

saying, "You shall practise a still more simple life, for you shan't have any food for a week."

Poor Nebuchadnezzar! You may fancy how ravenously hungry he was by then, whereas the mice grew fatter and less nimble, for there was no Grey-malkin to chevy and chase them. Then Adolphus took Nebuchadnezzar to the castle, and there with the Lord High Chancellor's permission, the cat was introduced to the mice. And when the business was over, whilst the cat with a smiling face sat licking his chops, the Lord High Chancellor hastened to tell the Emperor:

"Your Majesty, as I'm alive, life's stale a hundred and twenty-eval I counted the corpses one by one, and in sixty seconds the deed was done."

Said the astonished Emperor: "Go quickly as you can, or faster; bring me the hero and his master!"

When they appeared before him he asked many questions. On hearing of the Fitzdudor family calamities, and that Adolphus was of gentle blood, he said:

"Should you like to be one of our personal train, pray speak to the Lord High Chamberlain."

And Nebuchadnezzar chief mouser shall be to our Imperial Majesty."

And Adolphus made joyful answers: "Thanks awfully, Sire, the cat and I, in your service will do or die."

This was excellent business. Adolphus Plantagenet was so willing and useful that he soon became a general favourite. He had princely board, lodging, and clothing, and his earnings brought him much more than the sale of his beans.

As to the cat, the granary gave him plenty of occupation for some long time, and when there was scarce a mouse left to squeak he was employed in various parts of the country with equal success. He wore a gold collar on which was emblazoned the Imperial arms and the letters M. C. E.—Mouse-Catcher Extraordinary.

The destruction of so many mice meant an enormous saving in corn. And as corn became more plentiful, it became cheaper and cheaper. This was an immense boon for the people, but it did not suit the chief corn merchant. He had been making an enormous profit, and as now that profit lessened, so his grumbling increased. He said, "If the silly Emperor had not engaged that silly cat, I should be making a pot of money, but I'll be even with him."

So this bad, rich man fell to considering how he should kill his liege lord.

One day, as he was passing through the castle grounds, he chanced to spy the Emperor in the distance. Like Queen Anne he sat in the sun, and on his lap was Nebuchadnezzar. For every Wednesday he gave himself a holiday from state affairs which, you know, are rather taxing.

Year in year out he sat on the slope of the hill, sheltered from the north and facing the sunny south.

Immediately this bad, rich man formed a plan for destroying, at one fell swoop, Emperor and cat. He nursed his thoughts of vengeance until the winter, and then he went to work. First of all he felled a big tree and chopped off the branches. From it he cut a length of twenty feet level all round, and this immense log rested on the ground a mile above the spot where the Emperor was wont to sit upon his golden throne. A long lever was so arranged that, by means of it, the log could easily be set rolling.

There came a day when the ground was so slippery with ice that the hill was one great slide. The bad, rich man waited till noon; he saw the Emperor sitting in the sun with Nebuchadnezzar. Then he chuckled softly to himself and hastened to the hill top. Pressing with all his might on the lever, he started the big log rolling over and over down the hill: faster it went and faster, straight for the golden throne. In another minute the occupants of the throne would be smashed beyond recognition. Alas! alas!

At this supreme moment Adolphus Plantagenet chanced to come along on his sled. His eye took in the awful situation at a glance. With a warning yell he threw himself desperately in the path of the impending danger. Of course, it was impossible to arrest the log; his only hope was to divert its course, therefore, he opposed one end with all his might. But in a second he was overwhelmed. His clever idea, however, had worked

successfully; the log swerved slightly, but it was sufficient to clear the throne by just six inches. Yes, Emperor and cat were saved, but at what cost!

Looking in the direction of the warning shout, the Emperor saw two legs sticking out of the snow; it was all that was left of a hero!

The Emperor adjusted his eyeglass. Said he:

"Alas! those ends I have in view. Seen to please a last adieu! Strange how it haunts me more and more, That I have seen those legs before."

Nebuchadnezzar rushed to the spot and began frantically to paw up the snow, whilst the Emperor shouted for help. A gang of navvies going to their dinner fortunately heard, and, spade in hand, ran up. "See," said the Emperor, pointing, "that column of ascending breath augurs life, not death!"

The men worked with enthusiasm, and soon Adolphus Plantagenet was dug out. Yes, there he lay inert who once had been so spry. The Court Physician now applied the stethoscope. "Well!" murmured the Emperor anxiously. "Sire, he still breathes!" was the joyful reply.

Adolphus was borne carefully to the castle, and there, with skillful nursing, he slowly recovered from the terrible shock. When he was convalescent, the grateful Emperor thus addressed him:

"Heroic youth, why—dash my wig—the cat and I had hopped the twig. But for thy courage rare! To honour thee of what thou hast done, I now adopt thee as my son, And thou shalt be my heir!"

And behold, this saying of the Emperor became law! And the moral of the story is this: That however much an orphan you may be, however much your bank may break, or your residence be devoured by fire—DON'T DESPAIR—and it is possible that, like Adolphus Plantagenet Fitzdudor, you may one fine day find yourself an emperor. Who can tell?

**Building Difficulties in China.**

When a Chinaman has decided to build himself a house, the first person he consults is not an architect, but a sort of wizard. This individual examines the site and marks the exact spot for the front door. In China front doors must never face due south, though a partly southern aspect is highly desirable. Only the houses of the Emperor and of high governing officials may front due south.

The wizard, or geomancer, next prescribes the exact size of the front door. An inch too much or too little might have disastrous consequences. A screen of wood or brick must be erected about three yards in front of the door. This is to keep out any evil breath. Not human breath, not malaria, nor bad odours, but some mysterious and fatal something which is only to be kept out by that screen.

The wizard next locates the spot for the kitchen place. This also must not face south, because the south represents fire; and the kitchen fire and the south fire working together would be so powerful that the house would just naturally burn up.

Having settled the question of place, the wizard figures out a time when work may be begun with some degree of safety. For instance, if the earth god should be at home when the workmen began digging, they might stick a spade into his august cranium. The family living in that house would die out.

The would-be builder must also find out whether it is a year when he may with safety begin anything. There are lots of these unlucky years. A man must not be married, for instance, when his age is 24 or 26, or any even number.

Having picked out a favourable year, John must next consider his two lucky months, for there are only two out of the twelve which are favourable to his undertaking new things. Then his yellow road days or good ones must be determined. There are more black road days than yellow ones, so the auspicious moments for starting his house are finally reduced to a pretty limited number.

But this isn't all. The lucky days of the whole family must next be figured out, compared with John's own yellow road days, and the result boiled down. The proper moments for putting the front door in place, for building the kitchen fireplace, and so on, are then decided on, and after waiting perhaps several months for the auspicious day to arrive, John can at last begin work.

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