

# Gabrielle Jackson

## The Adventures of Tommy Postoffice



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# The Adventures Of Tommy Post-Office

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"Uncle Bobbert! Uncle Bobbert! Here we are!"



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# The Adventures Of Tommy Post-Office

*The True Story of a Cat*

By Gabrielle E. Jackson

AUTHOR OF "CAPTAIN POLLY."

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To Miss Barbara Wiley  
Who Gave My Little Heroine Her Name,  
This Story Of Tommy Is Most Affectionately  
Inscribed By Her Friend,  
Gabrielle E. Jackson

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# Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking authentic spirituality.

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## **A Note about Typos** [Typographical Errors]:

Over time we are revising the books to make them better and better. If you would like to send the errors you come across to us, we'll make sure they are corrected.

# 1. Tommy's First Appearance

“MEE-U, MEE-U, MEE-U-U!”

“M-r-r-rwow! Mr-r-r-wow!”

The first sound came from a dark corner in the cellar of the R—— Post Office, far in behind some stored-away mail-pouches, and the second was its answer, as a fine black-and-white cat made her way daintily across the dusty pouches, shaking first one foot and then another, to free them from any dirt which might adhere to them, before entering the corner from which the first cry proceeded. And, indeed, she had reason to guard those snowy stockings she wore, for she had taken infinite pains to wash them until they were immaculate.

Have the first sounds betrayed the secret of that dark corner? It was a spot rarely visited by the Post Office officials, and that was the very reason it had been sought out by this mother cat; for, hidden there upon some soft old leather pouches, were five wee, squirming kittens which were clamoring for their dinner, and their mother, the pet of every one in the office, was coming with it just as fast as any mother could. She had stolen away, while her babies were fast asleep, to visit Jimmy, the engineer; for Jimmy and Peggy Post-Office were boon companions, and shared a dinner daily.

As Peggy picked her way along she gave an occasional lick to her lips, for thereupon still lingered both taste and odor of a fine bit of cold roast beef. A moment later she was crooning to her children as only a loving old mother cat can.

Meantime events were hurrying along above-stairs; the great mail wagons had backed up to the Post Office to take their load of outgoing letters, carriers were hurrying in from all parts of the city with their letter bags filled with mail-matter, the clerks were rushing about the office, and Uncle Sam was being served with alacrity.

“Who ever heard of such a rush of mail at this season of the year? A month later there might be some sense in it. Haven’t half enough bags to hold it all. Where are all those reserve ones, Pete? Hustle down stairs and get up half-a-dozen of them, will you?” called the head of the department.

Pete, the general factotum of the Post Office, gave one bound over the pile of bags which were already upon the floor, tore through the door, and vanished below-stairs. About ten minutes elapsed and then he came struggling up the stairs, bearing in his arms two of the cumbersome mail-pouches talking what seemed to be a string of unintelligible nonsense, and chuckling as though he knew a huge joke.



“Here’s the very mother’s son of ’em,” cried Pete.

“Hustle, you boy, I say! Don’t keep the whole office waiting! Why? What?” and every man in the department followed the speaker as he hurried toward the struggling Pete. Some held a handful of letters, some an open mail-pouch which they were about to swing upon the supporting frame.

“How’s that for a fine showin’ for the lady of the Post Office? Ain’t that as dandy a litter as ever yer clapped yer eyes on? Five of ’em, and every one a beaut! Here’s the very mother’s son of ’em,” cried Pete, as he held up by its wee “neck handle” a tiny reproduction of Peggy Post-Office, – white nose, white shirt-front, white stockings, white tail-tip and all complete. Five pairs of bright little eyes blinked at the men in the brilliant sunlight of the office, five little mouths squealed in chorus, five cunning kittens not two weeks old squirmed and wriggled about upon the mail-pouch, while their proud but somewhat anxious mother warbled to them reassuringly, and rubbed herself against the legs of the admiring audience.

Mr. Wilson, the head of the department, chuckled with delight, as he said: “Peggy, old girl, you’ve done yourself proud this time, and no mistake.”

Then one of the men lifted the cat to the table where the kittens were being admired. Peggy fully appreciated the honor, but was filled with maternal solicitude for her family, as kittens have been known to disappear mysteriously when discovered by even the most cherished and trusted friends.

“Where did you find her, Pete?” asked Mr. Wilson. “I ’ve hunted in every hole and corner for those kittens without discovering even a hair.”

“On these bags, ’way over in the corner of the cellar. Great old cat,” was the reply.

“Well, next thing to be done is to fix up a box for her ladyship. As soon as we get this mail off see to it, will you, Pete? Put her down behind my desk; it’s sort of dark and snug there, and I guess she’ll like it and let them stay if we don’t bother her too much.”

An hour later Peggy Post-Office and her family were as “snug as bugs in a rug.” Pete had found a good-sized box, filled it half full of excelsior, and placed it behind Mr. Wilson’s desk, and there was as soft a bed as any reasonable cat could wish for. Mrs. Post-Office and her family were “at home,” and had they been content to remain there this history of Tommy Post-Office would never have been written.

However, true to her instincts, this mother cat detested a change. In her eyes no spacious box ever made, or the softest excelsior ever shaved up, could compare with that dark corner of the cellar, safe from inquisitive,

even though admiring, eyes, and near the familiar odor of the old leather mail-bags.

For some unknown reason a heavier mail was passing through the R ——— office just then than had ever been known at that season of the year, for Thanksgiving mails are not, as a rule, heavy ones. The men were exceptionally busy.

A night or two after Peggy had taken up her abode behind Mr. Wilson's desk, the night shift of clerks was just coming on, and there was the usual bustle and hurry of the exchange. Nobody thought of Peggy, and she was very glad of it, for she had a little scheme to carry out, and preferred doing so unaided. The men were working rapidly upon the outgoing Eastern mail, for it would close in ten minutes, and that meant to work as fast as possible.



Peggy had a little scheme to carry out.

“Here, Pete, set up another bag for Hartford! This one will burst for sure, if there's any more jammed into it. Don't like to send out a bag with hardly a handful of letters in it, but this one won't hold another letter,” cried Mr. Wilson, as he struggled to fasten a mail-bag which was almost bursting with the number of letters which had been crowded into it.

Pete swung another pouch upon the supporting bars, an armful of letters was dropped into it, click I went the clasp, and the bag was fastened, not to be opened again until the Hartford Post Office was reached the following morning.

When Mr. Wilson came to his desk the next morning, and peeped behind it to say “Good-morning” to the family residing in the box of excelsior, Tommy Post-Office was missing. Peggy meowed and tried to tell him what had happened, but Mr. Wilson had never studied *cat*-Latin.

More than twelve hours had passed since that mail-pouch was clicked together in the R office, and then, far away in one of the New England States, on Thanksgiving morning, a strange scene took place, one that the postoffice officials had not arranged for.

“Hustle, boys! Hustle! Hustle! Uncle Sam doesn’t often give his officials a half-holiday! Thanksgiving comes but once a year, and my landlady has the prize turkey of the town waiting for me up yonder. I know all about him, for I bought him for her, and he’s a dandy!” cried Robert Weston, as he bustled about in his quick, energetic manner, doing more in one minute than the average man could compass in ten. “Open up those pouches, Ben. All-fired lot of them for a Thanksgiving mail! Where is this one from, R———? Wonder what the Empire State has got to tell about this time? Down, Koko! What’s the use of you trying to stick your inquisitive nose into this fuss? You just keep yourself cool and collected. We can attend to this business, and not half try.”





There was shaken from out one of the bags, a wee,  
squirring kitten.

The last words were spoken to a handsome little spaniel which, perched high upon a shelf which ran along one side of the receiving room, about four feet above the sorting table, was fussing and whining to be taken down. His master always put him there “for safe keeping,” and there he would remain for hours, watching all that went on with his sharp black eyes, and awaiting his master’s “Come, Koko!” to spring fully six feet into his outstretched arms, confident that those arms would never fail him, for had not his mother before him sat upon that broad shelf, day after day, for years, and trained her son to do likewise? Then, when old age came creeping upon her, and she was forced to remain at home, she resigned the care of her beloved master to her doughty son, feeling sure that her responsibility was wisely shifted.

But Koko's ears were sharper than his master's, and he had heard a sound proceeding from one of those mailbags the like of which he had never heard before. A second later there was shaken upon the mail-table from out one of the bags a wee, squirming, half-dead kitten.

One wild, reckless leap, and Koko was upon the table, licking and whining over poor little Tommy Post-Office.

Then excitement reigned supreme for a while, for never before in all the history of the Hartford Post Office had a mail-pouch dropped upon the sorting table such a missive as this. If Uncle Sam's postal officials neglected their duties that Thanksgiving Day, the postmaster-general would have been obliged to accept a funny enough excuse for their having done so. The wording might have run somewhat in this wise: "Owing to the unexpected arrival of a tiny black-and-white kitten, whose state of health required instant attention at the hands of the postal force, the mail was temporarily delayed."

In less than half a jiffy Robert Weston had picked up the forlorn little kitten, in another jiffy he had sent one of the men out to buy some milk, and, funniest of all, a doll's nursing bottle. When the man returned the milk was warmed, and Tommy Postoffice was initiated in artificial feeding, with Koko sitting close beside him and cocking up first one ear and then the other, as though he felt it his duty to supervise. The kitten heartened up wonderfully under this care, and took his rations like a little major; then, wearied from the hustling about he had undergone in the mail-bag, he was only too glad to snuggle down beside Koko when Mr. Weston laid an overcoat upon one corner of the table and said: "Here, old man, you've got a job now, and no mistake. Lie there and take care of this infant until it is time for us to go home to our Thanksgiving dinner.

Koko seemed proud of his honors. The kitten cuddled close to his warm side, nestled in under his long silky hair, and went fast asleep as a dormouse, and neither animal stirred until eleven o'clock struck upon the big clock near by. Then the Post Office closed its doors for the day, and the officials went to their various homes to do justice to our national "gobbler."

When he was ready to take his departure Robert Weston called the dog, picked up the kitten and dropped it into his pocket, and went his way to his

boarding-house where he was a universal favorite with old and young, as well as every animal upon the place.

Peggy Post-Office, far away in the Post Office at R——— , little guessed the scenes in which her son was figuring as the star actor; for Tommy's adventure had to be related again and again, Tommy himself shown to every one, petted, admired, and marveled over, until it was a wonder his head was not hopelessly turned then and there. But he was destined to have an eventful life, and his journey was only the beginning of his wonderful experiences.

## 2. Tommy Becomes A Pensioner

"SWELL THE FUND! Help along a good cause! You ought to be proud to see your name on the list. Mr. Weston says we're to adopt the kitten and that the boys have got to chip in for his support. So here's a chance for 'em to do the generous act. How much do you contribute?" asked Ben, the morning which followed Tommy's arrival at Hartford, as he went about among the men filled with importance, and carrying a little book and pencil. On the cover was printed in rather irregular letters: "Subscriptions for the support and feed of the Post-Office Cat. He ain't got no name *yet*. The big words had been spelled by one of the men whose educational advantages had been somewhat superior to Ben's, but the last statement had been his own after-thought.

"What you trying to get at, anyhow?" asked one of the letter-carriers, as he looked over the boy's shoulder.

"Tryin' to get at your pocket. So hand over something and write your name down in this book for the same amount each week. Mr. Weston says that kitten what come in the mail-bag yesterday deserves to be made the P. O. cat, and that us fellers has got to take care of it. So what's your figure?"



“How much do you contribute?” asked Ben.

“Five cents a week, and here’s your nickel for a starter. Say, if the whole force gives a nickel each week that cat’s goin’ to bust, sure. Hand over your subscription-list and let me sign.”

So the list went the rounds of the office, and not a man withheld his mite, and the kitten’s maintenance was assured from the outset. Meantime, he was, of course, nameless.

“Say, Mr. Weston, what you goin’ to call him?” asked Ben, as he handed the subscription-book into his superior’s hands, and dumped upon his desk the pile of pennies and nickels which he had collected in his cap.

“Mean to write to the place he came from, and try to find out if he has one already. Ben, my boy, that cat’s no common, every-day sort of a cat. If

you believe in astrology, you'll know that the stars had something to do with his arrival. Do you?" and a mischievous twinkle came into Robert Weston's eyes as he looked at the office-boy.

