THE WISE LITTLE DONKEY

MADAME de SEGUR

Translated by
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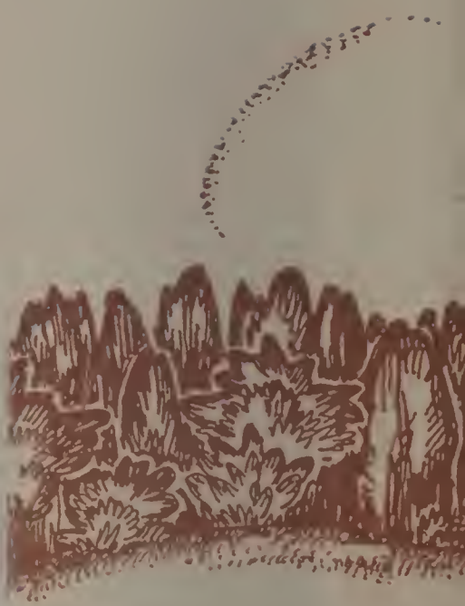

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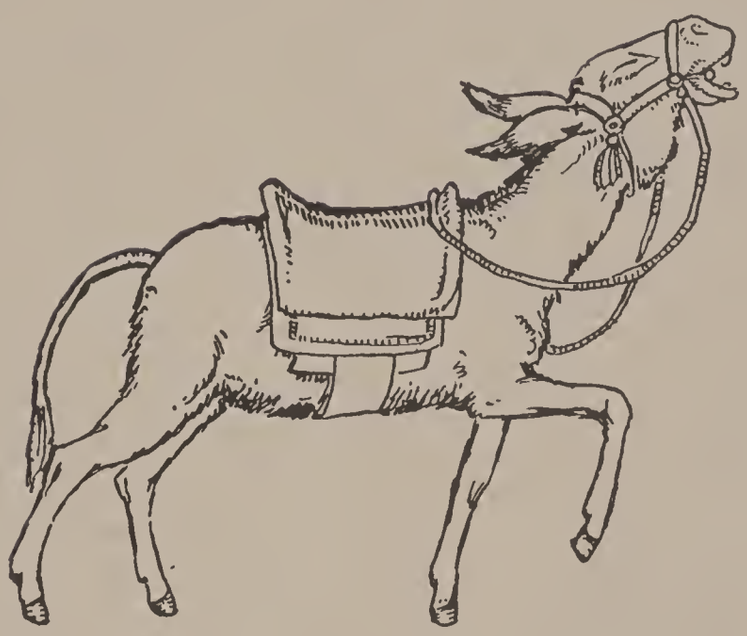

I could carry all four without being tired

"The Wise Little Donkey"

[MEMOIRS OF A DONKEY]

By

LA COMTESSE DE SÉGUR

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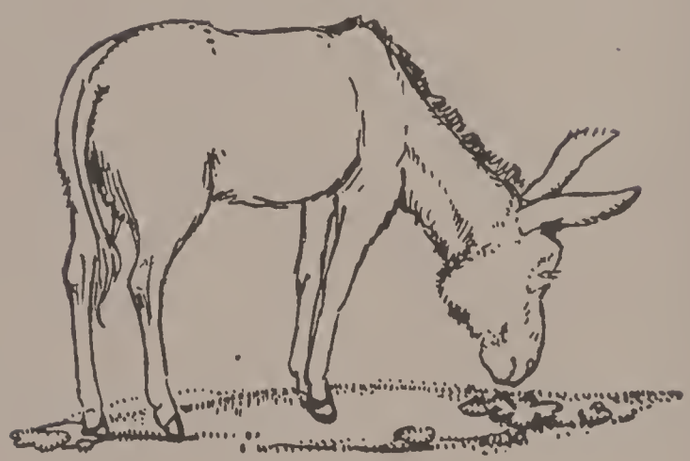
THE WISE LITTLE DONKEY

CHICAGO, U. S. A.



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CONTENTS

TO MY LITTLE MASTER
MONSIEUR HENRY DE SÉGUR

My little master, you have been good to me. But you have talked with scorn of donkeys in general. So that you may better understand just what donkeys are, I am writing and offer you these recollections.

You will see, my dear little master—like myself poor donkey, and my fellow friends—we have been and still are wrongly used by men. You will see we have a great deal of sense and many fine traits. You will see also how bad I was in my youth; how I was punished and unhappy; and how repentance changed me and made me the friend of my comrades and masters.

You will see finally that when people have read this book, instead of saying, "Stupid as a donkey, ignorant as a donkey, stubborn as a donkey," they will say, "Sensible as a donkey, wise as a donkey, gentle as a donkey"; and that both you and your parents will be proud of this praise.

Heehaw, my good master! In the first half of your life I beg you not to take after your loyal servant

CADICHON,
Wise Donkey.

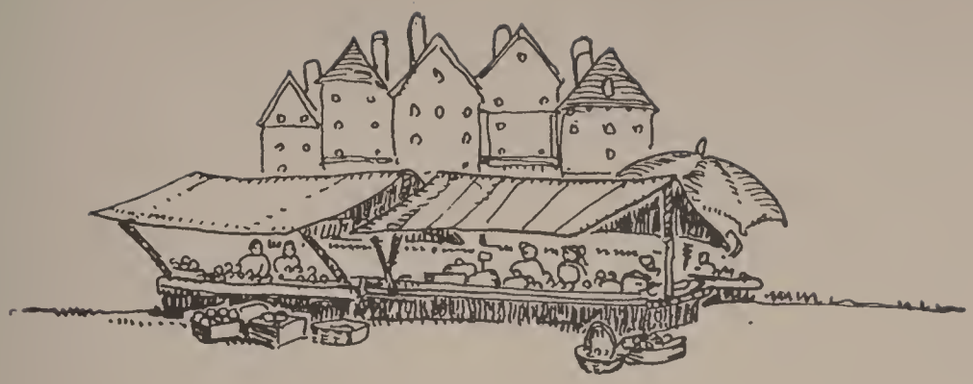
MY FOREWORD

I do not remember my childhood; I was probably unhappy like all small donkeys—but pretty, graceful as we all are; quite surely I had wit, since I still have more than my comrades, though I have grown old. More than once, I deceived my poor masters who were only human beings and who therefore could not have the intelligence of a donkey.

I am going to begin by telling you one of the tricks I played on them in my childhood days.

CADICHON, Wise Donkey.

I would trot along with all this pack



THE WISE LITTLE DONKEY

I

THE MARKET

Everybody is not supposed to know all that we donkeys know. You, the reader of this book, are probably not acquainted with a fact that all my donkey friends know only too well; that is, in the town of Laigle, every Tuesday is market day, and there they sell vegetables, butter, eggs, cheese, fruit and other good things to eat. This Tuesday is a day of suffering for my good friends. It used to be for me too, before I was bought by my present good old mistress who is your grandmother and in whose house I am now living.

