

Mistress Gurton's Cat

A Domestic Tale

By Mrs. Mary Robinson

Old Mistress Gurton had a Cat,
A Tabby, loveliest of the race,
Sleek as a doe, and tame, and fat
With velvet paws, and whisker'd face;
The Doves of Venus not so fair,
Nor Juno's Peacocks half so grand
As Mistress Gurton's Tabby rare,
The proudest of the purring band;
So dignified, in all her paces—
She seem'd, a pupil of the Graces!
There never was a finer creature
In all the varying whims of Nature!

All liked Grimalkin passing well!
Save Mistress Gurton, and 'tis said,
She oft with furious ire would swell,
When, through neglect or hunger keen,
Puss, with a pilfer'd scrap, was seen,
Swearing beneath the pant-house shed:
For, like some fav'rites, she was bent
On all things, yet with none content;
And still, whate'er her place or diet~
She could not pick her bone, in quiet.

Sometimes, new milk Grimalkin stole,
And sometimes—over-set the bowl!
For over eagerness will prove,
Oft times the bane of what we love;.
And sometimes, to her neighbour's home,
Grimalkin, like a thief would roam,
Teaching poor Cats, of humbler kind,
For high example sways the mind!
Sometimes she paced the garden wall,

Thick guarded by the shatter'd pane,
And lightly treading with disdain,
Fear'd not Ambition's certain fall!
Old China broke, or scratch'd her Dame
And brought domestic friends to shame!

And many a time this Cat was curst,
Of squalling, thieving things, the worst!
Wish'd Dead! and menanc'd with a string,
For Cats of such scant Fame, deserv'd to swing!

One day, report, for ever busy,
Resolv'd to make Dame Gurton easy;
A Neighbour came, with solenn look,
And thus, the dismal tidings broke.
“Know you, that poor Grimalkin died
“Last night, upon the pent-house side?
“I heard her for assistance call;
“I heard her shrill and dying squall!
“I heard her, in reproachful tone,
“Pour, to the stars, her feeble groan.!
“Alone, I heard her piercing cries—
“*With not a Friend, to close her Eyes!*”

“Poor Puss' I vow it grieves me sore,
“Never to see thy beauties more!
“Never again to hear thee purr,
“To stroke thy back, of Zebra fur;
“To see thy emral'd eyes—so bright,
“Flashing around their lust'rous light.
“Amid the solemn shades of night!

“Methinks I see her pretty paws—
“As gracefully she paced along;
“I hear her voice, so shrill, among
“The chimney rows! I see her claws,
“While, like a Tyger, she pursued.
“Undauntedly the pilf'ring race
“I see her lovely whisker'd face
“When she her nimble prey subdued!
“And then, how she would frisk, and. Play,
“And purr the Evening hours away:

“Now stretched beside the social fire;
“Now on the sunny lawn, at noon,
“Watching the vagrant Birds that flew,
“Across the scene of varied hue,
“To peck the Fruit. Or when the Moon.
“Stole o'er the hills, in sifv'ry Suit,
“How would she chaunt her lovelorn Tale
“Soft as the wild Eolian Lyre!
“Till ev'ry brute, on hill, in dale,

“Listen’d with wonder mute!”

“O! Cease!” exclaim’d Dam Gurton, straight;

“Has my poor Puss been torn-away?

“Alas! how cruel is my fate,

“How shall I pass the tedious day!

“Where can her mourning mistress find

“So sweet a Cat? so meek! so kind!

“So keen a mouser, such a beauty

“So orderly, so fond, so true,

“That every gentle task of duty

“The dear, domestic creature knew!

“Hers, was the mildest tend’rest heart!

“She knew no little *cattish* art;

“Not cross, like *fav’rite Cats*, was she

“But seem’d the queen of Cats to be!

“I cannot live—since doom’d, alas! to part’

“From poor Grimalkin, the darling of my heart!”

And now Dame Gurton, bath’d in tears,

With a black top-knot vast, appears:

Some say that a black gown she wore,

As many oft have done before,

For Beings, valued less, I wane,

Than this, of Tabby Cats, the *fav’rite Queen!*

But lo! soon after, one fair day,

Puss, who had only been a-roving—

Across the pent-house took her way,

To see her Dame, so sad, and loving;

Eager to greet the mourning fair

She enter’d by a window where.

A China bowl of luscious cream

Was quiv’ring in the sunny beam.

Puss, who was somewhat tired and dry,

And somewhat fond of bev’rage sweet;

Beholding such a tempting treat,

Resolved its depth to try.

She saw the warm and dazzling ray

Upon the spotless surface play:

She purr’d around its circle wide,

And gazed, and long’d, and mew’d and sigh’d!’

But Fate, unfriendly, did that hour controul,

She overset the cream, and smash’d the gilded howl!

As MISTRESS GURTON heard the thief,
She started from her easy chair,
And, quite unmindful of her grief,
Began aloud to swear!
“Curse that voracious beast!” she cried,
“Here SUSAN, bring a cord—
‘I’ll hang the vicious, ugly creature—
“The veriest plague e’er form’d by nature!”
And MISTRESS GURTON kept her word—
And Poor GRIMALKIN—DIED!

Thus, often, we with anguish sore
The *dead*, in clam’rous grief deplore;
Who, were they once alive again
Would, meet the sting of cold disdain!
For FRIENDS, whom trifling faults can sever,
Are *valued most*, WHEN LOST FOR EVER!