"In what, sir. Guess I ain't up much in them Chinee names. Don't see what the stars had to do with this kitten, neither. Maybe he saw some in that mail-bag, though, before he got here. Lord I I don't see what kept him from bein' squashed all to smash, the way them things is hustled round."

"It was 'Kismet,' that's what did it, my boy. That cat has a mission to fulfil, you see if he hasn't."

" 'Kismet'?" " 'Kismet'?" Don't you mean catnip? That's the stuff that makes 'em feel so funny that they act like they was drunk. I never heard of the other stuff. What is it?"

"No, I don't mean catnip. That's good in its way, but it can't hold a candle to Kismet, Ben. That's the thing which keeps you from being all smashed up if you happen to find yourself in a railway accident, or from falling off a cliff in the dark. Great thing, Kismet. That kitten knew about it, sure. That's the reason he got here without being killed on the way," and Robert Weston, that combination of fun and seriousness, wagged his head at the mystified boy.

"Is it a charm for fair?" Ben asked, in an awe-struck voice. His life had been a life of vicissitudes ever since he was a wee lad, and book-lore was unknown to him. He was, however, naturally quick-witted and adaptive, and possessed a fund of good-nature which seemed inexhaustible. It never occurred to him that, had "Kismet" so ordained, he, instead of a little lost kitten, might have been the one to have a collection taken up for his benefit. So go things in this world.

Robert Weston looked at the boy for a moment without replying, and probably something of the above thought passed through his mind. His reply was: "Benny, some fellows think that they can't get on a minute unless they have on hand a little of the very finest variety going, and that the world is to blame if they don't happen to get it. But let me tell you one thing, my boy, you'll be surprised to find out what a good sort you can turn out yourself if you use your wits. Just try it. But let's see what the kitten's bank account is."

He began to count the coins which lay upon the desk before him. "One dollar and thirty-three cents! That's a regular Vanderbilt income for a cat. If the boys turn over that sum each week the kitten can wear 'jools' if he wants to. Say, you little buffer, do you know you have fallen upon your feet?" and he reached over to stroke the sleepy little creature which was curled up in one corner of his desk, its bed being an old fur cap which had passed through many and varied experiences upon its owner's head. The kitten roused up, got upon its feet, humped up its back to stretch, and yawned until its mouth seemed ready to split.



"Come on and take your bottle like a little major."

"Hoo! Going to swallow every one of us? My I ain't you a big cat, though? Ready for your dinner now? You can have cream, if you want it, with such an income as this. Come on and take your bottle like a little major." A second later the kitten was tugging away at the little nursing-bottle

for dear life. Ben, in convulsions of laughter, and half-a-dozen of the men gathered about to watch the funny spectacle.

Thus did Tommy come into his fortune, and, soon after, his true name. Before the week was ended he was duly christened, and the ceremony was a funny one.

The morning that the letter arrived from R , Mr. Weston called the clerks together and said: “Boys, this kitten has got to be christened. He has come a long journey, nameless so far as the world knows, and that won’t do for the Hartford Post Office cat. He’s got to have a collar, and the collar has got to have his name and the name of the Post Office on it, too. But he can’t wear a collar until he gets a little bigger than a pint of peanuts. He ’d walk clear through it, and we don’t want him to wear a belt. We’ll christen him today, right now. The collar can come when he has grown into it. His true name is Tommy Post-Office, and he is the son of Peggy Post-Office of R ——— . So here goes. Tommy, – Tommy Post-Office of Hartford, Connecticut, – owned and supported by the boys of the office, who pledge themselves to your maintenance until you can hustle for yourself and do all the cats that try to invade your premises. In the names of the Post Office boys, I christen you Tommy Post-Office, and set their seal and badge upon you fore and aft.” Then, taking from his desk a one and a two cent postage stamp, he wet them and stuck one upon the kitten’s head and the other upon the end of his tail, where it was whisked and flirted about, but stuck tight nevertheless.

Passers-by would have been surprised to learn that the laughter which they heard within the staid old walls of the Post Office was caused by the pranks of a wee kitten whirling about after its own tail, upon which a green one-cent stamp was firmly stuck.





Whirling about after its own tail.

As though he realized his honors Tommy Post-Office made haste to grow both in size and beauty, to say nothing of intelligence. That he was rapidly becoming the “smartest cat going,” any man in the employ of the Hartford Post Office would have assured you, and would also have bridled with resentment had your face expressed a doubt which your lips were, perhaps, too polite to give voice to.

But there was no denying that Tommy was going to be a beauty. When the warm days of early Spring came he had grown as big as several “pints of peanuts.” and had also grown into the handsome collar bought for him. His hair was as black and shiny as jet, his shirt-front as immaculate as drifted snow, and his stockings were washed and scoured hourly, lest any vestige of dirt should adhere to them. He had learned to know the men, and was boon companion with each and every one of them. He also knew the hour of the day. or night, that each would arrive to go on duty, and was invariably on hand to welcome them when the big door swung open. He also knew their luncheon hours, whether they happened to be the midday or the midnight hour, which night duty made necessary, and was always ready to sit down beside them to await the tidbit which he knew would be his share. If they happened to be so hungry that he was in danger of being forgotten, he had a way of recalling his presence to them. This was to jump upon their

shoulders and just as some particularly dainty morsel was about to pass their lips, to reach one deft paw forward, catch the food upon his claws, and – presto! it regaled another palate than its owner had intended.



Mice and rats hardly dared to show themselves.

The engineer was Tommy's especial friend, and Tommy never failed to be on hand when Dan brought forth his lunch-pail. Dan was very fond of cold sausage-meat, and Tommy approved his taste.

But Tommy was by no means a sluggard. If he lived in the Post Office he meant that it should benefit by his industry: so from the earliest kittenhood he began to wage war upon the rats and mice, and as time went on not a whiskered head dared show itself.

By this time Tommy was six months old, and as full of pranks as a six-months-old kitten well could be. His education had begun the very moment he entered the Hartford Post Office, so it is not surprising that by the time he had spent half a year there he was really remarkable.

### 3. Tommy As Commissariat

IN ROBERT WESTON Tommy seemed to recognize his earliest friend, and, even though fond of the other men, never showed them quite the delicate attentions which he reserved for Robert. One day when Mr. Weston failed to go home to his dinner at the usual hour, Tommy seemed quite disturbed. He could not understand it at all. All the other men went at stated hours, and were welcomed by Tommy upon their return. How he knew that they had been dining no one could understand, although he seemed to be perfectly sure of it. Perhaps his cat sense of smell revealed it to him. But upon this particular day, as Mr. Weston sat at his desk, noon hour came and passed without his usual departure for dinner. Tommy was disturbed, – seriously disturbed. He jumped upon Mr. Weston's desk, warbled at him; jumped down again and ran toward the door, where he paused to look back to see if his friend would take the hint. He did not, and could not say to Tommy: "I am not going until two o'clock today, and then I am not coming back."

The hour crept along, and still Tommy fidgeted. Mr. Weston was too absorbed in arranging his affairs for a week's holiday to notice that Tommy was acting in a most unusual manner, – rubbing against his legs, brushing against his sleeve, watching him intently with his bright, shining eyes. But at length the cat could stand it no longer. One o'clock had struck and his friend must surely be starving. With a more than usually prolonged and vehement "Merowwow-wow!" Tommy fled from the office. Mr. Weston looked up at that moment, and caught sight of the vanishing black tail. He laughed and said: "What 'sup, Tommy'? Seems to me I have a hazy idea that you've been making some sort of a row about here for the past hour, but I don't get a week's holiday very often, and you must excuse my preoccupation." Then he resumed his work. Twenty minutes later Tommy came bounding through the outer office as though he were pursued by a wild animal. He was merely a black streak as he leaped along. The swinging door

leading into Mr. Weston's office was closed, but a whit cared Tommy for that! He had seen that door opened and shut too many times not to know that a good bang against it would cause it to swing in the desired direction.



If he hadn't sense enough to know it was dinner-time, Tommy had.

The bang came, and Tommy vanished.

“Wonder what he's been up to now?” said one of the men.

A second later a plump, still wriggling mouse lay upon Mr. Weston's desk. If he hadn't sense enough to know when it was dinner time, Tommy had.

The months slipped by. Spring had brought its balmy air and soft green foliage. Summer its showers and sultry days, – not a fig cared Tommy Post-Office for either. One day was much the same as another to him. Each

morning brought him one set of friends who were sure to pet and feed him, play with him, and assure him that he was “the finest cat in all Hartford”; each evening saw these depart to give place to another set. It was all the same to Tommy.

As Autumn days drew near he began to put on his winter coat and a truly splendid cat he was. His black coat was thicker and shinier than ever, his shirt-front white as driven snow from many ablutions, and his stockings simply immaculate. And Tommy’s expression had also changed during the eleven months spent in the Hartford postoffice. The funny little kitten face had given place to the wise cat’s, and he now looked at you as though he knew every bit as much as you did and was well aware of the fact. If he had grown to be a vain, self-conscious cat, it was all due to “the boys” who told him twenty times a day that he was “the handsomest cat in town.” He was known throughout the neighborhood, and in the Post Office grounds, as well as in the office itself, was literally “monarch of all he surveyed”; and woe to the cat, or dog, which dared invade Tommy’s domain. Dogs! Tommy was fully convinced that dogs belonged in an entirely different world, and should under no circumstances be tolerated in this one, – at least, all dogs but Koko; he was, of course, an exception, and a privileged character because Robert Weston was his master.

During Tommy’s kittenhood Koko had been his guardian, but Tommy had made haste to put kittenhood behind him and to grow into a splendid big cat who needed no guardian whatever, but was fully capable of acting as guardian to some lesser creature, should he feel inclined to do so.

He and Koko were friends; that is, they passed the time of day when Koko arrived at the office in the morning, and once in a while lapped from the same bowl of water, but these were concessions to politeness.

Tommy could take care of himself very well indeed, and Koko was perfectly willing that he should do so, for Koko had his opinion of cats, and felt that his master would have all he could comfortably attend to if he paid the attention he should pay to the friends whom he had known longest. So Koko watched Tommy from the vantage-point of his shelf above the sorting table, turned up his little snub nose a degree higher when Tommy gave way to an exceptionally wild, kittenish freak, or politely crowded over closer to the wall when Tommy jumped up to take a siesta beside him, as “once in a

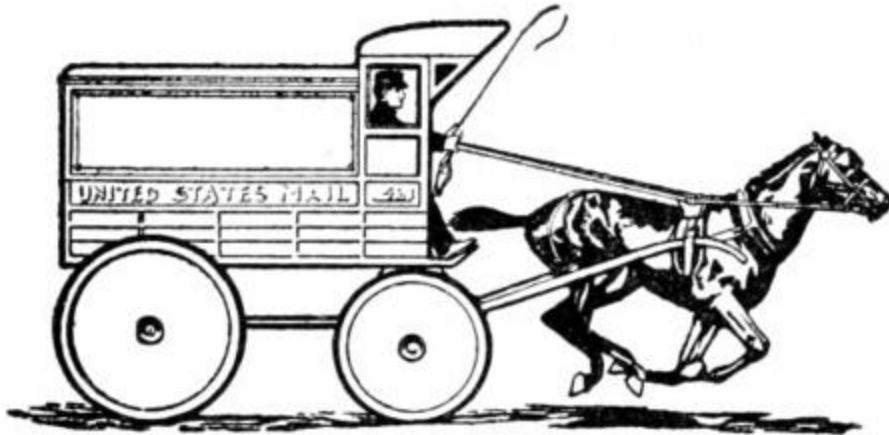
blue moon” he would do. It was noon hour upon a glorious October day when Tommy’s first adventure began to shape itself. The air was crisp and clear, the sun shining gloriously. Crimson and yellow leaves were fluttering to the ground from the great elms and maples which grew in the Post Office park, and Tommy was perched upon one of the window-seats watching them as they fell. Presently the temptation to play with them became too great, and away he went in hot chase after a particularly gorgeous one. Thither and yonder he darted after the fluttering bits of color, chasing up and down in pursuit of them. Over the lawn, down the paths, and even out upon the sidewalk, only to tear back again and dash up a tree in his mad frolic. But Tommy was too well fed to romp very long without a rest, and at length grew weary from his exertions. Next in order was a resting-place, and this he proceeded to hunt up.