I used to belong to a very mean, thoughtless farmerette. Just imagine, my dear little master, how unkind she was! She would gather up all the eggs that her hens laid, all the butter and cheese from her cows' milk, the week's vegetables and fruit. And then she would pack all this into baskets which she put on my back. When I was so loaded up that I could hardly budge, she would climb on top of the

baskets and make me trot along with all this pack as far as the market of Laigle, which was a good three miles from the farm. Every time this happened I became very angry; but I didn't show it for fear of getting a beating with a big heavy knotted stick that my mistress used for this purpose. Every time I heard or saw the preparations for market, I would sigh, and groan, and bray, hoping to soften my master's heart.

"Come on, lazy," they said to me when they came to get me. "Won't you keep quiet, and not deafen us with your ugly loud voice? Hee-haw! Hee-haw! That's a fine song! Julius, my boy, take this good-for-nothing near the door so that your mother can put his pack on! There! a basket of eggs.....another! Now the cheese, and the butter.....and the vegetables. Fine! That good load will bring us quite a few silver coins. Marietta, my daughter, bring a chair so that your mother can climb up. Everything is all right now. Goodbye, wife, make this good-for-nothing of a donkey trot along. Here is your stick, use it. Get up there! A few more raps and he'll go. Bang! Bang!"

While thus speaking to me they would strike my sides, my legs and neck. I trotted on; indeed I almost galloped. I was mad at such injustice and cruelty. I tried to rear in order to throw off my mistress, but I had too heavy a load. I could only shake myself, first to the right then to the left, and at last I had the pleasure of feeling her sliding down. "You stupid, stubborn beast! I am going to give you a good

caning!" And she beat me so much that I could hardly reach the town.

They removed from my poor lame back all the baskets which they put on the ground. After tying me to a post, my mistress went to lunch. There I was dying of hunger and thirst and not getting even a blade of grass or a drop of water. I found a way to get near the vegetables during the absence of the farmerette and I quenched my thirst and satisfied my hunger with a whole basketful of lettuce and cabbage. Never in my life had I eaten such good ones.

I was finishing the last cabbage and the last lettuce when my mistress returned. She yelled on seeing the empty basket. I had such a look of insolence and satisfaction that she guessed at once what I had been up to. I won't repeat what she said. She never behaved very well to me, but when she was angry she said things which made me blush, even if I am only a donkey. My only answer was to lick my chops and turn my back. The beating I received got worse and worse and finally I lost my patience and kicked three times. The first broke her nose and two teeth, the second cracked her wrist, and the third hit her in the stomach, throwing her down. Everybody around came to her rescue, and carried her off I know not where.

I was left there, attached to the post and when I discovered that no one was paying any attention to me, I helped myself to a second basket of vegetables. Then I cut the rope with my teeth and ambled slowly toward the farm.

The people I passed on the road were astonished to see me alone.

"Look at that donkey with a broken halter. He must have run away," said someone.

"He probably got away while his owner wasn't looking," added another.

And they all began to laugh.

"He has not much of a load!"

"He certainly played a trick on somebody!"

"Catch him, husband, we can put our little fellow on his pack-saddle," said one woman.

"He will be able to carry you too," answered her husband.

As I wanted them to have a good opinion of my gentleness and kindness, I walked up to the country-woman very slowly, then I stopped to let her get on my back.

"This little donkey doesn't look a bit wild," said the man while helping his wife get into the saddle.

I smiled with pity at hearing this, as if donkeys when well treated are ever bad! We get angry or disobedient or stubborn only to get even for the blows and injuries we receive. When we are well treated, we are good, very much better than other animals.

I brought the young woman and her little boy home. He was a fine little fellow two years old who petted me, found me nice, and would have liked to keep me. But I thought this wouldn't be honest. My masters had bought me and I belonged to them. I had already broken the nose, teeth and wrist of

I ate a whole basketful of lettuce

my mistress and that was enough revenge. So when I saw that the mother was going to give in to her little boy whom she spoiled (I had noticed that when I was carrying him on my back) I jumped to one side and before the mother could seize my bridle again, I galloped away and returned home.

Marietta, my master's daughter, saw me first.

"Oh! there is the donkey! How early he is back home to-day! Julius, come and take off his pack saddle."

"You bad donkey," said Julius sulkily, "some one must always look after him. Why did he come back alone? I think he ran away. You ugly beast!" he added, kicking me in the legs, "if I knew you ran away, I'd beat you a hundred times."

Since he had taken off my saddle and bridle, I galloped away to the pasture, and I hadn't been grazing very long when I heard loud cries coming from the farm. I looked over the hedge and saw they had brought the farmer's wife home. It was the children who were shouting. I listened closely and heard Julius say to his father:

"Father, I am going to take the big cart-driver's whip, tie the donkey to a tree, and then I'll beat him up till he drops to the ground."

"Go ahead, boy, go ahead, but don't kill him; we would lose the money he cost us. I'll sell him at the next fair."

I stood shaking with fright at hearing them and seeing Julius run to the stable to get the whip. There was no time to lose, and without hesitating this time at making my masters lose the price they had paid for me, I ran toward the fence which separated me from the fields and jumped at it with such force that I broke some branches and passed through.

I ran into the field and continued to run for a long time, a very long time, thinking they were chasing me. Finally I could not go any farther and stopped to listen, but I heard nothing. I climbed a little hill, but saw nobody. Then I began to breathe easier and to rejoice at having escaped those mean farmers.

But I was wondering what was to become of me. If I remained in that part of the country I would be recognized and caught, then brought back to my masters. What should I do? Where should I go?

I looked around me; I was all alone and unhappy, and I was ready to cry because of my bad luck, when I noticed that I was near the edge of a magnificent wood. It was the forest of St. Evroult.

"What luck!" I said to myself. "In these woods I shall find tender grass, water and soft moss; I am going to live there for several days, then I'll go to another forest, farther on, very far from my master's farm."

I went into the woods; I ate gladly some tender grass and drank water from a lovely spring. As night was coming on, I lay down on the moss at the foot of an old fir tree and slept peacefully until the next day.

II

THE CHASE

The next day, after eating and drinking I thought of my good fortune.

"Here I am all safe," I thought; "I'll never be found, and in two days, when I'm well rested I'll go even farther."

Scarcely had I finished thinking when I heard the far-off barking of a dog, then of a second one; several moments later I could make out the howls of a whole pack of dogs.

Uneasy, even a little frightened, I got up and went toward a little brook I had noticed in the morning. I had scarcely gone in, when I heard Julius' voice speaking to the dogs.

