seemed as a dead man's face, and old, half-pictured in its shroud, and dimly down the misty way, crailed dusky banners shot with gray. They watched the midnight's ebon wings Poise, float and circle, high o'erhead, As a hawk calls in widening rings O'er summer fields with daisies spread, Hand clasped in hand, and silent so, But in their hearts the expectant glow. Chat wavered as the night wore on— Chat fluttered at the moon's eclipse— Then came the first faint streaks of dawn And speech rushed eager to their lips. While down along the eastern shore The red sun painted "There more." — Ernest Ingham.



"A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO BOTH OF YOU!"

When Mrs. Beard's wife looked at her feet, she said to her, "Just like your wishers look, my dear." LOCATING HIM. "Seen my boy Tommy anywhere, Book?" "Well, no, I ain't seen 'im, but th' fight at the other end of the st— Pick-me-Up. His Occupation Gone How doth the busy little bee Improve each modern hour? When glucose, cleverly, Makes useless every frow — Chicag. Plenty of Them. "You say you love my daughter? I love her, sir, with every I possess." "Every fiber?" "Yes, sir, I'm in the rope business, sir."—Cleveland Plain Second Edition. Biggs—Do you think Dr. T. former years? Biggs—Certainly. They the news as he used ten years ago. A Clever Man Dyer—How did the boy to escape? Duell—He disguised himself as a free man and, of course found.—Town Topics. Had Respek Office Boy—Hencken pye. He's been 'sing' Home" all day. Typewriter—His w Journal. He—Think of ou this time! She—Yes, And should both meet Up-to-Date. Manager F Mrs. Tuppenny when I married Tuppenny—That may be, never given up anything a Topics. Keeping Account Average Wife—My dear, I going to church with me th Average Husband—Good la I went to church with you las —N. Y. Weekly. Had Some Motive, of C Mrs. Bellows—I believe yo me for my money. Bellows—A hem! Well, I didn't go to the altar for my N. Y. Journal. A Genuine Delight. "There is one thing which g woman more than all things e "And what is that?" "Being told that other wo jealous of her."—Chicago Reco Basis of Popularity. Miss Elders—Poor Sister Ba great worker; she will be sad out of your church. Mrs. Kerry-Tauk—Yes; and so newsy!—Puck. A Certainty. Mr. Harps—Do you suppose that it is possible for a man t or more women at the same t Mrs. Harps—Not if I'm on

Lippincott's Magazine. THIRTY-FIRST ANNUAL ANNOUNCEMENT. LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE for 1898 will continue to offer in each number a complete Novel, also as much additional reading matter in selected stories, sketches, essays, poems, etc., as the average illustrated magazine contains. Admitting no serials, it avoids the objection of so many readers to a continued story, combining all the characteristics of a magazine, each number is complete in itself. We present a partial list of the novels, etc., to be published during 1898. ANNE HENRY (Princess Troubetzkoy), author of "The Quick and the Dead" returns to the field in a love story in her own peculiar style. MARIA LOUISE POOLE, well known by her sketches of New England life, will offer a tale of abundant interest, in which comedy mingles with the elements of tragedy, and the characters of the two heroines are ably sketched and strongly contrasted. CAPTAIN CHARLES KING, who is supreme and almost alone in descriptions of army life, takes for his scene a post in the south-west, and combines a picture of garrison society with the stirring events of the field, this time in pursuit of white bandits and deserters. EDWARDS VAN ZELE, author of "The Manhattaners," "The Crown Prince of Romania," etc., will be found to surpass his previous achievements in a novelette of which the hero is a dramatist and the heroine an actress. JOSEPH A. ALTSHELER, who has won much repute by stories of the American revolution, finds a more recent subject in a supposed stronghold of the Confederacy, held in the wilderness long after the war is over. JENNIE BULLARD WATERBURY tells of the life of an American girl who goes to Paris to study music. It is a vividly depicted tale of student life. Annie E. Brand, Henry Willard French, and others will also contribute novelettes. Sundry industrial, social, geographical, and political phases of America will be represented by George Ethelbert Walsh, Allan Hendricks, William Trumbull Larned, H. G. Robinson, Calvin Hill, Wilson, John E. Bennett, and other good writers. Dr. Theodore P. Wolfe will continue his articles on "Some Literary Shines of Manhattan." Sundry topics connected with letters will be discussed by Emily S. Whiteley, E. A. Madden, Nina Allen, Frank G. Carpenter, William Cecil Egan, and others. Dr. James Weir, Jr., Dr. Harvey B. Bashore, Albert G. Evans, and others will write occasionally on scientific subjects. Oscar Horzberg, Agnes Carr, Emily P. Weaver, and others will handle themes of historical, foreign, or general interest. The short stories of the Magazine, as hitherto, will have plot and point, and will come from various sources. Among their authors are Marion Manville Pope, Germaine Bonner, Maria Hood, Gladstone, Alice Macgovern, Matt Crim, Owen Hall, Philip H. Hubert, Wm. T. Nichols, Chas. Newton Hood, H. C. Stickney, and not a few more. Whether a writer be known or unknown is of less consequence than how he writes, and good writers, new or old, are the valued contributors to LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE.

Modern Treatment of Consumption. The latest work on the treatment of diseases, written by forty eminent American physicians, says: "Cod-liver oil has done more for the consumptive than all other remedies put together." It also says: "The hypophosphites of lime and soda are regarded by many English observers as specific for consumptive Scott's Emulsion contains the best cod-liver oil in a partially digested combined with the Hypophosphites of Lime and Soda. This remedy, a standard for a quarter of a century, is in exact accord with the latest views of the medical profession. Be sure you get SCOTT'S Emulsion. All druggists.

Pennsylvania Railroad Company will Issue Clerical Orders for 1898. The Pennsylvania Railroad Company announces that the issue of the clerical orders will be continued for 1898 on the same lines as in effect at present. Application blanks may be obtained of station agents, and same should reach the General Office by December 30, so that orders may be mailed December 31 to clerical men entitled to receive them. Orders will be issued only on individual application of clerical men.