A row of mail-wagons stood backed up to the rear end of the office, the horses taking their dinners from their nose-bags while they waited for the wagons to be filled with the out-going mail. Small thought had these sedate animals for the fly-away cat racing over the grass.

But when Tommy found himself in need of a resting-place he turned his attention to the wagons, for his sense of smell was keen, and those wagons smelt of the mail-bags. Indeed, some of the bags were already in them, and Tommy’s love of mail-bags was not surprising. So into one of the wagons he jumped, made his way to the front part of it, and in two minutes was fast asleep upon his old friends, the pouches. Then minutes or hours might have passed. Tommy neither knew nor cared. The first intimation he received that his bed was not a fixture, occurred when a rude jounce aroused him from dreaming of a feast of fine mice, and at the very moment he thought he was about to pounce upon one, – thumpety – bumpety – ^bang! went his bed, and Tommy was bounced upon his feet in a most unceremonious manner.

It was well for the driver of that mail-wagon that he could not see through the wooden partition which shut in the mail-bags from storm and shower. Could he have done so he would have been frightened out out of his wits, for Tommy’s eyes were simply glaring green sparks, and his tail standing out as stiff as a bottle brush, as he stood bracing himself upon the mail-bags, and wondering what upon earth would happen next. He learned very quickly, for Uncle Sam’s mail-wagons are not, as a rule, either new or

modern; they serve many years, and they serve well. Nor are the horses which draw them noted for their youth and blue blood; they, too, have served.



The driver was trying to make up lost time.

The horse which drew this particular wagon was no exception to his kind. He went “gallumping” along, for everything must make way for such a glorious institution as the United States Mail, and the wagon behind him bounced and thumped along too. Over the car-tracks, around corners, rattling over a paved street, rolling along an asphalted one, in and out among a crush of vehicles it went, for it was late for the mail-train soon due at the big railroad station, and the driver was trying to make up lost time.

Tommy felt like a ping-pong ball, as he was bounced about from one side to the other of the wagon. To say that he was angry does not convey the very faintest idea of his state of mind: he was wild with rage, frantic with fear, filled from the tip of his nose to the very end of his bristling tail with indignation. Never in all his life, that he could recall, had he been treated with so little respect, or been so battered about, for he did not remember his journey to Hartford.

Wild yowls of protest announced his state of mind to the world, but the noise outside the wagon drowned them.

Up Asylum Street rattled the wagon, around a corner and up to the New York, New Haven, and Hartford station. That horse knew what was expected of him, and in just about no time had whisked the mailwagon around and into its place, with the back doors up to the platform. The doors were unlocked and thrown open.

“Merow-rrw-wow-woooow!” A black and white streak, a flash of green lightning, a sable plume, and out flew Tommy! The man who held the door bounded backward, lost his balance, and tumbled heels over head. Tommy merely used him as “a stepping-stone to higher things,” for he was going somewhere and going in a hurry. The man scrambled to his feet, took one look at the object flying down the street toward Capitol Park, and cried:

“Lord save us, but it’s Tommy Post-Office, as I live ! Now, it’s all me life is worth to go back to that office widout that durned cat, but how under hivin am I iver to lay hands on that streak o’ lightnin”?”





Tommy was going somewhere and going in a hurry.

But Michael Curran, veteran mail driver for the Hartford Post Office, need not have experienced any concern about Tommy, for Tommy was quite capable of taking care of himself; nor could Michael spare time to chase after the runaway. His duty lay with the mail-bags in his charge, and with those about to arrive from New York. The moment the big panting engine drew up to the station, the heavy pouches were hurled from the mail-car, caught up by the station hands, and hurried into the waiting wagons. But once his wagon was filled, and he took up the reins to drive back to the Post Office, Michael held a long conversation with himself concerning Tommy, and his possible fate in that big city.

But we must follow Tommy, for he was destined to figure in another episode before he reached his old home, the Post Office, again.

## 4. Tommy In The Guise Of Cupid

ON RACED THE CAT helter-skelter, pellmell. He neither looked nor cared where he was going; his object was to get out of and away from that dark place in which he had been confined. But agile and active as he was, the big city, the busy streets, the noise and clatter all about him caused him to halt a moment, and in that moment he was espied by a terrier, which boasted the unenviable record of never having missed his prey when that prey was a cat. There was a bound, a yelp, and one desperate scratch! Mr. Terrier drew back a half second, and that was enough for Tommy. Across the street, almost under trolley-cars, over the lawn of the pretty park he darted, his pursuer hot upon his heels.

It was a wild race for life and liberty, and Tommy paused not upon the order of his going. A short distance within the park stood a row of seats. On the end one sat a young girl reading. Her back was toward Tommy. It would have made no difference to him had her face been turned that way. One side was quite as good as the other to him for the “boost” he needed to get up the tree beneath which she was sitting, and the next thing she knew there was a rush, a scramble, a general hoorah! and up her back darted a cat to claw up the tree, and glare derisively at the bristling dog, which seemed disposed to follow his example and use the lady for a stepladder.

In one little instant there was a change of positions.

But this girl was not given to shrieking or making a fuss. Her parasol stood beside her, and it had a good stout handle. Mr. Terrier did not want a second rap upon his broad crown with it, and when his master came upon the scene, that master received some very wholesome advice upon the subject of permitting his dog to chase a cat, for this girl loved cats.

The dog was put in leash and led away. Next came the problem of rescuing Tommy Post-Office. But Tommy was a wiseacre. No sooner had that dog vanished than “M-r-o-wow,” came from the crotch of the tree where he sat.

“Poor kitty! Poor kitty! Come, pussy, come down,” called the young girl, and Tommy proceeded to accept the invitation. Bit by bit down he crept, at length turning backward and letting himself down by his claws. The last wriggle, the final clutch, was made, and Tommy was safe in her outstretched arms. ’Toor pussy, you certainly had a close call that time. Now sit here in my lap, and get over your fright, and then we’ll see what can be done. Let me see to whom you belong.”



Raising his hat he said, “Tommy, you old scamp,  
how came you way out here?”

She turned the collar about in order to read the inscription. As she did so a gentleman stopped in front of her, and raising his hat said: “I beg your

pardon, but will you tell me how in the name of all that is wonderful Tommy Post-Office happens to be in your lap? Tommy, you old scamp, how came you way out here?"

"Merow-wow-wow," warbled Tommy, deserting his rescuer to spring to Robert Weston's shoulder, from which vantage-point he grinned upon the girl as though to say: "You didn't know that cats were gifted with second sight, perhaps. I could tell you a thing or two if I wished to, but I guess I won't."

"Why, Mr. Weston, does he belong to you?"

"I've only an interest in him. He is Uncle Sam's property. And I'm still guessing as to how he came here. I am glad to meet you again. Miss Westfield. You see I'm renewing my acquaintance on the strength of Tommy's intimacy, and having heard you sing so often at St. Mark's"; and Robert Weston smiled pleasantly upon the girl sitting there with the soft Autumn light all about her.

"I am pleased to have you do so, I'm sure. How fortunate that you happened along in time to rescue the cat!"

"It looks as though the rescuing had already been done, and all that remains for me to do is to escort this gentleman back home, and thank you in the name of the Post Office boys for befriending him. You would do well to make your manners, old man, and come back to the office with me."

Robert Weston dropped upon the seat as he spoke, and Tommy promptly hopped down upon his lap, rubbed against him, and then settled himself down for a siesta.

"Made up your mind to spend the rest of the day here, old man'?"

Tommy warbled contentedly. The park was beautiful in its Autumn dress, the air soft and dreamy as one could wish, Mr. Weston a tower of strength against officious dogs and mischievous boys, the young lady beside them as pretty as a dream, so what better place could be found? Tommy said within himself: "Let well enough alone."

Twenty minutes passed as twenty minutes have a trick of passing when one is agreeably entertained, and neither Robert Weston nor Tommy took heed. Then Miss Westfield rose to her feet, saying:

“This will never do for a busy music-teacher, Mr. Weston. You know I am a business woman nowadays, and must look to my pupils’ voices.”

“Merow-r-r-r-r-rrrr-wow!” warbled Tommy.

Miss Westfield broke into a merry laugh as she asked: "Does he understand the human tongue, Mr. Weston?"

“Looks like it. Want your voice cultivated, Tommy, old man? What were those, chest or throat notes?”

“I am sure that I shall have to take him in hand. What a promising pupil he would make with that remarkable rolling of his r’s. Shall we begin at once, Tommy? You will have to learn the way to my studio.” She stroked the cat which was now perched upon the seat and looking at them with wisdom written all over him.

“You will have to come to Tommy’s house, Miss Westfield,” said Mr. Weston, looking at her in a manner which caused a pretty color to creep into her cheeks, for although he had seen Mary Westfield many times before, and had occasionally spoken with the pretty soprano of St. Mark’s, somehow he had never realized how very attractive she was until Tommy undertook to awaken him to that fact.

“Oh, no. My pupils all come to me, Mr. Weston, and I cannot make an exception in Tommy’s case.”

“Very well, then, there is only one thing to be done. Tommy’s voice must be cultivated, and I shall have to see that he attends to it without further delay. I fear that valuable time has already been lost. I shall bring him to the studio myself. It may have to be after business hours, for our time is precious. Isn’t it, Tommy?” he said, as he stooped to pick up the cat and place him upon his shoulder. "And we shall have to take our music-lessons in the evening. Will that be convenient, Miss Westfield?"

“Provided you do not ask for too many a week. My time, too, is very valuable, you know, and particularly my evenings.” Mary Westfield’s eyes were very bewitching, and her voice had a ring of fun in it.

They had now reached the edge of the park, where their paths divided.

“Good-morning, Mr. Weston. I wish you a safe journey with your unusual charge. Good-bye, Tommy Post-Office. I hope to hear good reports of

you.”

“Good-bye, Miss Westfield. Many thanks for your kindness to this chap. The boys will appreciate it. Come and see him upon his native heath some time. He’s worth seeing there, I assure you.”

“I do not doubt it. Some time perhaps I will, thank you. Good-bye.”

Now what freak entered the head of the ever freakish Tommy just at that moment no one will ever be able to tell. He had known Robert Weston as long as he had been able to know anything, and he had known Mary Westfield barely thirty minutes. Yet, right there in the very midst of the big city, with noise and confusion all about him, he chose to desert the friend whom he had known for months, and in whom he should have had implicit faith, to spring to the shoulder of a slip of a girl whom the terrier, from which he had so recently escaped, could have thrown right off her small feet.

Mary Westfield gave a jump which very nearly unseated him, the move was so unexpected.

“You little rascal!” cried Mr. Weston, making a dive for the erratic animal. But Tommy evaded him, and sprang to the ground.



"Many thanks for your kindness to Tommy Post-office. The boys will appreciate it."

Then began a pretty chase. Up the park for about a hundred feet tore Tommy, then stopped and waited for them to overtake him. Mr. Weston ran after him. The cat let him come almost within reach, then off he darted again, up the hill, straight for Asylum Avenue, as though the very spirit of mischief were in him.

Now it is no use denying that Mr. Weston had a pretty correct idea of the figure he was cutting as he chased along in the middle of the highway after a runaway cat, but there are times when one is prepared to make a mighty effort to control one's temper. Mary Westfield, with a very amused smile upon her lips, and her eyes fairly dancing, followed slowly behind the chaser and the chased.



Anything more tantalizing than that cat it would have been difficult to conceive of. One moment tearing along the sidewalk, the next rolling over and over in the grass which grew beside it, Tommy seemed to say;

“What is the use of your trying to catch me? I can escape you every time and only half try. See? See? Moreover, I am taking you in the very direction you know perfectly well you would like to go if you only had half an excuse, and here I am giving you the best one ever heard of – the rescue of the Post Office cat. So come on. Number 8 isn’t so very far up, and you can ride back in a trolley-car if you are in such a dreadful hurry.”

There is little doubt that Tommy Post-Office would have succeeded in carrying out his scheme to perfection had not a small boy interfered. Tommy had not counted upon him, but there he was, and in just about a second Tommy had run straight into him. There was a wild scramble, and Tommy was a prisoner. If Mr. Weston gave him a little shake when he took him from the boy the impulse was wholly due to time lost from postal duties, and not because a pair of laughing eyes were looking roguishly into his as Miss Westfield came up.

## 5. Tommy Pays Off Old Scores

"RIGHT! LEFT! Ah I keep those claws furred, you villain! Do you think I'm going to box with you if you don't play fair? Now, sit up and do your little act like a man. One, two, three! So. Now again. One, two, three! That was a good one!"