"Go on, go on, doggies, search around well; find that nasty donkey for me; bite him, tear his legs with your teeth, and bring him back to me so that I can try my whip on him."

Fright almost made me fall. But I thought immediately that if I walked in the water the dogs couldn't smell the trace of my steps; then, I began to run in the brook which fortunately had thickets on each side. For a very long time, I walked without stopping. The dogs' bark as well as Julius' voice got

I began to run in the brook

farther and farther away, and soon I did not hear them at all.

Panting, exhausted, I stopped a minute for a drink. I ate some leaves from the bushes. My legs were stiff with cold, but I didn't dare leave the water for fear the dogs would come there and smell my tracks. When I was a little rested, I began to run again, still following the brook, until I had left the forest. I reached a big meadow where more than fifty oxen were grazing. I lay down in a sunny grassy spot; the oxen paid no attention to me so that I could eat and rest in peace.

Toward evening two men entered the meadow.

"Brother," said the taller of the two, "let's take the oxen to the barn to-night. They say there are wolves in the woods."

"Wolves? Who told you that nonsense?"

"Some people at Laigle. They say that the donkey

of the Hedge farm has been carried off and eaten up in the forest."

"Bah! I don't believe it. Those people at that farm are so mean they probably killed their donkey by beating him."

"Why would they say then, that the wolf ate it?"

"So that no one would know they killed him."

"All the same it would be better to take in the cattle."

"Do as you like, brother; I don't insist either way."

In my corner, I did not move; I was so afraid they would see me. The grass was tall and hid me, luckily for me. The oxen were not near where I was lying and they were driven toward the gate and then to their masters' farm.

I was not afraid of wolves, since I was the donkey they were speaking of. And I hadn't seen a wolf's tail in the forest where I had spent the night. Therefore I slept very well, and I was finishing my breakfast when the oxen came back next morning; two big dogs were leading them.

I was watching them peacefully when one of the dogs noticed me, barked threateningly and ran toward me with his companion following him. What could I do? How could I escape them? I rushed toward the hedgerow surrounding the meadow. The brook I had followed crossed it. I was lucky enough to jump over it and I heard the voice of one of the men I had heard the night before calling back his dogs. I calmly went along my way and walked

to another forest, whose name I don't know. I must have been more than thirty miles away from the Hedge farm. So I was saved. Nobody knew me and I could show myself without fear of being brought back to my former masters.

III

MY NEW MASTERS

For a month I lived peacefully in that forest. Sometimes I would become a bit lonesome, but I preferred to live alone happy than unhappy with others. However, I soon noticed that the grass was getting scarce and coarse; the leaves began to fall, the water was ice-cold and the ground was damp.

"Alas! Alack," I thought; "what is to become of me? If I remain here I'll perish from cold, hunger and thirst. But where can I go? Who will want to keep me?"

After some hard thinking, I imagined a way of finding a home. Leaving the forest, I went to a little village nearby. I saw a very neat solitary little house; a good woman was sitting on the door-step spinning. Impressed by her kindly and somewhat sad expression, I drew near and put my head on her shoulder. Evidently startled, the good woman jumped up from her chair. I didn't move and looked at her sweetly and imploringly.

"Poor animal," she finally said; "you don't look bad. If you don't belong to anybody I would be very glad to have you take the place of my poor old Graylocks who died of old age. I would be able to

go on earning a living by selling vegetables in the market. But you probably belong to someone," she added sighing.

"Whom are you talking to, grandmother?" said a sweet voice from indoors.

"I am speaking to a donkey who came and put his head on my shoulder, and he is looking at me so sweetly that I haven't the heart to chase him."

"Let's see, let's see," replied the other voice.

And soon I saw on the threshold a fine little lad of six or seven years of age, poorly but neatly dressed. He looked at me with curiosity but as if a little frightened.

"May I pat him, grandmother?" he asked.

"Certainly, Georgie; but take care he doesn't bite you."

The little chap put out his arm which did not quite reach me; then he took one step, then another and finally could pat my back.

I didn't move for fear of frightening him; I only turned my head toward him and licked his hand.

"Grandmother, grandmother, how good this poor little donkey is! He licked my hand!"

"It is strange that he is all alone. Where is his master? Georgie, go around in the town, and to the inn and find out whose little donkey this is. His master is probably worried about him."

"Shall I take the donkey, grandmother?"

"He wouldn't follow you; let him go where he wants to."

Georgie started on a run; I trotted after him.

When he saw me following him, he came toward me, and patting me on the back said:

"Come, little donkey, since you are following me, let me get on your back." He jumped right on, and with a "Get up!" we were off.

I trotted along, much to Georgie's delight. "Whoa," he said when we reached the inn. I stopped immediately, and Georgie jumped down. I stood still in front of the door, not stirring the least bit, just as if I were tied.

"What do you want, my lad?" asked the innkeeper.

"Mr. Duval, I came to find out if that donkey at the door belongs to you or to one of your customers."

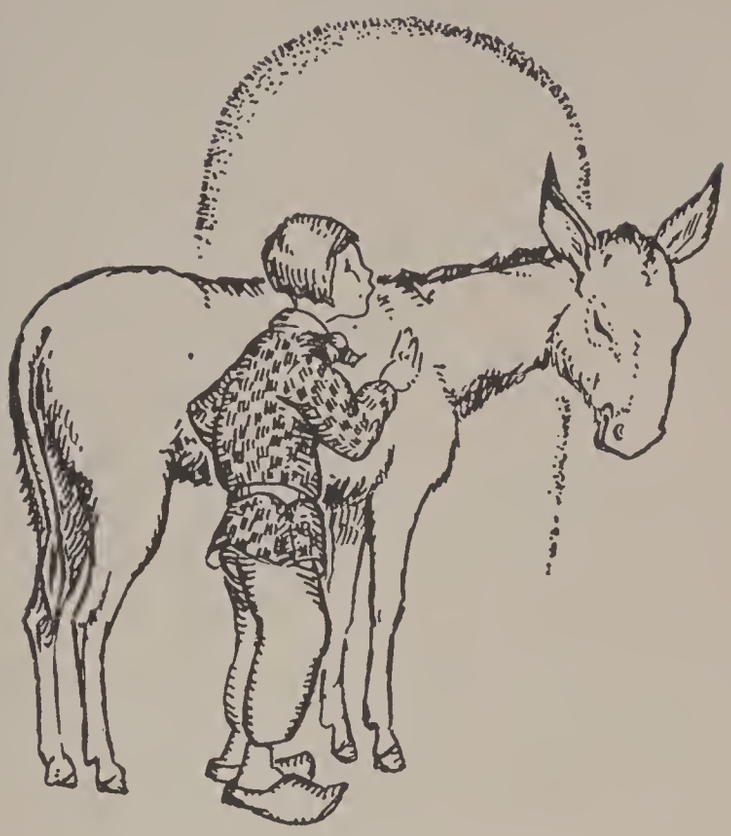
Mr. Duval came to the door and looking at me attentively said:

"No, it does not belong to me or to anybody I know. Go and look elsewhere."

