



The proverbial cat

From a 1904 collection:

An old cat likes young mice. (Greek)

Cat after cat kind.

Cats eat what hussies spare.

Cats hide their claws.

Don't look for five feet on a cat.

Wanton kittens make sober cats. (*I love this one -- Curator*)

"We are all well placed" said the cat, when she was seated on the bacon. (Danish)

Well might the cat wink when both her eyes were out.

When cat and mouse agree the farmer has no chance. (Danish)

Singed cats live long. (German)

The cat always leaves her mark upon her friend. (Spanish)

The cat and dog may kiss yet are none the better friends.



When the cat's away . . .

. . . rodents will frolic, in many different ways according to their origin. Here's some cultural variants on this proverb.

The cat is absent and the mice dance. (Modern Greek).

When the cat is gone the mice dance. (Belgian).

When the cat is away the mice have room to play. (Welsh).

When the cat is not in the house the rats (or mice) dance. (Italian).

When the cat is not the mice are awake. (French).

When the cat's away it is jubilee with the mice. (Dutch).

When the cat's away the mice give a ball. (Martinique Creole).

When the cat shall leave home the mice shall have leave to dance. (Irish-Farney). When the cats leave town (or home) the mice dance. (Irish-Ulster).

When the cat sleeps the mice play. (Dutch).

When there is no cat mice dance. (Indian-Kumaun, Garhwal).

But wait! Here's some related proverbs. . .

A blate (bashful, timid - Curator) cat makes a proud mouse. (Scotch).

A blind cat catches only a dead rat. (Chinese).

The mewling of the cat has silenced the mice. (Modern Greek).

Well knows the mouse that the cat's out of the house. (Scotch).

Were the cat at home it were worse for you. (Welsh, Irish).

What wots the mouse, the cat's out of the house. (Scotch).

When the cat dies the mice rejoice. (Ashanti, Oji-West African).

When the cat is blind the rat becomes bold. (Marathi).

When the cat is safe in the forest the rat says—"She's my wife." (Hindustani).



From a 1916 collection:

The mouse fell from the roof. "Come take some refreshment," said the cat. "Stand thou off," she replied. (Arabian) Always mistrust offers of help from your enemy.

Has the black cat passed from between us? (Osmanli, or the Ottoman Empire - Turkish). Have we had a quarrel?

Every day is no' Yule-day; cast the cat a castock. (Scotch) Be generous at Christmas, even unto giving your guests the needless extras - a castock is a cabbage-core.

"Why, man, have you got up into the tamarind tree?" He replied, "To pluck grass for my kitten." (Tamil). It's none of your business.

The three most pleasant things: A cat's kittens, a goat's kid, and a young woman. (Irish)

When the cat lies on its brain, it is going to rain. (English) Brain = back, actually.

A black cat will not be washed white by soap. (Persian) The leopard can't change its spots.

Kiss the black cat, an' 'twill make ye fat; kiss the white one, 'twill make ye lean. (English)

A cat will be a small thing to an old dame who swallowed an elephant. (Tamil)

A gold coin to a cat. (Japan) Pointless activity.

He who plays with a cat must bear its scratches. (Arabian)



Eastern proverbs:

Yoke not a camel and a cat together. (Persian)

Good greeting softens a cat. (Russian)

Is it proper to tame a parrot and give it into the claws of a cat? (Tamil)

The prick of a needle on a cat's head is plenty. (Afghan)

A cat that lives in the temple fears not the gods. (Tamil - Familiarity breeds contempt)

Do we give milk to the cat that cries, or to the cat that does not cry? (Badaga)



Gaelic proverbs:

Is e miann a chait a chniadachadh.
The cat's desire is to be caressed.

Is trom an cat ri sior ghiulan.
The cat is heavy if carried constantly. (As children try to do.)

Tha sin sgrìobht' 'am bathais a chait.
That's written on (or in) the cat's forehead. (The selfevident.)

Tigh gun chat, tigh gun ghean gun ghair.
A house without a cat, a house without cheerfulness or laughter.

*Seachd bliadhna saoghal a chait,
Sin gu h-eibhinn agus ait;
Seach sin cadal agus tur-chadal.*
Seven years lives the cat
Joyfully and cheerfully,
All the rest is sleep, sound sleep.



Scottish proverbs and their explanations from a 1721 collection:

Cast the cat o'er him.

It is believed that when a Man is raving in a Fever, the Cat cast over him will cure him; apply'd to them whom we hear telling extravagant Things, as they were raving.

I am o'er old a Cat, to draw a Straw before my Nose.

That is, I am too old to be imposed upon. A young Cat will jump at a Straw drawn before her, but not an old one; nothing being more playful than a young Cat, and nothing being more dull than an old one.

It was never for nothing that the Cat lick'd the Stone. (English variant:) The cat knows whose lips he licks.

People who officiously offer their Service, may be suspected to have some selfish End in it.

You never bought Salt to the Cat.
You know not what it is to provide for a Family.



From a book of 6000 Tamil proverbs:

- 882. A cat sits and mews in the place once occupied by the royal elephant.
- 1598. Will the cat leave its hold on the crying of the rat?
- 1609. As a rat makes salaam to a cat.
- 2026. On untying a cat and calling puss, puss, will it come?
- 3016. Will the temple cat reverence the deity?
- 3017. Why should a temple cat fear?
- 4226. As the cat looks at the fish which has become putrid.
- 4510. Will an ungodly cat ascend to heaven?
- 5110. He is like a cat on a wall. (*Spoken of one who makes the most of his position.*)