This odd, one-sided conversation came to Robert Weston's ears as he sat at his desk one bleak November day. Rising from his chair he stepped softly to the swinging door which opened upon the sorting room, and there beheld a funny enough sight. It was an idle half-hour between the mails, and the big sorting table was empty. Seated in the middle of it was Tommy Post-Office, his head was cocked knowingly to one side, his face wore a half-belligerent expression, and his eyes seemed to say, "If I only dared!" He was reared up upon his haunches, with both fore-paws "on the defensive." In front of him stood one of the Post Office men teaching him to box. Evidently Tommy was an apt scholar, for he braced himself and hit out in the most approved fashion in return for the harmless passes made at his head by his instructor.

Several of the men stood about, some urging on the combatants, some keeping up a running comment, and some convulsed with laughter. Tommy took not the slightest notice of them, but paid strict attention to his trainer. Robert Weston joined the group.

If I were better versed in the language of the "ring," I could, no doubt, more readily describe the "sparring bout" which Tommy was holding with his opponent. Since I cannot, I can only tell what I have myself seen.

Tommy seemed as well balanced upon his hind-quarters as a kangaroo, and spatted and hit for dear life with his fore-paws. Not once did he unfurl the sharp claws after the reprimand which he received at the outset, but cuffed away until he had vanquished his opponent, and sent him from the table. Then a truce was declared, and Tommy's manner straightway

changed. He jumped from the table, rubbed against the legs of his adversary, and begged for his reward. The man walked to a cupboard, and, taking from it a little package, seated himself upon a bench. Tommy promptly squatted beside him with a knowing look on his little face.

“Are you going to eat like folks, or just cat style?” asked the man.

“Me-row-wow,” answered Tommy.

“That means ‘yes,’ does it?”

Tommy reached out his right paw. The man took from the package a small piece of liver, held it in front of Tommy, and the paw, the long claws no longer furred, caught it deftly and conveyed it to his mouth, where it speedily disappeared.

Tommy understood table deportment. Bit by bit the liver vanished, and when the last morsel had been eaten the man said:

“Now go make yourself decent. You smell of dinner, and I can’t abide that.”

Down jumped Tommy, and, walking gravely to the far corner of the office, began to carefully wash his face and paws. It was a ceremony, and not a vestige of his late feast remained at the end of fifteen minutes. Once in order he came warbling back to his friends; but meantime a mail had arrived, and they had their hands full. Then Tommy was left to his own resources for a while.

One of Tommy’s favorite resting places was on the top of a cupboard close to the side entrance to the Post Office. From this vantage-point he could watch all that went on, the outgoing and the in-coming of the force of clerks, and smell out any dainty which one of them might possibly have concealed about him. So to his “roost,” as the men called it, he now betook himself, and ere long was in the land o’ dreams. He was aroused by a sound which caused his tail to swell visibly, and a wicked light to spring into his eyes. Just outside that door came a patter, patter of feet. They were not the soft-padded feet of a cat, but unmistakably the feet of a dog, and “dogs not allowed at large,” was Tommy’s slogan. So he proceeded to investigate. To jump down from his “roost” to the window-ledge was the first move, but the window was closed that chilly day. Nothing daunted, Tommy walked along the ledge until he reached the package chute, and the next instant

went flying through it, to land almost upon the back of a terrier which sat waiting for his master just beneath it.

Then things happened. That dog had once made it interesting for Tommy and now Tommy's turn had come, and he was uppermost.

Away went the dog, with Tommy clinging to his back, and making a vicious dig with his claws for every bound which the dog had given when chasing him over the Capitol Park a few weeks before. He was no match for Tommy while Tommy was uppermost, and this very soon dawned upon him; so he at once set about finding a way to rid himself of his unpleasant burden. Stopping in the midst of his wild career, he flung himself to the ground, and Tommy was unseated. Then Tommy thought that –

“He who fights and runs away,  
May live to fight another day,”

and put his best leg forward to regain the shelter of his beloved Post Office. But the ever-present busybody had to interfere, and failing to recognize the pet of the office, rushed toward him shouting, “Scat! Scat!”

But Tommy had never learned the meaning of that word. He kept right on, and in another minute cat, dog, and busybody were all snarled up.

Bang! And down came a cane.



“Was that your dog?”

It was well for Tommy that the dog's broad back caught it. But he was too eager to eat up that cat to pay any heed to the cane, and it would have fared badly with Tommy had not the boys in the office become aware of the uproar outside and rushed to learn the cause of it. The war-cry of the office was sounded when Fred Wilder, one of the letter-carriers yelled,

“Boys! boys! There's a dog out here doing up Tommy!”

No less than twenty men rushed pell-mell from the office, armed with whatever could be caught up on their way to the door; and when the master of that dog appeared a moment later, all that he could see of his animal was a forlorn object scuttling across the park while close at hand some excited men were conducting a clinic, their subject a cat.

"Was that your dog?' asked one of them.

“Yes, it was. Has anything happened to him?” demanded the man, with some concern.

“Well, I hope so! And let me tell you just one thing, sonny: you don’t want to bring him with you to this Post Office the next time you come, for the boys have got it in for him. There won’t be much of him left to enter the bench show if they get after him, you may as well understand, for we don’t stand any nonsense around this cat.”

A few more “courtesies” were exchanged, and the man hurried away to learn if his dog was fit to appear in public, while Tommy was borne in triumph back to the office and carefully examined by the entire force lest a scratch appear upon his precious body. But he was none the worse for his fracas, and promptly set about consoling himself for any nerve shock he might have sustained from his recent encounter.

By this time there was not a hole or corner of the office which he did not know “with his eyes shut,” and into which he had not poked his inquisitive nose. So it is not necessary to add that he was fully aware of what ever passed through the mails, provided his sense of smell could vouch for it. Curious things are often sent through the mails, and one of them happened to be consigned to Uncle Sam’s care that day.

Tommy went prowling about, and ere long came upon the parcel-room. Packages of all sorts were awaiting delivery, for, not coming under the head of first-class matter, they had to await their turn. Tommy proceeded to look them over. Sniff, sniff, went his pink nose, and presently his keen nostrils were assailed by an odor which caused him to behave as though he had suddenly taken leave of his senses. He meowed, he warbled, he lay down and tumbled about like a tipsy cat, and then, ah, woe upon him ! he set about scratching with those formidable claws, and in just about one minute the paper in which that extraordinary stuff was wrapped was reduced to fragments, and no one in this world could ever guess what address had been written upon it. But Tommy was having a royal time. He was wallowing in a bunch of catnip as big as himself. He took no account of time; he was enjoying himself hugely, so what cared he how time passed? It might have been an hour, it might have been more, and then came the clerks whose duty it was to attend to this class of matter. They found Tommy fast asleep, – catnip under him, catnip on top of him, catnip scattered from one end of

the office to the other. A very carpet of catnip. What did Tommy care? Not one straw. He felt sure that all explanations concerning the condition of the mail-matter should be made by the mail-clerks, and that his sole duty was to sample the quality of the stuff which passed through the office.



Tommy was wallowing in a bunch of catnip as big as himself.

It is quite possible that the people who sent that package of catnip, as well as the people who were expecting it, are still wondering what under the sun ever became of it.

But now we must skip over a year or more in Tommy's history. During that period he led a blissful life, growing more and more beautiful, winning new friends, and gaining a wider reputation. He learned many tricks, and when visitors came to the office Tommy was made to perform for their edi-

fication. The “boys” were extremely proud of their pet, and had been untiring in their attentions to him. So it is not surprising that he grew to be a most accomplished animal. His rescuer of the park always inquired for him when she visited the Post Office, and more than once brought her little niece, Barbara, with her. Then Tommy found a delightful companion, for Barbara was as merry as he was, and very much alive to this wonderful cat’s accomplishments. In the course of time Tommy was invited to visit Barbara at her own home, to which he was escorted by Mr. Weston, and these were gala hours, indeed, for Barbara was an original little lady and possessed of a resourceful mind. The pranks which were played at Barbara’s home would fill another book, but we must tell of Tommy’s adventures. That one of them was the outcome of Barbara’s fondness for him and his affection for her another chapter must tell. But it happened after Tommy had “done himself proud” at the cat and poultry show, and had completed his conquest of the men at the Post Office by winning a prize and distinguishing himself in several other ways.



## 6. Tommy Enters The Cat Show

IT WAS TOMMY'S BIRTHDAY, or, more correctly speaking, his anniversary – Thanksgiving Day. Three blissful years had he lived in the Post Office and ruled as undisputed lord of the place. “Cats, mice, and dogs, keep off!” was Tommy's fiat, and as time passed it grew to be carefully heeded. Dogs found it interesting to take a stroll around the block while their masters entered the Post Office for their mail. Cats scurried along upon the opposite side of the street, and never by any chance presumed to invade Tommy's domain. Rats and mice scuttled through the walls of the building to places of safety, and never dared show a whisker.

But every rule must have its exception. On this fourth Thanksgiving morning Tommy's bowl was filled with extra creamy milk, and his eyes shone with satisfaction as he settled himself down upon the floor in front of it and prepared to enjoy his breakfast as only a cat that is entirely convinced of his own value and importance can. Two or three dainty laps were taken, and then he paused, raised his head, and listened.

"What's up, old man?" asked Richard, the porter, who had been in the office as many years as Tommy had toes, and who now stood watching the cat eat the breakfast he had brought for him.



“Come back, an’ eat yo’ breakfus’.”

Tommy laid back his ears, growled an ominous “M-m-m-ug!” and crept toward the door, his eyes glaring and his tail swelling.

“Come back, an’ eat yo’ breakfas’, yo’ old skeezicks. Might tink ’twa’n’t the best cream-milk to be had, but just citified blue stuff!” was Richard’s comment.

But Tommy had other concerns, and now stood with his nose to the crack of the door, sniffing and lashing his tail.

“Now what yo’ hear out thar? Lor, seems like the whole Post Office fo’ce – men and boys too – got to wait on you! Gettin’ so mighty uppish and important! Pretty soon won’t none of us be able to live wid yo’. Now go ‘long out, if yo’ want ter, and like ‘nough yo’ won’t find no milk when yo’ come back; I seen a mighty likely lookin’ cat over on de lawn as I come by dis mawnin’.”



In walked Tommy, accompanied by his very miniature.

Tommy paid no heed to Richard, but slipped through the door which was held ajar for him. About ten minutes passed, and then Richard heard the cat's familiar "Meow" demanding admittance.

"Now jist listen at dat! Ain't no mo' 'n let dat cat out, 'n he hollerin' ter come in again. Might tink I was jist his portah, and had n't nothin' in the worl' to do but wait on him!"

He opened the door, and in walked Tommy, accompanied by his very miniature. Tommy's face and air said: "Behold me as I was in my frivolous youth! Treat my protege with respect, or beware!"

Beside him toddled a kitten so exactly like himself shrunken to one-quarter his own size that the resemblance was funny to the last degree.

The big cat sailed across the room, head up, tail erect, utterly ignoring everyone. The little cat trotted close beside him, head and tail held in exactly the same manner, but its comical little baby face and baby eyes could not assume Tommy's disdain of surroundings, but looked about as though asking, "How does it happen that I'm here?"

Tommy led his charge straight to the bowl of milk, gave a funny little warble, which no doubt meant, "Help yourself," and sat down to await developments. The kitten needed no urging. It had probably fasted for hours. It smelt the milk, made a dive for the bowl, and was instantly lost to all the world.

"Now what do you think of that?" said Tommy's expression as he looked up at the boys who had gathered about to witness the unwonted sight of Tommy dispensing hospitality to another cat. Never before had he tolerated a rival, much less actually entertained one. Yet here he was doing the honors of the Post Office to a scrap of a black kitten so exactly his own counterpart in color and marking that the boys fairly shouted at the sight.

When the kitten's feast was ended, and its little sides were fairly swelling with the quantity it had eaten, Tommy escorted it to the box beneath Mr. Weston's desk, picked it up by its neck, and dropped it in. A few confidences were exchanged in cat language, and then the youngster cuddled down for a nap. Tommy's nursery duties ended, he returned to his bowl, finished the milk, and then sought a bed elsewhere. He drew the line at sleeping in the same box with a kitten. Of all unwise places, he chose a drawer in one of the desks. It was a very deep drawer, and stood conveniently open. So in he crawled and fell sound asleep after his hearty meal, and never knew when the drawer was shut and locked by the day clerk when he took his departure at noon, for business ended at noon on Thanksgiving Day, and only a few clerks would be on duty in the building for the remainder of the day and night.