Georgie climbed on my back again and I started off at a clip. We went from house to house asking whether I belonged there. Nobody claimed me and we returned to the grandmother's house where she was still spinning.

"Grandmother, the donkey does not belong to anybody around here. What are we going to do with him? He won't leave me and he runs away when anyone wants to touch him."

"In that case, my child," answered his grandmother, "we must not let him spend the night outdoors for something might happen to him. Put him



How I wish he could remain with us

in poor old Graylock's stable and give him some hay and a pail of water. Tomorrow we'll take him to market; perhaps we'll find his master."

"And what if we don't find him, grandmother?"

"We'll keep him until he is claimed," she answered. "We cannot let the poor animal perish from cold during the winter, or else get into the hands of some rascals who would starve or beat him to death."

Georgie gave me something to eat and drink, patted me, and then left. I heard him say as he closed the door: "Ah! how I wish he had no master and could remain with us!"

Next day, after feeding me, Georgie tied a halter around my neck. He took me in front of the door and Grandmother put a very light pack-saddle on

me, on which she sat. Georgie brought her a small basket of vegetables which she put on her lap and we set off for the market at Mamers. The good old lady sold easily all her vegetables; nobody recognized me, and I went home with my new masters.

I lived happily with them for four years, doing no harm to anybody and working well. I loved my little master who never beat me. They did not overwork me and fed me rather well. You see, I am not a glutton and in summer I have enough with the parings of vegetables or the grass not wanted by the horses and cows; in Winter, some hay, peelings of potatoes, carrots or turnips; that's what all we donkeys eat.

There were, however, some days that didn't please me; for example those when my mistress lent me to some children in the neighborhood. The old lady was not rich and when there was no work to do, she would earn a little money by hiring me out to the children of the neighboring mansion who were not always kind to me.

Here is what happened to me one day when they were riding with me.

IV

THE BRIDGE

There were six donkeys lined up in the yard. I was one of the handsomest and strongest. Three little girls brought us some oats in a trough. While eating I listened to the children chatting.

"Come on, friends," said Charles, "let's choose our donkeys. I choose first and take this one," pointing to me.

"You always take what you think the best," said the five other children at the same time. "We must draw lots."

"How do you want us to draw lots, Caroline?" asked Charles. "We can't put the donkeys in a bag and draw them out as if they were marbles."

"Ha! Ha!" said Anthony. "Isn't he stupid with his donkeys in a bag! As if you couldn't number them 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, then put the numbers in a bag and each one draw out his."

"That's true, that's true," said the five others. "Ernest, get the numbers ready while we go and write them on the donkeys' backs."

"These children are stupid," said I to myself. "If they had a donkey's common sense, instead of taking the trouble of writing the numbers on our backs

they would stand us along the wall: the first would be 1, the second 2, and so on."

In the meantime, Anthony had brought a big piece of charcoal. Being first, he wrote an enormous 1 on my back; while he was writing 2 on my comrade's back, I shook myself hard to show him that his invention was not so good; the charcoal fell off and the figure 1 was gone.

"Fool," he shouted; "I must start all over again."

While he was re-writing his number 1, my comrade, who had seen what I did, and who was mischievous too, shook himself, and number 2 was gone. Anthony began to get angry; the others laughed and made fun of him. I motioned to my comrades; we let him do his work; no one moved. Ernest came back with the numbers in his handkerchief; each one drew a number.

While they were looking at their numbers, I motioned again to my comrades, and then we were all shaking ourselves good and hard. The charcoal fell off and the numbers were gone. The children had to begin all over again and they were angry. Charles snickered and jeered. Ernest, Albert, Caroline, Cecile and Louise yelled at Anthony who stamped his foot madly. They said mean things to one another while my comrades and I began to bray. The noise attracted the fathers and mothers. The whole story was explained to them. One of the fathers finally thought of placing us along the wall and made the children draw the numbers.

"One," called out Ernest. That was I,

"Two," said Cecile. That was one of my friends.

"Three," said Anthony. And so on until the last one was chosen.

"Now, let's start," said Charles. I shall go first."

"Oh! I'll soon catch up with you," Ernest told him immediately.

"I bet you won't," replied Charles.

"I bet you I do," answered Ernest.

Thereupon Charles touched his donkey who started off at a gallop. Before Ernest had time to touch me with his whip, I was off at a pace which made me catch up very quickly with Charles and his donkey. Ernest was pleased; Charles was mad. He whipped and whipped his donkey, while Ernest didn't have to hit me for I ran like lightning. In a minute I was way ahead of Charles; I heard the others, behind us, laughing and shouting:

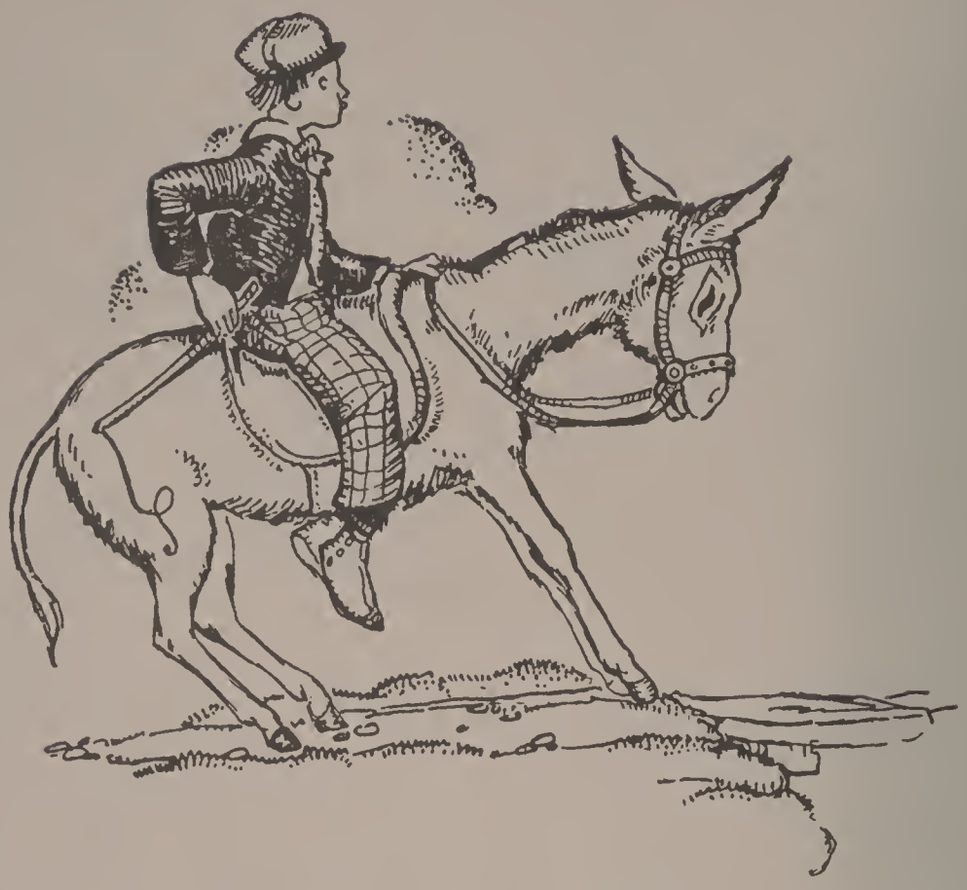
"Bravo! donkey number 1; Bravo! He runs like a race-horse!"

