

The Duel

Eugene Field, 1850 - 1895

The gingham dog and the calico cat
Side by side on the table sat;
'T was half-past twelve, and (what do you think!)
Nor one nor t' other had slept a wink!
 The old Dutch clock and the Chinese plate
 Appeared to know as sure as fate
There was going to be a terrible spat.
 (I was n't there; I simply state
 What was told to me by the Chinese plate!)

The gingham dog went "Bow-wow-wow!"
And the calico cat replied "Mee-ow!"
The air was littered, an hour or so,
With bits of gingham and calico,
 While the old Dutch clock in the chimney-place
 Up with its hands before its face,
For it always dreaded a family row!
 (Now mind: I'm only telling you
 What the old Dutch clock declares is true!)

The Chinese plate looked very blue,
And wailed, "Oh, dear! what shall we do!"
But the gingham dog and the calico cat
Wallowed this way and tumbled that,
 Employing every tooth and claw
 In the awfulest way you ever saw—
And, oh! how the gingham and calico flew!
 (Don't fancy I exaggerate—
 I got my news from the Chinese plate!)

Next morning, where the two had sat
They found no trace of dog or cat;
And some folks think unto this day
That burglars stole that pair away!
 But the truth about the cat and pup
 Is this: they ate each other up!
Now what do you really think of that!
 (The old Dutch clock it told me so,
 And that is how I came to know.)