When the night shift came on there was found sitting beside the empty bowl what seemed to be Tommy shrunken to a quarter of his size.

"Well, I'll be hanged! Say, Frank, have I got 'em?" called the man who first spied the kitten. "Is that Tommy shriveled up, or am I seeing things'?"

The man to whom he spoke came running in, and at sight of the small cat cried: "Well, if you've got 'em, I have too. Where did that come from, and where's Tommy?"

Call as they might no Tommy was to be found until they entered the office of the stamp clerk, where they were greeted by doleful, if smothered, wails of distress.

"Where in thunder is that cat?" cried one of the searchers, peering into every hole and corner.

"He's in that desk somewhere! That's where he is. Hi, Tommy!"

"Me-ro-wow-wow-w – o w!" was wailed from the very innermost recesses of nowhere.

Duplicate keys were procured, and when the drawer was unlocked and opened, a forlorn, cramped object crawled out of it, gave a quavering "Meow," sat down upon the floor, and eyed reproachfully a small blackand-white kitten whose nose just peeped through the door.

The week following Thanksgiving a cat and poultry show was advertised. Now Tommy's pedigree was not patrician: he was just cat. A beauty, to be sure, but blue blood was not within his veins. Nevertheless, the boys decreed that he must enter that show if there was a single aristocratic hair upon him which would entitle him to entrance. A collection was at once taken for an entrance fee, a resplendent new collar bought and put upon his neck, a basket procured, and, escorted by one of the boys. Tommy took a trolley-ride to the cat show, which was held in a large building in another quarter of the town. The people who happened to be in the trolley-car which conveyed Tommy were not left in any doubt regarding the contents of the basket. But at length he was landed safely at his destination and placed in a cage.

The cages were arranged upon low tables in order that big and little visitors alike might see the occupants easily. Tommy's stood in the middle of a row, and his neighbors, separated from him by heavy cardboard partitions, – alack! they should have been sheet-iron, – were a blue Maltese, with five tiny kittens, and the beauty of the show, a handsome "tortoiseshell," with enough Angora blood to enable him to claim relationship with royalty. Cats of all degrees, sizes, and colors were there.

Tommy could not, of course, see his neighbors, but he well knew they were at hand. And how he hated that cage I Bristling with indignation, he retired to the extreme back of it, turned his back upon all comers, and positively refused to look at them. The exhibition was to be held from Monday morning until Saturday evening – ample time for Tommy to distinguish himself. Yet for three days it seemed as though he were destined to return to the Post Office as lacking of laurels, blue ribbons, and such, as any street cat. Not a single trick would he perform, although the man to whose care he was entrusted, and who had been Tommy's intimate friend for the past two years, strove in every way to induce him to "show off." Not a bit of it!

Then came a delegation of the boys to visit Tommy among the "four hundred," and his reputation was saved. They arrived in the very nick of time, for that very afternoon the cat was taken from his cage to the judges' stand. His friends followed close upon his heels, eager to see Tommy do credit to his training, for they knew nothing of his previous conduct. And, lo! for love of the gray-coated men who crowded about the platform, and whose coats smelt of the letter pouches. Tommy outdid himself; this was his way of begging to be taken back to the Post Office by them. But neither the judges nor the admiring public suspected Tommy's ulterior motives, as they exclaimed over his clever tricks. He boxed like a prize-fighter, sang for his dinner, and ate like a boarding school miss fresh from her seminary when he was placed before a small table with a napkin pinned about his neck. He shook hands with people, was a "dead cat" or a "live one" at command, and, when his repertoire was ended, walked over to one of his friends and hopped upon his shoulder as though to say: "I've done my best, now please take me home."

"It can't be done. Tommy, my boy," said the letter-carrier. "You may as well make up your mind to spend the entire week among the upper ten. Take advantage of your privileges as they come, for there's no telling when new honors will seek you out."

So back to his hated cage Tommy had to go, there to display his prize, – a blue ribbon specially voted him "for general intelligence," and to await the coming Saturday for his release from "durance vile." At least, so those in authority decreed. They little knew Tommy Post-Office.

During the afternoon Miss Westfield brought Barbara to see him, and thus one bright ray shone across his clouded horizon, for Barbara spent more than an hour with him, and Tommy renewed his entreaties to be taken home, greatly to the amusement of several other children who were gathered about his cage at the time.

“We ’d just love to take you home, Tommy,” said the little girl, “but don’t you know that you are a very wonderful cat, and that is the reason the Post Office people put you here? They want everybody to know about you. So please be a good pussy, and don’t do a single thing that’s naughty, will you?”

Tommy looked at Barbara a moment, as though considering before he promised; and then, if ever a cat winked his eye. Tommy winked his.

“Will you bring me to see him again to-morrow, Auntie?” asked the little girl, lingering a moment at parting.

“I would love to, dearie, but you know that I must go to New York to-morrow for my music lesson. So I am afraid that you will not be able to see Tommy at the show again.”

Disappointment overspread Barbara’s face, for she seemed to feel instinctively that Tommy’s reputation for good behavior rested largely with her influence over him. Under what circumstances she next saw that designing cat must be told under the heading of “Tommy’s Escape.”

## 7. Tommy's Escape

WITH EVENING many more visitors arrived, but Tommy declined to unbend. His trusted friends had failed him. At midnight the doors were closed and the lights extinguished. Silence reigned save when some lonesome cat wailed out his distress. Tommy did not wail; he had other thoughts to occupy him. Deep down in his cat heart he had resolved to “get even” with something or somebody, whatever or whoever was responsible for his incarceration. About two o'clock the moonlight began to flood the hall, and Tommy set about carrying his plans into effect. He sniffed and sniffed all around the edges of his cage in hope of finding some weak spot, but without success. On his left the blue Maltese purred contentedly to her babies, but on his right an occasional low growl from the Tortoise-shell testified to his resentment at being disturbed by “a common Post Office cat” at such an unseemly hour. Tommy continued to fidget. At length the Tortoise-shell could no longer endure such a state of affairs, and gave louder voice to his disapproval, which clearly meant:

“Be quiet, you commonplace creature, and let me slumber in peace!”





The watchman found Tortoise-shell in a state of collapse.

“You’re another!” retorted Tommy.

“How dare you so presume?” screamed the Tortoise-shell.

“Dare! Dare! Who says ‘dare’ to me. Tommy Post-Office’? Oh, it I could only reach you I’d soon show you what I’d dare!”

“Indeed I happily, you cannot. The authorities took great precautions to protect me. When my mistress, whose home is on Woodland Avenue, placed me here she insisted that I should be carefully shielded from contact with the common herd. She told the authorities that she simply could not have me brought in touch with such creatures.”

“You don’t say so! Well, we’ll see,” was Tommy’s derisive retort.

Then a little performance took place which had not been set down in the program, and there were only excited cats and startled poultry to witness it. When the watchman appeared upon the scene the following morning the

cardboard partition between Tommy's and the Tortoiseshell's cage was reduced to a pulp, the wire was torn from its fastenings, the Tortoise-shell lay in a state of collapse upon the bottom of his cage, – both eyes closed, and tufts of his silky fur scattered all about him, and literally “not fit to be seen.” Tommy had vanished completely.

Consternation reigned. The prize darling of the show was tenderly lifted from his cage and restoratives were quickly applied. Happily, he was able “to take notice” when his mistress arrived at eleven o'clock, but, alas I he was no longer the well-groomed beauty from which she had parted the previous evening. Tommy had important concerns to look to elsewhere, and had evidently gone to attend to them.

As soon as he found himself upon the outside of his cage he lost no time in scuttling away to a hiding-place, of which there were many, and directly the doors were opened the next morning out he slipped into the street. Although somewhat “knocked about,” for Tortoise-shell's claws had done effective work. Tommy hurried along the streets, anxious to make his way home. We are told that it is impossible for a cat to get lost, but this cat was certainly lost for the time being. He scurried from one street to another, frightened and bewildered, and at length managed to stray into a wretched quarter of the town where he came very near meeting his fate, for there he was set upon by a mob of howling boys, and forced to flee for his life.

Poor Tommy! if ever he had use for his nimble legs he certainly had then, for never in all his life had he fallen into such straits. On, on, he scurried; behind barrels of refuse, down cellar-ways to rush out at the further end; down dark, ill-smelling alleys; out into the street once more, until it seemed as though his breath must leave him and he would drop in his tracks. And still those yelling, shouting boys were after him. It was well for them that none of the letter-carriers happened along just then, or they would have had a reckoning to render that they little calculated upon. Tommy had no idea in which direction he was running. All sense of locality had long since deserted him. But the guardian angel which watches over dumb creatures, as we are told, must have had special charge of Tommy that morning, for just as the boys were almost upon him he darted into a passing coal-cart, and while the driver was reading the riot act to his pursuers, Tommy darted out again, turned a corner, and found himself in the midst of one of the broadest thoroughfares of the city, with trolleys and what not surrounding

him. But the boys were again hot upon his trail, and away he scurried, the next instant to hear a familiar voice cry, "Tommy Post-Office!"

Meantime, far away in another part of the city where one finds pretty, attractive homes. Miss Westfield was bidding her little niece good-bye, and charging her to be a good little maid and take excellent care of mamma and baby brother. Barbara promised, but added: "Won't you be home in time to take me to see Tommy again, Aunt Mary?"

"Not at the show, dear, but we will see him at the Post Office next week," and a pretty color came into the young auntie's cheeks.

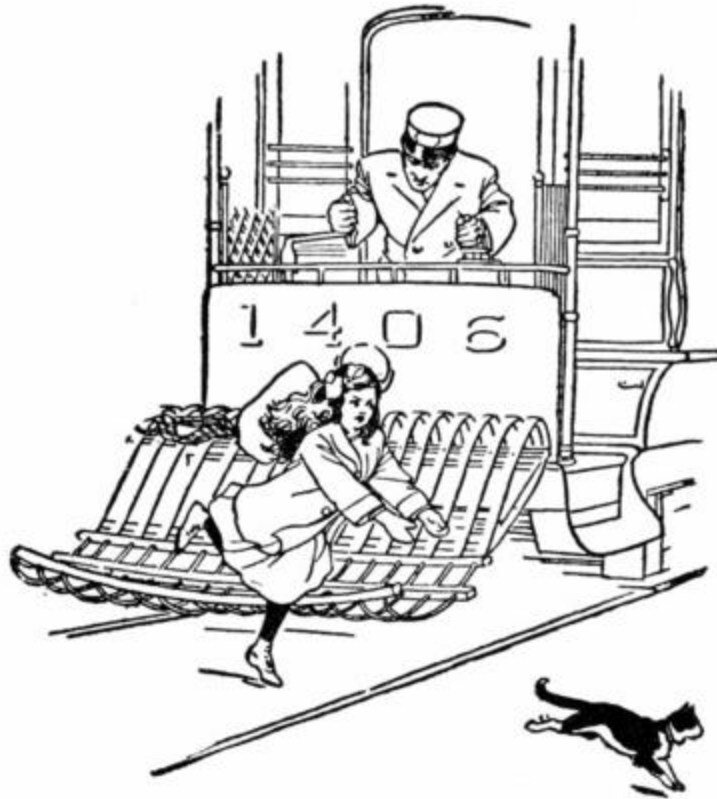
"But I do so want to see him there, and I know he wants to see me, for he is lonesome."

"I am sorry, but I must go to New York, you know, and learn to sing so beautifully that everyone will want to listen to me," answered Mary Westfield, laughing. "And I must run away this minute, for I have some shopping to do for mamma before I can take the twelve-thirty train, and must get my luncheon down town too. So good-bye, sweetheart," and away she hurried.

It was a clear, crisp December day, and Barbara longed to be out of doors. Running up to her mother's room, she asked: "Won't you take me out for a walk, mamma?"

"I can't, dear, for brother is very miserable with his teeth, and I cannot leave him. Why don't you take a ride up and down the block on your tricycle? It is such a lovely morning that I am sure you would enjoy it, dear. Only do not leave the block," she added, as she buttoned the little girl's warm cloak and drew on her red mittens.