Pride gave me courage. I continued to gallop until we came to a bridge. I stopped suddenly; I had just seen that one of its planks was rotten and weak; I didn't want to fall into the water with Ernest, but wanted to return to the others who were very far behind us.

"Go on! Donkey, go on!" said Ernest to me. "On the bridge, my friend, on the bridge!"

I resisted; he hit me with his switch. I continued to go toward the others.

"Stubborn! Fool thing! Will you turn around and cross the bridge?"



I stopped suddenly at a bridge

I kept on going toward the other children; I joined them in spite of the scoldings and blows of that bad boy.

"Why are you whipping your donkey, Ernest?" called out Caroline; "he is excellent. He carried you full speed and made you beat Charles."

"I am whipping him because he got stubborn and didn't want to cross the bridge," said Ernest. "He insisted on turning back."

"Nonsense! It's because he was alone; now that we are all together he will cross the bridge like the rest of us."

The poor things, I thought to myself. They are all going to fall into the river. I must try to show them that there is danger.

And there I was galloping off again toward the bridge, to Ernest's great satisfaction, and accompanied by the children's shouts of joy.

I galloped to the bridge; when I got there, I stopped abruptly as if I was afraid. The astonished Ernest urged me to go on; I drew back as if frightened and this astonished Ernest all the more. The foolish child didn't suspect anything, although the rotten plank was very noticeable. The others had caught up with us, and laughingly watched Ernest's efforts to make me go on, and mine not to go across. They ended by getting off their donkeys each one pushing me and whipping me without mercy; I didn't budge.

"Pull him by the tail!" yelled Charles. "Donkeys are so obstinate that when you want them to go backwards they go forwards!"

There they were wanting to grab me by the tail. I defended myself by kicking; they all beat me at once, but I didn't budge any more for all that beating.

"Wait, Ernest," said Charles. "I'll go first; your donkey will certainly follow."

He tried to go forwards; I stood across the way to the bridge; he made me back out by beating me hard.

"Well," I said to myself, "if this bad boy wants to drown himself, let him; I did what I could to save him; let him get a drink if he insists upon it."

Scarcely had Charles' donkey set foot on the rotten plank, than it broke and there went Charles and his donkey in the water. As for my comrade there

was no danger, because he knew how to swim like all donkeys. But Charles was floundering about, yelling and not being able to get out of his trouble.

"A pole! a pole," he cried. The children shouted and ran in all directions.

Finally Caroline noticed a long pole, picked it up and held it out to Charles who grabbed it. But his weight dragged Caroline who yelled "Help! Help!" Ernest, Anthony and Albert ran to her; they succeeded with difficulty in dragging out the unfortunate Charles who had taken a bigger drink than he bargained for, and who was drenched from head to foot.

Now that he was safe, the children began to laugh at his sorry state; Charles got angry; the children jumped on their donkeys and laughingly advised him to go home and change his clothes. All dripping wet, he got back on his donkey. I chuckled all to myself at his ridiculous appearance. The current had carried off his hat and shoes; water was dripping off him, his soaked hair was sticking to his face, and his furious expression completed the funniest picture. The children were roaring with laughter; my comrades were frisking and running about in order to show their glee.

I might add that Charles' donkey was hated by all of us because he was quarrelsome, greedy and stupid, which is very rare among donkeys.

Finally Charles disappeared; the children patted me and we all started off again, with me at the head of the procession.

They succeeded in dragging Charles out

V

THE HIDING PLACE

I was happy as I have already said, but my happiness was soon to end. Georgie's father was a soldier; he returned home and brought back some money which his captain had left him and the military cross which his general had given him. He bought a house at Mamers, took away his little boy and his old mother and sold me to a neighbor who had a little farm. I was sad at leaving my good old mistress and my good little master Georgie; both had always been very kind to me, and I had always done well all the work they gave me.

My new master was not bad but he had the foolish mania of wanting to make everybody work, me along with the rest. He used to hitch me to a little cart and make me haul dirt, manure, apples, firewood. I was beginning to be lazy; I didn't like to be harnessed, and above all I didn't like market day. They didn't overload me, and they didn't whip me, but on that day I had to remain without eating from morning until three or four o'clock in the afternoon. During hot weather, I was dead with thirst, and I had to wait till everything was sold and my master got his money and bid goodbye to his friends who invited him to have a drink with them.

The Farm, my new home

I wasn't very good then; I wanted to be treated with kindness; otherwise I tried to get revenge. Listen to what I invented once; you will see that donkeys are not so stupid, but you will also see that I was becoming wicked.

On market day they used to get up earlier than usual at the farm; they would pick the vegetables, churn the butter, gather up the eggs. During the summer I used to sleep out in a large meadow. I saw and heard these preparations and I knew that at ten o'clock in the morning they were to come for me and hitch me to the small cart, full of all the things they wanted to sell. I have already said that this market bored and tired me.

I had noticed in the meadow a deep ditch full of briars and thorns. I thought I could hide there so that they would not find me at the time of departure. On a certain market day when I saw the farm folk

beginning to come and go, I went down to the ditch very quietly and I crept into it so well that it was impossible to see me. I had been there an hour hidden by the briars and thorns when I heard the boy call me running here and there, then return to the farm. He had undoubtedly told the master that I had disappeared, for a few seconds later I heard the farmer himself call his wife and all the farm hands to look for me.

"He has probably crossed the hedge," said one.

"Where do you think he could have passed through? There isn't an opening anywhere," answered the other.

