

THE ALLEY RABBIT

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The alley rabbit by James H. Penniman

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JAMES H. PENNIMAN

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ALLEY RABBIT**



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R A B B I T**

BY
JAMES H. PENNIMAN



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A LITTLE fuzzy creature called to Mary one evening from the top of a wall, putting its small head as close as possible and talking in a low sweet voice. The waif had a story to tell, it was experiencing the hardness of the world without being embittered. It was a mere bag of bones covered with moth-eaten fur whose dingy white was so nearly the color of its gray spots, that it presented a uniformly neutral tint. Its tail, a tufted bone, was about twice as long as its body. It followed Mary home and soon after its arrival a rat came out from behind the range. The small cat sprang after it and they circled the kitchen in a blur of speed and fur until the rat had a head-on collision with the coal hod. The cat pounced upon him and the

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career of Mr. Rat came to an abrupt but not untimely end. For this heroic act the cat was permitted to remain, though we are in doubt whether he has given himself to us or annexed us for his own purposes.

He was so experienced in the ways of the world, that it was not until his increase in size became noticeable that we realized that when he came he was only a half-grown kitten. We estimate his growth by the length of his tail. I have said that when he came it was a tufted bone twice the length of his body. It is now not quite as long as his body, plump, beautifully feathered and ringed and he manages it with extreme grace. When walking along the tops of fences he uses it as a rope-walker does a balancing pole. Gray remarked of his cat Selima:

“Her conscious tail her joy declar’d.”

We can tell when and to a limited extent what our cat is thinking by the way he flirts his tail,