"I won't," promised Barbara, as she kissed her mother, and ran downstairs. The child meant to keep her promise, but, oh, dear I it is so hard to remember when one is but seven years old. Up and down the sidewalk rolled the little tricycle, and as she rode thoughts of Tommy Post-Office, shut up in his cage, far away at the show, kept passing through her busy brain, until, before she knew how it had happened, Barbara had dismounted from her vehicle and was hurrying down Asylum Avenue toward the city.



“Hi! Hi! Look out!” shouted the motor-  
man.

But the city is a big place for one little girl, and she was only a very small dot upon its busy streets. On she wandered – on – on – through the bustle and traffic, to the broad thoroughfares, where trolleys clanged, drays rattled by, and confusion reigned. Her feet were growing somewhat weary and her little brain entirely bewildered. No one noticed the child, for she was just one among many others. Around the park, down a street where tall warehouses towered upon either side, on and on until one of the broad, main streets was reached and she started across it. She got half way over and then stopped stock-still between the trolley-tracks. Cars were approaching from north and south, and wagons darting hither and thither.

“Hi! Hi! Look out! Get out of the way, you young tyke!” shouted a motorman, bringing his car up with a jerk as it bore down upon the child.

“Oh, auntie I auntie!” sobbed the poor little girl, too terrified to move, “I want to see Tommy Post-Office, I do! I do!” and as though he had sprung from the ground at her bidding, a black-and-white cat, hotly pursued by three or four yelling boys, darted across the street at her very feet, his collar gleaming in the sunshine, and the bells upon it jingling. Barbara recognized him instantly, and that recognition probably saved her life, for with a wild cry of, “Oh, Tommy, Tommy, please wait for me!” she rushed after the cat and gained the sidewalk just as he vanished within an open door.

Meantime a policeman was hurrying to the little maid’s rescue, and just as her foot touched the curbstone he picked her up in his strong arms and asked in a comforting voice: “Well, little girl, don’t you think I’d better carry you out of this crowd?”

“But it’s Tommy! It’s Tommy Post-Office, and the boys chased him into that store! Oh, please, please get Tommy for me,” and Barbara clasped her small hands imploringly.

“Tommy Post-Office?” queried the officer, glancing about in expectation of seeing a small boy. “Who is Tommy Post-Office, little girl?”

“The pussy that lives at the Post Office where Uncle Bobbert is. I love him, I love him dearly!”

“Come on, and we’ll find him if he is in that store,” was the consoling answer, and the big man, with the little girl held tightly in his arms, strode toward the store at which she was pointing.

Tommy’s pursuers had vanished.

“Got a runaway cat in here?” he asked as he entered.



"Got a runaway cat in here?" he asked.

"Got the very Old Boy himself, you'd better ask!" was the indignant retort. "Look at this, and this, and this; and who's to pay for it, I'd like to know\*?" cried the man, his voice rising higher and higher with each word. He stood in front of his desk as he held to view a shirt-sleeve dripping with black ink, pointed to a ledger lying upon it bespattered all over with black splashes, and eyed with disgust a stream of little black rivulets which were flowing from it to the floor.

"Guess you were right in line when the spill came," said the officer, smiling.

"In line!" snapped the man.

“Reckon the whole blamed store was in line. Never see such a critter as that one in all my time, drat him!”

“Where is he now?” asked the officer.

“Where he won’t do no more harm till I can kill him, you bet your last cent on that I”

“Better hand him over and let me take care of him.”

“Will you kill him? I tell you that cat’s got to die. Here, take him,” and reaching somewhere within his desk he hauled out the forlorn Tommy, shirt-front and stockings inky black.

“Oh, Tommy I dear, dear Tommy!” cried Barbara, reaching out for him.

“Me-row-wow-r-r!” warbled Tommy as the policeman placed him in the little girl’s outstretched arms, and his fear straightway vanished at the sound of a friendly voice.

“Now where shall I take you both?” asked the officer.

“Oh, please take me to Uncle Bobbert at the Post Office. Tommy lives there, and Uncle Bobbert will take care of us.”

To the Post Office they accordingly made their way. Mr. Weston was about to put on his hat and coat to go to his dinner when his doorway was darkened by the form of a big policeman, holding in his arms a small child who clasped a rowdy looking cat.

“Uncle Bobbert I Uncle Bobbert! here we are!”

Mr. Weston dropped both hat and coat and the next instant had Barbara in his arms. The officer stated the facts of the case and then took his leave. Mr. Weston sat down in his chair, with Barbara upon his knee and Tommy upon his shoulder.

“Now tell me all about it once more, Barbara. I don’t understand yet how you came to be ’way down in Main Street.”

“I wanted to see Tommy again at the show. Auntie couldn’t take me, ’cause she had to go to New York this afternoon for her music lesson, so I thought I could go alone, but I got lost. I was right out in the street when Tommy came. I ran after him and the policeman took care of us. I told him

to take us to Uncle Bobbert!” here Barbara paused suddenly, clapped her hand over her mouth, and looked dismayed.

“Go on. Take you to whom?”

“I didn’t mean to say it I Auntie said I must never, never call you by that name that I made for you, and I promised her I wouldn’t, but I forgot,” said Barbara, contritely, as she hung her head.

“O – h! Say, Barbara, whereas auntie now?”

“I guess she’s getting her luncheon at Brown’s. She said she was going to after she ’tended to mamma’s shopping, and –”

But Robert Weston had risen to his feet. Tommy jumped to the floor and walked from the room, disgust written all over him. Hurriedly putting on his coat and hat Mr. Weston said to Barbara:

“Let me take you right home, Barbara, for I am sure mamma will be terribly worried about you.”

If passers-by took time to notice the tall man striding along with a pretty little child perched high upon his shoulder, their comments might very naturally have been, “How that man adores that child!”

As they turned into Asylum Street they caught sight of a trim figure hurrying along it toward the railway station, but her hastening steps were no

match for the long strides rapidly overtaking her, and a moment later one high-pitched voice was crying:

“Oh, Aunt M-a-r-y! Aunt M-a-r-y!” while mingling with it came, “Miss Westfield! Mary!”

Mary Westfield did not take the twelve-thirty train that day. Whether it was because she felt it her duty to see Barbara safely restored to her mother, or whether Robert Weston’s question had any influence upon her plans, who shall say? As they hurried along he said:

“I have learned that Barbara has a new name for me, Mary. Won’t you give her permission to use it always?”



## 8. Tommy's Ordeal By Fire

JUNE, with its roses and soft air, had come. Birds were building their nests in the leafy branches of the trees in the Post Office park, and Tommy was on the alert for the unwary ones. In the upper part of the city another "nest" was being built – indeed, was almost completed – and friends of those who would occupy it were adorning it with all sorts of contributions. Great interest in this particular nest was manifested by "the boys" at the Post Office, and they were anxious to be represented. Heads were put together in conference, and great plans evolved. At length a decision was made: a handsome life size photograph of Tommy Post-Office should be taken, the picture artistically framed, and sent to the nest with the compliments of "the boys."

Robert Weston was to be kept in ignorance of their intention.

Barbara still called him "Uncle Bobbert" in secret, but had given Aunt Mary her promised word that the name should not be even breathed in public until after June 30.

All went well until the day arrived for photographing the cat. He was conveyed to the finest photographer in town, but lost his temper en route, for the basket suggested cat shows, and Tommy had had all he cared to have of those. However, the studio was reached in time, and the first attempt made. Alack-a-day! they might as well have tried to photograph a swallow. The instant the instrument was pointed at Tommy he was somewhere else. Had the camera been an infernal machine he could not have regarded it with greater distrust. More than an hour was spent in futile endeavor, and then the photographer gave up in disgust. So that plan fell through. Next to be adopted was a snap-shot, the small picture so taken to be enlarged later. So far so good. The plan was all right; the only stumbling-block was the cat. Of the half-dozen attempts the first got him with Richard's grinning face for a background, which was obviously inappropriate. The second showed

Tommy with three heads; the third no head at all; the fourth managed to capture his hind-legs and a rampant bottle-brush of a tail as he fled the premises; the fifth captured as dour-looking a beast as anyone could conceive of, for one of the boys, carefully concealed behind some drapery, held him, and Tommy resented the indignity. Number six showed him fast asleep, – the only one anything like him, – but, as one of the boys said, “We could get any old cat that way; we want Tommy as he looked at the show.”



They might as well have tried to photograph a swallow.

“There’s luck in number seven,” was Dan’s reassuring remark, and so it seemed, for number seven proved a great success, although Tommy had to pass through a chastening process before he was sufficiently subdued to sit for his portrait as a cat should.

A morning or two later one of the clerks arrived upon the scene armed and equipped with a fine new kodak, and announced his determination “to snap that cat or kill him!” He nearly succeeded in his latter threat, but failed for the time being to carry out the former.

It was a wonder that anything went as it should have gone in the Registry Department of the Hartford Post Office during that day, for work was dropped and the kodak hastily caught up every time Tommy's whiskers appeared around a corner. Noon came and passed without a picture being taken, and then he vanished entirely.



Determined to "snap that cat."

"Ben, have you seen Tommy during the last two hours?" asked the registry clerk with some spirit as he gathered up his papers to lock them in the safe before taking his departure that evening.

"No, sir, not a sign of him. Guess he's hid away from your machine there," answered Ben, pointing to the kodak.

"I'd like to hide him away somewhere, the rascal that he is!" and the clerk slammed the safe door shut.

“It’s no use to try again to-night. I’ll bring the kodak with me in the morning. Good-night.”

“Good-night, sir. Better luck tomorrow.”

The night shift of clerks missed Tommy. Lunch hour came and passed, yet he failed to appear for his midnight feast. The engineer called and whistled in vain as he sat with his back to the partition of the engine room and waited for Tommy to come running along the top of it to drop upon his shoulder and claim the tidbit always saved for him.

No Tommy materialized. At eight o’clock the following morning the registry clerk returned, armed with his keys and his kodak. After placing the latter carefully upon his desk he unlocked the various drawers containing the materials needed for the day, and at last threw open the safe door. Lying with his nose to the crack, apparently lifeless, was Tommy Post-Office!



**Lying with his nose to the crack, was Tommy Postoffice.**

He picked up the limp little figure and ran to the door with him, half the force of clerks hurrying behind, for the evil news flew like a flash.

“He’s a goner for sure, this time,” cried one. “Looks like it,” cried another.

“How under the sun did I ever manage to lock him in that safe and not know it?” was the registry clerk’s perplexed query.

“But he crawled in behind the big books to hide from your kodak,” suggested one of the men.

“That’s it, just as sure as you live! Run over to the drugstore for a bottle of smelling salts, Mac. Hustle! We’ll bring him to life if there’s a spark of it left in him. Bring a pail of water, Ben.”

Orders flew and so did the men.

Such a small matter as the United States mail could wait! What was that compared to the life of the Post Office cat"? Cold water, smelling salts, fresh air, and vigorous massage had their effect, and before long Tommy began to gasp. The small life-engine within him began to throb once more, and the pumps got in action. He opened his eyes, blinked at the men once or twice, attempted to get upon his feet, wobbled, and tumbled over with a look of resignation to the inevitable. They carried him back into the building, heated some milk and fed him. Evidently the milk had a stimulating effect, for in an hour or so he seemed quite as well as ever, although by no means as lively.

"Now's my chance," cried the registry clerk. A cloth was hastily thrown over a bench, Tommy was carefully lifted upon it, stroked and petted into a most beatific frame of mind, and the kodak brought into range. Evidently Tommy's heart was swelling with gratitude to his friends, for he beamed upon them like a man who has been convivial and "feels good."

A snap, a click, and the deed was done! When the thirtieth of June dawned a fine photograph of a finer cat stood in its handsome frame among many other beautiful wedding gifts in Mrs. Westfield's drawing room. It was fortunate for the bride elect that her wedding day had not been set for July thirtieth instead of June, or she would never have numbered among her gifts a picture of the handsome cat.

Robert Weston and his wife were still absent upon their wedding trip when Dan was taken seriously ill and his place temporarily filled by another man, as surly, disagreeable a creature as ever trod the earth. From the outset he was cordially disliked by everyone, and more than one of the Post Office employees predicted that trouble would follow in his footsteps. It came all too soon.