"Somebody may have left the gate open," said the master. "Run and look in the field, boys; he can't be far; hurry and bring him back, for time is passing and we will arrive too late."

There they were searching in the fields and woods, running about and calling me. Down in my hiding place I laughed quietly and took good care not to show myself. The poor people came back out of breath and panting; for an hour they had looked everywhere. The master swore at me, said that I had surely been stolen, and so he had one of his horses hitched to the cart, then left in very bad humor.

When I saw that everybody had gone back to work, I cautiously peeked out of my hiding place, looked around and seeing that I was alone, I got completely out; I ran to the other end of the meadow and began to bray with all my might.

At this noise, the farm hands all rushed toward me.

"Well! here he is back again!" called out the shepherd.

"Where has he come from?" said the farmer's wife.

"Where did he pass through?" added the teamster.

In my joy at having escaped the market, I ran to them. They received me very well, patting me, and telling me that I was a smart animal for having run away from the people who had stolen me, and complimented me so much that I became ashamed, for I knew well enough that I deserved the whip more than caresses. They let me feed peacefully and I would have spent a lovely day if I had not been troubled by my conscience which reproached me for having played a trick on my masters.

When the farmer came home and learned of my return he was very glad but also very, very surprised. Next day he took a walk around the meadow and carefully stopped all the cracks in the hedge around it.

"He will be smart if he can escape again," he said on finishing. "I have filled the tiniest cracks with sticks and thorns; there is not a place left where a cat could crawl through."

The week passed peacefully; they thought no more of my adventure. But on the following market day I started my trick all over again; and I hid in that ditch which had saved me from such great fatigue and boredom. They looked for me as they did before

and were even more astonished and believed that a very clever thief had taken me through the gate.

"This time," said my master sadly, "he is surely lost. He will not be able to escape a second time and even if he were to, he couldn't come home; I have filled the cracks in the hedge only too well."

And he went away sighing; again one of the horses took my place at the cart. In the same way as the preceding week, I got out of my hiding place when everybody was gone; but I thought it more prudent not to announce my return by a hee-haw! like the other time.

When they found me peacefully eating grass in the meadow, and when my master learned that I had returned shortly after his departure, I saw that they suspected me of playing a trick on them; nobody complimented me, they looked at me suspiciously and I was well aware of being watched more than formerly. I laughed up my sleeve at them and said to myself:

"My good friends, you are very keen if you can discover the trick I played on you; I am more clever than you, and I'll fool you over and over again."

Therefore I hid for the third time, very much satisfied with my cleverness. But I had scarcely huddled up in my ditch when I heard the terrible barking of the big watch-dog and my master's voice saying:

"Catch him! Rover, go on! Get down in the ditch, bite him! Get him! Rover, get him!"

Rover, the dog had indeed dashed into the ditch

and was snapping at my ankles and sides; he would have eaten me up completely if I hadn't decided to jump out of the ditch; I was going to rush toward the hedge and try to make a little passageway, when the farmer, who was waiting for me, lassoed me and stopped me short. He had equipped himself with a whip which he made me feel sharply; the dog continued to bite me, the master kept on whipping me; I regretted deeply my laziness. Finally the farmer sent off Rover, stopped whipping me, loosened the lasso, put a halter around my neck and led me off quite dejected and bruised and hitched me to the cart which was waiting for me.

I learned afterwards that one of the children had remained on the road, near the gate, to open it for me if I returned; he had noticed me coming out of the ditch and had told his father. The little traitor!

I bore him a grudge for what I called a mean trick until my misfortunes and more experience had made me better.

After that they were much more severe with me; they wanted to lock me up, but I had found a way to open all the gates with my teeth; if it was a latch, I raised it; a knob, I turned it; a bolt, I pushed it. I got in everywhere, and I got out as well. The farmer would swear, scold and beat me; he became wicked to me and I became more and more so toward him. I felt that I was unhappy through my own fault; I would compare my wretched existence with the one I used to lead, but instead of correcting myself I became more and more obstinate and bad.

One day I went into the vegetable garden and ate up all the lettuce; another day I threw down the little son who had betrayed me; another time I drank a pail of cream that had been put out for churning; I trampled on their chickens and little turkeys; I bit their little pigs; finally I became so bad that the farmer's wife asked her husband to sell me at the Mamers' fair which was to take place in a couple of weeks.

I had become thin and scrawny because of many beatings and bad food. In order to have a better chance of selling me, they wanted to groom me up, as the farmers say. The farm-hands and children were forbidden to ill-treat me; they no longer made me work and fed me well; I was very happy during those two weeks. My master took me to the fair and sold me for a hundred francs. On leaving him I would have liked to bite him good and hard, but I was afraid my new masters would get a bad opinion of me, and I contented myself with turning my back on him scornfully.

VI

PAULINE

I had been bought by a man and his wife who had a little daughter twelve years old, always ailing and lonesome. She lived in the country and was always by herself for she had no playmates of her age. Her father didn't bother about her; her mother loved her well enough but couldn't bear to see her love anyone else, not even animals. However, since the doctor had prescribed amusements, she thought donkey rides would entertain her sufficiently.

The name of my little mistress was Pauline; she was sad and often sick, very kind and quite pretty. Every day she rode me; I took her through the pretty paths and woods that I knew. At first a servant used to go with us; but when they saw how gentle I was, how good and how careful of my little mistress, she was allowed to go all alone. She called me *Cadichon,* and that's the name I have kept ever since.

"Go and ride with Cadichon," her father would say to her; "with a donkey like that, there is no danger. He has as much sense as a person, and he will always know how to bring you back home."

We therefore went out together. When she got

tired of walking, I would stand against a hillock, or else go down into a little ditch, so that she could get easily on my back. I took her near the hazel bushes filled with hazel nuts and let her pick as many as she wanted. My little mistress liked me very much; she took good care of me; she fondled me.

When the weather was bad and we couldn't go out, she came to see me in my stable; she would bring me bread, fresh grass, salad leaves and carrots. She would stay with me a long time, and speak to me, believing that I didn't understand her; she confided her little troubles to me.

"Oh, my good Cadichon," she used to say, "you are a donkey, and you can't understand me; and yet you are my only friend for you are the only one in whom I can confide all my thoughts. Mother loves me, but she is jealous; she wants me to love only her; I don't know anybody of my own age and I am very lonesome."

And Pauline cried, and petted me. I loved her too, and pitied that poor little thing. When she was near me, I took care not to move for fear of hurting her with my feet.

One day Pauline came to visit with me and had no sooner entered my stall when a housemaid opened the stable door, called to Pauline and said:

"Miss Pauline, your mother wants you; she does not want you to stay in Cadichon's stable or even to enter it."

"Cadichon, my poor Cadichon!" cried Pauline. "Am I not to see him any more?"

