

Pangur Ban

Pangur Ban and I
each of us plies a special trade;
he pursues the hunt
while I employ the pen.

Far from worldly fame
I seek repose
in thoughtful study;
not envious is Pangur Ban;
he delights in his nimble game.

Though we are two alone
neither one grows bored
attending to our tasks;
we have unlimited sport,
plentiful opportunities
for accuracy and skill.

It is understood
by feats of valor Pangur Ban
in time will catch his prey;
Less sure, I catch at phrases,
seek the intricate paths
that higher thoughts traverse.

His eye, glancing and attentive,
he points against the corner wall:
my eye weak though willing
inclines toward obscured truth.

His is a joyous speed,
pouncing upon the mouse;
Mine a fleeting flash of wit,
grasping the hard idea.

Contented with our lives
we are always thus;
neither hinders the other:
each gains pleasure through his art.
Pangur Ban is master of the task
he performs each day;
I meditate upon existence,
seek design through well-chosen words.

Adapted from *Thesaurus Paleohibernicus*, edited and translated by Whitley Stokes, Cambridge, 1903, pp. 293-94.