He was doing night duty about ten days after his installation, and at the usual luncheon hour was seated in Dan's chair, tilted back against the partition in Dan's own attitude, and regaling himself upon a choice morsel. More than once while at luncheon during the past ten days he had driven Tommy from the engine room, for he hated cats as he hated every living thing. Tommy had kept at a respectful distance, but to-night the engineer had something in his dinner-pail which the cat could not resist. He scram-

bled to the partition from the rear end of the cellar, trod noiselessly along the top of it until he was just above the man, and then dropped upon his shoulder as he had hundreds of times dropped upon good-natured Dan's. Woe to poor Tommy! This man and Dan were very different individuals.

There was a startled yell, a curse, an over-turned chair, a lunch-pail rolling upon the floor, and an insanely enraged man. The next instant a horrible thing happened. Tommy was caught up and hurled bodily into the glowing ash-pit beneath the boilers.

## 9. The Post-Office Becomes A Hospital

TO DESCRIBE all that took place that frightful midnight hour would be impossible. Poor, petted Tommy! His cries of anguish speedily brought his friends to his rescue, and it is well for the fiend in human form who committed the atrocious act that the cat absorbed the attention of all the men in the office for the time being. During that hour, while the men worked over the suffering animal, the man disappeared forever. He was never again seen about the Post Office, nor could any trace be found of him when, later, officers were sent in quest of him. True, no one had actually seen him throw Tommy into the ash-pit, but one of the men who had been engaged with some work in the cellar at the time had seen the cat jump to the partition and run along it toward the engine room. He had smiled as he recalled Tommy's pranks with Dan, and the next instant had come the scuffle and mingled cries of pain and rage. When the men reached the cat he was rushing from the ash-pit writhing in agony.

Never did men work more faithfully over a human friend than these men worked over this animal friend, yet it seemed for a time that the poor creature must succumb to his cruel suffering. Day after day he lay upon the bed of oiled cotton which they had prepared for him, swathed from head to tail in soothing ointment, but moaning piteously with pain. Day after day the men coaxed him to eat some of the dainties which they brought to him, fearing that the poor creature would die of starvation. But Tommy's sufferings were too great for the daintiest food to tempt him. More than a week passed before he could be moved from his bed of cotton except to have his terrible wounds dressed, and during that time he had taken less than a cupful of milk. At length, however, he began to mend, and at the end of ten days he took his first morsel of food, – a dainty bit of chicken brought to



him by one of his devoted friends from his home many miles from the Post Office.



Swathed from head to tail in soothing ointment.

Then if ever a cat was pampered Tommy was that cat. But it required a long, long time for those cruel burns to heal. Six weeks passed before he left his bed unless carried from it by one of his friends. Meantime, Mr. Weston and his wife returned, and when they learned what had taken place their indignation knew no bounds. Another search was made for the culprit, but without avail.



Tommy would "O. K." the delivery of each letter with a little pat.

Not until adversity overtook him did Tommy learn the true value of his friends, or how numerous they were. Nor had those to whom he belonged realized how wide a reputation the cat possessed. Men, women, and children came to the Post Office to inquire for him, for few had ever visited the office without sooner or later seeing Tommy, and becoming familiar with his clever ways. At the hour of delivery he was usually to be found perched upon the little shelf of the general delivery window, and as each letter was handed to the person calling for it he would give it a little pat with his paw as though to say, "I must O. K. that."

Dozens of funny little pranks of this sort had endeared him to those visiting the Post Office, and when they learned of his misfortune it was no wonder the keenest sympathy was manifested.

Two months passed before Tommy got about once more, but, alas I it was a distressing looking object that went slowly about the office. Only stumps of his large, glossy ears remained. Fully one third of his tail was gone. Not a hair or a whisker remained upon his body, and every claw was burned off. The soft pads of his feet which had enabled him to steal upon his prey – the rats and mice – so stealthily, were reduced to blunt horny substances, and when, later on, he had entirely recovered his health and spirits, and sometimes in the “wee sma’ hours” of the night sought to renew his youth by frolicking about the office, it sounded as though a goat were trying to “do a dance.”

In course of time, however, a new coat, nearly as glossy and silky as the former one, made its appearance, and a snowy shirt-front and socks grew again. New whiskers and “blinkers” appeared, and he became less uncanny to look upon. Nevertheless, Tommy the beauty had disappeared forever, to give place to Tommy the freak cat. Happily, his wits had not been affected, and his affection for the men had grown stronger as a result of their untiring devotion to him. It is said that every catastrophe has a funny side, but it would seem that Tommy’s was too horrible to have a shade of humor in it. Still, it followed in the course of time. Tommy Junior, as the little kitten adopted by Tommy Senior had been named, was the unwitting cause of the funny side of the mishap. During the nine months the kitten had spent at the Post Office under Tommy’s protection he had hastened to profit by it, and to follow his protector’s example in all things. It was funny to see the kitten copy the cat. He grew to be so like him that he was often mistaken for him by strangers. Tommy Senior did not appear to know it; perhaps he would not have cared much if he had. After his accident, however, he began to draw comparisons and comparisons, as we know are “odious.” They proved so in Tommy’s case. At first he merely avoided his late protege. If Tommy Junior approached him with a friendly warble he would look at him a moment, then click away on his poor, horny feet to some remote corner of the building, there to groom himself as though striving to restore some of his former dapperness. But it was a vain attempt. Never again could he hope to be as he had once been, and to have the contrast brought home to him so sharply day after day was too much for his pride. Something must be done and done speedily to end it all. The way soon presented itself.

The kitten was fond of a sparrow dinner, and although by no means so expert as Tommy Senior in catching his prey, he did manage to capture a tender morsel now and again. Tommy Senior reasoned things out in his cat brain, and in the course of time settled upon a plan of action. One day in September, during a driving rain-storm which beat down branches and soaked everything through and through, he set about carrying his plan into effect.

A sparrow too wet to fly was caught and laid at the delighted kitten's feet. The next moment sparrow, feathers and all, was disappearing. Tommy Senior grinned a complacent grin. An hour later another sparrow was presented to Tommy Junior, to go the way of number one. A little later still another dripping bird met its fate and went the way of its relations. Number four and number five were caught, offered, and eagerly devoured by the kitten; then Tommy sat down to await developments. He did not have to wait very long. Before the hour was ended howls and wails of misery arose from that gourmand kitten. He ran from one room to another yowling out as plainly as an animal could, "Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What a stomach-ache I've got!"



Mr. Weston had watched the whole performance with absorbing interest.

Mr. Weston had watched the whole performance with absorbing interest, and when the climax was finally reached he laughed like a schoolboy. The kitten was caught, a dose of medicine administered, and when Mr. Weston returned to his pretty cottage at the upper end of Asylum Avenue that evening, Tommy Junior accompanied him, there to dwell for the future, and spare Tommy Senior grounds for jealousy. Tommy Senior grinned a wise grin.

Once the kitten was removed from the scene, Tommy felt that he was reinstated. That he could, so to speak, stand for the honors of the Post Office, and no longer be forced to hear some chance visitor exclaim:

“That cat the pet of the Post Office?” in tones of surprised derision. “Why this one is far handsomer! Why do you not train him? Here pretty, pretty kitty.” The emphasis laid upon the final “pretty” was simply intolerable. Thus it ever is with hidden virtue: it has to be labeled, and after so many years of recognized merit, Tommy had no idea of going about tagged:

“This is Tommy Post-Office, the trained, intelligent pet of every official. He may not be pretty, but oh, my! he’s a wonder, and don’t you forget it!”

Before we bid Tommy farewell we must learn of one more performance in which he bore a prominent part. It can hardly be called an escapade, for it was the outcome of direct intention, and Barbara figured in it also.

Tommy’s highly cultivated table deportment was the prime cause of it, and great fun it caused. So we will call it Tommy’s and Barbara’s Farewell Performance.

## 10. Tommy's And Barbara's Farewell Performance

“UNCLE BOBBERT,” – Barbara was no longer forbidden the odd name she had coined for Mr. Weston, – “will you take me to the Post Office this morning and let me take care of Tommy until you come home for dinner?”

Barbara asked this question as she was seated at breakfast with her aunt and uncle one morning, for since her aunt's marriage she had spent more time in their cozy little home than with her mother. Mr. Weston reached over to give Barbara's ear a playful tweak as he answered:

“Take care of Tommy? Why he is all well now and does not need anyone to take care of him. What would you do at the Post Office all the morning? You 'd grow tired before an hour had passed.”

“No, I shouldn't,” asserted Barbara very positively. “I love to go down there. I often wanted to spend a day with you before you were my right out Uncle Bobbert, but Aunt Mary wouldn't let me ask you if I might. I think it's much nicer this way, because I can say just what I want to.”

“Barbara, you 're a child of vast discrimination and common sense! I quite agree with you, my dear. You shall go to the Post Office,” and Mr. Weston nodded his head in a very convincing manner to Barbara, while an odd look came into his eyes as he turned them upon his pretty wife.

“Oh, goody I I have so many mucilage friends at the office that I always enjoy myself there, and Tommy is really very faxinating.”

“Come along, then, and see your ' faxinating mucilage' friends,” said her uncle, laughing, as he rose from the table.

Barbara spent the morning trotting about the building with Tommy in close attendance. Mr. Weston was too closely occupied with his office duties to keep her beside him, and feeling sure that her friend's adhesive properties would keep them near at hand, and that no harm could befall her, he let her wander where she would. No corner of the big building was left unexplored, for those which Barbara did not know Tommy knew very well indeed, and together they poked their inquisitive little noses into all sorts of unfrequented places.



With Tommy in close attendance.

It was nearly time for Mr. Weston's return for his midday dinner when one of the carriers stepped into his office to say:



“Will you come with me a moment, Mr. Weston’? There’s a sight in yonder fit to make a cat laugh.”

"What’s up?"

“High Tea or High Dinner or something like it,” answered the man, laughing and leading the way to a little room which opened off the large sorting-room, and which was only used as a sort of stowaway place. The door leading to it stood ajar, and peeping through the opening were two or three of the clerks. They stepped aside to make room for Mr. Weston, and as he looked within he certainly beheld a comical enough sight.

An empty packing-box was upturned in the middle of the floor, with a smaller box at either side of it. Spread over the largest box, by way of a tablecloth, was an old window shade, and on one side of it stood Tommy’s bowl of milk and his plate containing his dinner. Upon the other side of this improvised table were a glass of water, some gingersnaps upon a paper plate, undoubtedly of home manufacture, some sweet chocolates in tinfoil wrappers, and a little box of gumdrops; evidently Barbara’s friends had been donating. On one of the small boxes sat Tommy, a sight to bring smiles to the gravest. He wore Barbara’s little pocket-handkerchief rigged up as a cap, the point drooping dowlily over one eye, and a piece of old scrim, which she had resurrected from nobody knew where, enveloped him like an infant’s slip. One of his front paws rested upon the table, while with the other he conveyed bits of liver from his plate to his mouth. The claws had grown once more, and he could again “eat like folks.” Now and again he leaned over to lap from his bowl, but never for a moment forgot the part he was playing. As Barbara ate she kept up a steady conversation with him, to which he occasionally replied with a subdued warble.

“Now don’t that beat all you ever did see?” whispered one of the spectators. “That’s the greatest cat going, I tell you!”

“Boys,” said Mr. Weston, as he withdrew from sight and hearing of the performers, “I’ve got the biggest idea you ever heard of! That feast in yonder has put it into my head, and it’s great! If the little wife will agree, we’ll make a sensation in this town before another month has passed, you see if we don’t!”

They questioned him eagerly, but not a word would he say, save, "Just wait and see."

When he and Barbara returned to their home that noon Tommy Post-Office went with them.

Two weeks later an announcement appeared in the newspapers. An entertainment was to be given for the benefit of the letter-carriers of Hartford. The date named was November 26, and the hour eight o'clock.

"A musical recital by the quartette choir of church, and other attractions. Tickets fifty cents, the object being to establish a fund for the letter carriers in case of serious illness."

When Thanksgiving eve arrived the hall was crowded, for "the boys" were out in force, and not a few of them found it pleasant to bring some of the other sex with them. The place was bright and pretty with flags, the American, as a delicate compliment to "Uncle Sam," being given a conspicuous place. Everyone was in the gayest good-humor.

