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I readily undertook to do this, and we parted in the most friendly manner, I assuring her that if she ever felt that she could reform she had only to come under the kitchen window at dusk and meow three times, and I would give her every assistance in my power in return for her kindness to me. But she said firmly that this would never be—it was too late. She gave her children so many instructions that I grew quite impatient, but at last, after hastily licking them all over and telling them to mind every word I said, she let them go, and we trotted off for the house. I was a little limbered by that time, but I still felt very stiff and miserable.

It did not occur to me until afterward that it was strange these kittens manifested no grief at leaving their mother, and no hesitation about going off with a dog whom they had never even seen till the day before, and that the Outlaw Cat's anxiety for her children's welfare looked curiously like a desire to be rid of them. I wish it had never occurred to me at all: it isn't pleasant to think that one has been made a fool of. I instructed the kittens to hide themselves under the corncrib, promising them a share of my dinner, and an introduction to the kitchen as soon as I considered it safe.

While I was settling the kittens comfortably one of the largest rats I had ever seen sprang out of the corncrib and scuttled away. In a minute I forgot all about my stiffness and flew after him, catching him before he had gone a yard. Instead of throwing him away, I happened to think that it would be a good plan to take him to the