She called me Cadichon

"Oh yes, Miss Pauline, but only when you go riding; your mother says your place is in the living room and not in the stable."

Pauline didn't answer; she knew her mother wanted to be obeyed; she kissed me another time; I felt her tears on my neck. She left and never came back again. From that time on, Pauline became sadder and more ailing; she coughed much; I saw her getting paler and thinner. The bad weather made our outings less frequent and shorter. When I was brought to the porch of the mansion, Pauline would mount me without saying a word; but when we were out of sight she would jump down, fondle me, and relieve her heart by telling me all her troubles, still thinking I didn't understand her. That's how I learned that her mother had remained in bad humor and sullen; that Pauline was more lonesome and sadder than ever and that her illness was becoming more serious every day.

VII

THE FIRE

One night when falling asleep, I was aroused by cries: "Fire! Fire!" Uneasy, frightened, I tried to get rid of the strap which tied me; but it was useless to pull, to roll on the ground, the cursed strap did not break. Finally I had the good idea of cutting it with my teeth, and I succeeded after some effort. The glow of the fire lit up my little stable; the shouts and noise increased; I heard the wailings of the servants, the crackling of the walls, the floors crumbling, the roaring of the flames; the smoke had already reached my stable and nobody was thinking of me; no one had the charitable thought of even opening my door to let me escape. The flames were increasing in volume and I felt an uncomfortable heat beginning to smother me.

"It's all over," I said to myself. "I am doomed to burn alive; what a frightful death! Oh! Pauline, dear little mistress! You have forgotten your poor Cadichon!"

I had hardly uttered these words, or rather thought them when my door was opened suddenly and I heard Pauline's terrified voice calling me. Happy to be saved, I rushed toward her, and we

were going to pass through the door, when a terrible crash made us step back. A building opposite my stable had crumbled; its ruins barred any passage-way; my poor mistress was then to perish because she had wanted to save me. The smoke, the dust of falling walls and the heat were smothering us. Pauline fell down near me.

I suddenly made a dangerous decision, but the only one that could save us. With my teeth I got hold of the dress of my mistress who had nearly fainted, and I rushed through the burning beams which covered the ground. I was lucky enough to get through without her dress catching fire; I stopped to see in which direction I ought to go, but everything around us was burning.

Discouraged and desperate, I was going to put the unconscious Pauline on the ground when I noticed an opened cellar; I rushed toward it knowing full well that we would be safe in the vaulted cellars of the mansion. I laid Pauline down near a tub of water so that she could moisten her forehead and temples upon reviving which she soon did.

When she saw she was saved and out of all danger she got on her knees and made a touching prayer to thank God for having saved her from such a terrible danger. Then she thanked me so tenderly and gratefully that I was moved. She drank several mouthfuls of the water from the tub and listened. The fire continued to rage—everything was burning; we still heard several cries, but so vaguely that we couldn't distinguish the voices.

I saw that she was sleeping

"Poor Mother, poor Father!" said Pauline, "they must think that I have perished because I disobeyed them and went to get Cadichon. Now we have to wait till the fire burns out. We will probably spend the night in the cellar. Good Cadichon, it is thanks to you that I am alive."

She didn't say any more; she had sat down on an overturned box and I saw that she was sleeping. Her head was leaning on an empty cask. I was tired and thirsty. I drank some water out of the tub; I stretched out near the door and I too was soon asleep.

I woke up at dawn. Pauline was still sleeping. I got up softly and went to the door which I half opened; everything was burned and the fire was out. We could easily climb over the ruins and reach the court outside. I gently called "Hee-haw!" to awaken my mistress. She opened her eyes and seeing me near the door came over and looked around her.

"Everything is burned," she said sadly. "Everything is lost. I won't see the mansion any more. I'll be dead before it is rebuilt, I feel it; I am weak and sickly, very sick in spite of what Mother says."

"Come, Cadichon," she continued after remaining pensive and still for several moments; "come, let's go out now; I have to find Mother and Father to reassure them. They believe I am dead."

She carefully crossed the fallen stones, the crumbled walls, the still smoking beams. I followed her; we soon reached the lawn; there, she got on my back and I headed for the village. We soon found the house where Pauline's parents had sought refuge; believing their daughter to be dead, they were in great grief.

When they saw her they uttered a cry of joy and rushed toward her. She told them how intelligently and courageously I had saved her.

Instead of running to me to thank and pat me, her mother looked at me indifferently.

"Thanks to him you almost perished, my poor child," said the mother. "If you had not had the foolish notion of going to open his stable and untie his strap, your father and I would not have spent a frightful night."

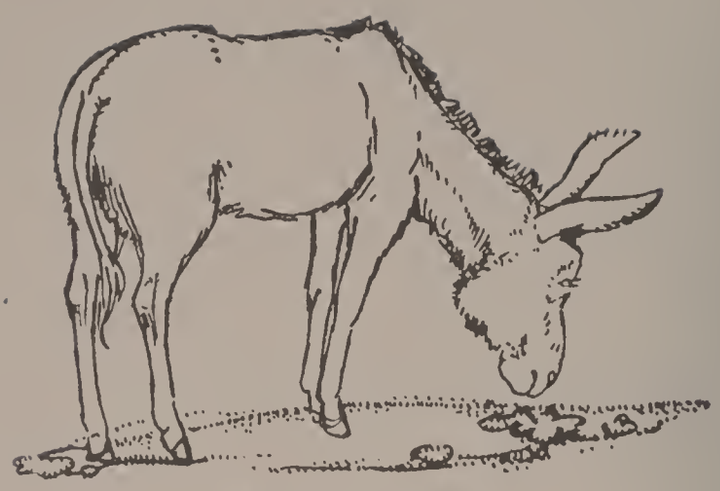
"But," answered Pauline, "he. . . . . ."

"That will do," interrupted her mother. "Don't speak to me any more of that hateful animal which almost caused your death."

Pauline sighed, looked at me sadly and said nothing more.

After that, I never saw her again. The fright caused by the fire, the fatigue of a sleepless night, and above all the cold of the cellar, all that aggravated the illness from which she had long been suffering. On that very day she was seized with a fever which did not leave her. She was put to bed, never to leave it again. The chill of the night before finished up what sadness and loneliness had begun; her lungs already affected became worse; she died a month later, not regretting life nor fearing death. She often spoke of me and called me in her delirium.

Nobody bothered with me; I ate what I found; I slept outdoors in spite of the cold and rain. When I saw them take from the house the coffin bearing the body of my poor little mistress, I was stricken with grief and left the place never to return.