The entertainment was opened by the quartette choir, and the selection was well worth hearing. Then came a solo by the tenor, and this was followed by a solo sung by Mrs. Robert Weston. She sang Dudley Buck's "My Redeemer" as she had never sung it before, for into her life had come the great power which sways us all, filling and rounding our lives, softening and enriching every action and tone.

Two encores followed, "Elsa's Dream," and Gottschalk's "Trip to Poppy Land." The roof rang with applause as the last notes of that exquisite voice died away, and then and there "Tate" stepped in to shape the future of this talented, lovable woman. Among those in the audience was the musical director of church, – a man of great talent, and a power in the musical world. The soprano of his own church had just resigned and her place must be filled. Here, in his estimation, was the very voice to fill it – soft, tender, sympathetic, and with a range as surprising as it was without effort. Before another week had passed Mary Weston had been offered, and had accepted, the position which led to the place she holds today in the musical world. Just how proud her husband was of his talented wife's triumph we have no place to tell in this history of Tommy Post-Office, but must hasten back to Tommy himself.

There was considerable delay after Mrs. Weston's number, and more or less commotion behind the scenes. Screens had been placed across the platform, and sounds of suppressed mirth were heard behind them. At length, however, the accompanist seated herself at the piano and began to play softly, "Auld Lang Syne," while from behind the wings, in Mary Weston's sympathetic voice, came distinctly, "Should auld acquaintance be forgot?" The screens were withdrawn, to disclose, seated at a little dinner-table, – doll's dishes, tiny candles with red shades, and service all complete, – Barbara and Tommy Post-Office. The national gobbler was represented by a roasted chicken, some of which had already been carved, and the slices, cut into dainty squares, were lying upon the little plates in front of the cat and the wee maid. Barbara was dressed like a little Puritan maiden, – a veritable "Priscilla," and Tommy was a sight for gods and men!



Seated at a little table—Barbara and Tommy Postoffice.

A long and most elaborate baby gown fell to the floor from the doll's high chair upon which he was seated. His furry fore-paws and shoulders were displayed by its short-sleeved, decollete waist, a string of gold beads encircled his neck, and from a much-beruffled baby cap his comical "Come-on; what-do-you-care?" face gazed upon the audience.

One might have feared that the squares of roast fowl upon his plate would prove rather hearty diet for an infant in long clothes, but at a word from Barbara (Tommy had been put through two solid weeks of training for this one star performance, and knew what was expected of him) this precocious infant reached forth a very odd-looking hand, caught a square of fowl deftly upon the claws, and conveyed it without mishap to his mouth, where it vanished right speedily. It was a wonder that the cat did not become terrified at the outburst of applause which followed this performance, but he was accustomed to seeing many people, and consequently proceeded with his feast in the most unconcerned manner. Moreover, he was hungry, for, like the sturdy, self-sacrificing forefathers, whom he was commemorating, Tommy had been forced by "circumstances entirely beyond his control" to fast before he feasted.



He nodded at the audience from over Barbara's shoulder.

At length the last morsel of chicken was eaten, the last drop of milk lapped up, the last word of the interesting conversation maintained by Barbara and her queer guest spoken. Then Tommy turned his comical face toward the audience. Just then a voice called out, "Three cheers and a tiger for Tommy Post-Office, the star of the evening!" and the very roof rang. Now it had not been set down in the program that Tommy should acknowledge an encore, but he evidently had his own ideas regarding his duty on that score, for he had recognized the voice which proposed the cheer. So, quite forgetful of his finery, he jumped down from his chair, and with an appreciative, "Me-rowow-ow-o-o-w:" started toward the edge of the platform. Two or three steps were taken, and then his long gown interfered, and the next instant away went Tommy heels over head. His cap flopped over one eye, his gown trailed out behind him. But it took a good deal ever to phase Tommy. When Barbara ran to pick him up and carry him from the platform, he nodded at the audience from over her shoulder, and the last they saw of

the remarkable infant was a black and white face peeping from its befrilled bonnet as he disappeared behind the wings.

# 11. Tommy Post-Office And “Owney” Say Farewell

HAVE YOU HEARD ENOUGH about Tommy Post-Office, or do you want to hear about his acquaintance with Owney, the Post Office dog?

But this must be “positively his last appearance” upon these pages. Not that Tommy is too old, or has grown uninteresting. No, indeed! He still lives and flourishes in the Hartford Post Office, but I have come to the end of my story about him. His friend, Mr. Weston, is as proud of him as ever; Barbara, although quite a young lady now, often visits him, and Mrs. Weston does not forget to take him a dainty when she has occasion to go to the Post Office. “The boys still pet him, and put him through his”paces“; he still hobnobs with his friend the engineer, and the porter attends daily to his meals; so you see that he is a”truly true" cat, and if you entertain the least doubt of it go straight to the Hartford Post Office and ask to see him. When I last visited him he was perched upon Mr. Weston’s desk, and, although he is certainly the oddest appearing cat one ever set one’s eyes upon, – with his docked tail, and ears rounded off as smoothly as though they had been trimmed with a pair of scissors, – he really looked as wise as an owl, and did the honors of the office with the greatest importance. But now to the story of Tommy and Owney, sometimes called “Owney of the MailBags,” sometimes “Owney, the Post-office Dog,” and again, “Owney, the Traveler.”



“Owney of the Mail-Bags.”

In the course of his wonderful journeyings, this dog Owney, visited the Hartford Post Office, – collar, harness, medals, and all. He appeared one morning arrayed like Solomon in all his glory, for his “braw brass collar” gleamed, his curious harness shone, and the medals with which it was fairly weighted down, to testify to his journeyings throughout the world, jingled right merrily with every step he took.

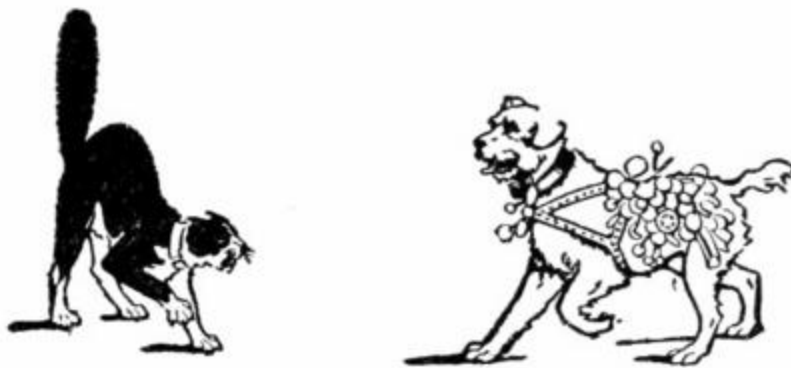
Now, I am sure that none of you have forgotten Tommy’s early aversion to dogs, and his experience with the terrier was still fresh in his memory. So when Owney appeared it was not surprising that Tommy felt it his duty to discipline him, and let him understand at once and for all time, that, while he might be, and no doubt was, a dog of vast importance the world over, there was one place upon this big globe where he was by no means “the biggest toad in the puddle,” and that was the Hartford Post Office, where Tommy Post-Office reigned supreme.

Owney, as usual, arrived upon one of the mail-wagons, and, ever confident of a warm welcome from anyone connected with the postal service, whether in his own United States or in foreign lands no matter how remote,



he jumped down from the wagon and trotted into the office, wagging his tail and jingling his medals as chummily as you please.

He went from one clerk to another, and from one department to another, greeting and greeted by all. At length he made his way into Mr. Weston's office, and Tommy was in there too. Tommy was hidden from sight behind a letter-case, but he instantly smelt "dog," and out he flew with his war-paint on. He danced along sidewise, very like a crab, hair bristling, eyes gleaming, and his stump of a tail rampant. Truly, he was a sight to daunt the bravest dog, and so sure did he feel that this particular one would quail before his onset that he was actually brought to a standstill with surprise when Owney, with a friendly bark, jumped toward him all ready for a frolic. Owney had gone through life making friends at every turn, and felt so sure of a cordial greeting from everybody and everything that he did not know what to make of Tommy's belligerent attitude toward him.



He was a sight to daunt the bravest dog.

He had romped with American cats, Japanese cats, Chinese cats, Turkish cats, Russian cats, German cats, Dutch cats, French cats, English cats, and Irish cats, and saw no reason why this freak Yankee cat should wish to scratch his eyes out.

Whether it was the bark, the jump, or the jingle of the medals no one tried to guess, but for the first and last time on record. Tommy was thor-

oughly frightened and routed; with one wild yowl he fled, Owney hard after him, harness and all.

Tommy's haven of refuge was invariably his box beneath Mr. Weston's desk, so for it he pelted, and once he had gained it, there he stood, growling and glaring at the funny little dog, who looked at him with a laugh in his intelligent eyes, as though he enjoyed the joke.

"Hello! Tommy Post-Office routed by Owney, the United States Mail dog!" cried Mr. Weston, laughing, and Owney promptly trotted up to him and "presented arms"; that is, he wagged his tail, squatted upon his haunches, and lifted a paw to shake hands. That paw had been shaken by many a postal official of both high and low degree, and Owney was a wise dog.

"How are you, old man?" asked Mr. Weston, stooping down to take the scraggy little paw in his hand.

"Glad to see you. Travelled far? Come up here and talk to a chum." He lifted the dog to his knees, where he petted and talked to him, and examined his wonderful medals. Presently he peeped down under his desk where Tommy was still bridling. Then his merry laugh again rang through the office.

"Tommy, if you know what you're about, you will come out and do the honors to this distinguished gentleman who has condescended to visit you. You don't appreciate your privileges. I tell you, Tommy, it isn't every Post Office cat who can boast of having entertained Owney. Come out, I say, and do the hospitable act. Come on, now, and no nonsense." Reaching down he lifted the cat from his box and placed him upon the desk.

Now, it is impossible to tell whether Tommy understood the words (the boys declared he understood every word spoken to him; but then, the boys were inclined to be partial, since Tommy founded their Fund), or whether the tone conveyed to him the impression that obedience would be to his advantage. He, in common with all other animals that came under Robert Weston's care and rule, both loved and obeyed. Just why they did so Mr. Weston's friends found it difficult to understand, but that did not alter the fact. Horses, dogs, cats, and more than once wild animals, that he had managed while still a lad to capture and tame, loved and obeyed him. To this day his

friends tell an amusing story of a very youthful escapade with one of his father's fractious horses, an animal which even the bravest man approached with caution. Little Bob chose a novel way to bring him to terms. He was too young to walk at the time, so he crept into the horse's stall upon all fours. Possibly he decided that this mode of navigation would bring him in closer sympathy with a creature which traveled upon four feet. At all events that was how he got there, and when two hours later he was missed, and a search instituted, they found the intrepid horse trainer seated between the horse's hind-legs, playing "peep" through the long, sweeping tail, and the animal regarding him benignly. That horse was given to little Bob then and there, and they literally grew up together, for the horse was a mere colt at the time. Stories are still told of the pranks they cut during the ensuing fifteen years. But this is a long way from Tommy and Owney.



One plate served for both.

The dog eyed the cat and the cat eyed the dog. Then a truce was declared. Tommy jumped to Mr. Weston's shoulder, his expression softened as he gravely accepted the honors which had been "thrust upon him." Good-natured Owney wagged his tail and smiled a dog-smile, which said, as plainly as words could have done, "Oh, it's all in the day's work."

Before an hour passed Mr. Weston telephoned to his home for Mrs. Weston and Barbara to come to the office, for Owney was a character well worth going a long distance to see. Moreover, although in Hartford today, within forty-eight hours he might be found in Chicago, and at the end of a week in San Francisco.

Barbara and Mrs. Weston tarried only long enough to put up a little feast for the distinguished Post Office guest, and then hurried down town.

It was Barbara who placed the dish upon the floor for Owey and Tommy, for she was resolved that Tommy should do the honors in true Abyssinian style, and partake from the same dish with the guest. Fancy Tommy partaking of food from the same dish with a dog! Nevertheless, it came to pass, and as we bid them farewell we see Tommy and Owey actually “cheek by jowl.” Tommy the dog-hater! One plate of tender liver served for both. One bowl of milk was quite large enough for the black-and-white nose and the gray scraggy one. Tommy Post-Office, the pet of Hartford, and Owey, the pet of every Post Office in the world.

**The End.**



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Him that they might have life. They reject Him, and therefore stand rejected. But those who come to Him, poor and needy and helpless, but trusting in His mercy, He will receive, to comfort and to save.”

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