I browsed thistles

VIII

THE DONKEY RACE

I was living wretchedly because of the season; I had chosen for my dwelling place a forest where I found scarcely enough to keep me from dying of hunger and thirst. When the cold weather froze up the brook, I ate snow; and for food, I browsed thistles and slept under the fir-trees. I compared my sad existence with the one I led at Master Georgie's or even with the farmer to whom I had been sold; I had been happy there as long as I had not been lazy, tricky and revengeful. But I had no way of getting out of my present wretched condition, because I wanted to remain free and master of my actions.

I sometimes went to the outskirts of a small town near the forest to learn what was happening in the world. One day in the spring, fine weather having

returned, I was surprised to see extraordinary excitement; the town had taken a holiday air; people were walking in groups; everyone was dressed in his Sunday best, and what astonished me all the more, all the donkeys of the neighborhood were gathered there. Each donkey had a master holding it by the bridle; they were all combed and brushed; several had flowers on their heads, around their necks, and none had either pack or saddle.

"That's strange," I thought; "yet there is no fair to-day. What can all my comrades be doing here cleaned and all dressed up? And how sleek they are! They have been well fed last winter!"

Finishing these words I looked at myself; I saw my back, sides and haunches, thin and badly combed, my hair all rumpled up, but I felt strong and sprightly.

"I prefer," I thought, "to be ugly but spry and healthy; my comrades whom I see so fine, so plump, so well cared for could not bear the fatigue and privation I have stood all winter."

I went nearer to find out the meaning of this meeting of donkeys, when one of the fellows holding them, noticed me and began to laugh.

"Why!" he called out, "look here, fellows! See the beautiful donkey coming here. Isn't he well brushed?"

"And well fed and cared for!" added another. "Is he coming for the race?"

"Well, if he insists, we'll have to let him compete," said a third, "there is no danger of his winning the prize money."

General laughter greeted these words. I was annoyed, displeased with the silly jokes of these fellows, but I had learned that there was to be a race. But when, and how would it take place? That's what I wanted to know, and I continued to listen and to pretend I didn't understand what they were saying.

"Are they going to start soon?" asked one of the young fellows.

"I know nothing about it, they are waiting for the mayor."

"Where are you going to race your donkeys?" said a good woman just arriving.

"In the large mill meadow, Mother Tranchet," answered Jean.

"How many donkeys are here?" asked Mother Tranchet.

"Sixteen, not counting you, Mother Tranchet."

A burst of laughter greeted this joke.

"My! you are witty, aren't you? What does the winner get?" said Mother Tranchet.

"First the honor, and then a silver watch," replied Jean.

"I'd be glad to be a donkey and win the watch; I never could afford to have one."

"Well! if you had brought a donkey you would have run. . . . . the chance."

And they all started laughing again.

"Where should I go to get a donkey? Have I ever had the means of feeding and paying for one?" inquired the old woman.

I liked that simple woman; she seemed good and jolly. I got the idea of making her win the watch. I was quite accustomed to running; every day in the forest I took long runs to keep me warm; and I had had formerly the reputation of running as fast and as long as a horse.

"Come," I said to myself, "let's try; I have nothing to lose; if I win, I'll win a watch for Mother Tranchet, who wants one badly."

I set off with a little trot and went to stand next to the last donkey. I assumed a proud manner and began to bray vigorously.

"Hey! there, my friend," called out André, "won't you finish your music? Get away, donkey, you haven't any master, you are badly curried, you can't run."

I kept silent, but I didn't move. Some laughed, others got angry; but they were beginning to quarrel when Mother Tranchet called out.

"If he has no master, he is going to have a mistress; I recognize him now; he is Cadichon, the donkey of poor Miss Pauline; he was chased away when the little girl was no longer there to protect him, and I believe he lived all winter in the forest, for nobody has seen him since. Therefore, to-day I am taking him into my service; he is going to run for me."

"Why! It's Cadichon!" they called out on all sides. "I have heard of that famous Cadichon!"

"But, Mother Tranchet," said Jean, "if you race him, you will have to put in the Mayor's bag a fifty centime silver coin."

"Don't worry about that, children. Here is my coin," she added, untying a corner of her handkerchief; "but don't ask me for another, for I haven't many more."

"Oh! well!" said Jean, "if you win, you will have plenty, for the whole town has put some in the bag; there are a hundred francs in it or more."

I approached Mother Tranchet, prancing, cavorting, leaping and rearing so lightly that the young fellows began to fear that I would win.

"Listen, Jean," said André in very low tones, "you were wrong to let Mother Tranchet join in the purse. Now she has the right to have Cadichon race and he seems to me alert and in good enough form to take the watch and prize-money from us."

"Bah!" answered Jean. "How foolish you are! Don't you see how pitiful that poor Cadichon looks! He will give us a good laugh; he won't go far, I tell you!"

"I don't know," said André. "Suppose I give him some oats to make him go away."

"And what about Mother Tranchet's ten sous?" asked Jean.

"Well, if the donkey doesn't start, they would be returned to her."

"Really," agreed Jean finally, "Cadichon does not belong to her any more than to you or me. Go and get a measure of oats and try to make him leave without attracting Mother Tranchet's attention."

I had heard and understood all this; so when André came back with a measure of oats in his work

apron, I went closer to Mother Tranchet who was talking to some friends. André followed me; Jean took me by the ears and made me turn my head, thinking I didn't see the oats. I didn't move in spite of the longing I felt to taste them. Jean began to pull me and André to push me, and I started braying in my finest voice. Mother Tranchet turned around and saw the manoeuvres of André and Jean.

"What you are doing is not very nice, boys. Since you made me put my small silver coin in the race-purse, you must not take Cadichon away from me. It seems to me you are afraid of him."

"Afraid!" said André. "Of a dirty looking donkey like that! Of course we aren't afraid!"

"Then why are you trying to get him away?"

"Just to give him some oats," replied André.

"That's different!" answered Mother Tranchet mockingly. "How nice of you! Pour some on the ground so that he can eat it easily. And I who thought you wanted to give him some oats out of malice! How easy it is to make a mistake!"

André and Jean were a bit ashamed and dissatisfied but didn't dare to show it. Their comrades laughed at seeing them caught; Mother Tranchet was rubbing her hands for glee and I was delighted. I greedily ate my oats and felt I was gaining strength while eating. I was pleased with Mother Tranchet and when I had finished the oats I became impatient to start. Finally, there was great excitement; the mayor had just given the order to place the donkeys. They were placed in line; I modestly took the last

place. When I appeared alone, some one asked to whom I belonged.

"To nobody," said André.

"To me!" called out Mother Tranchet.

"You should have contributed to the race-purse, Mother Tranchet," said the Mayor.

"I have, your Honor," replied the old woman.

"Good, then enter Mother Tranchet's name," said the Mayor.

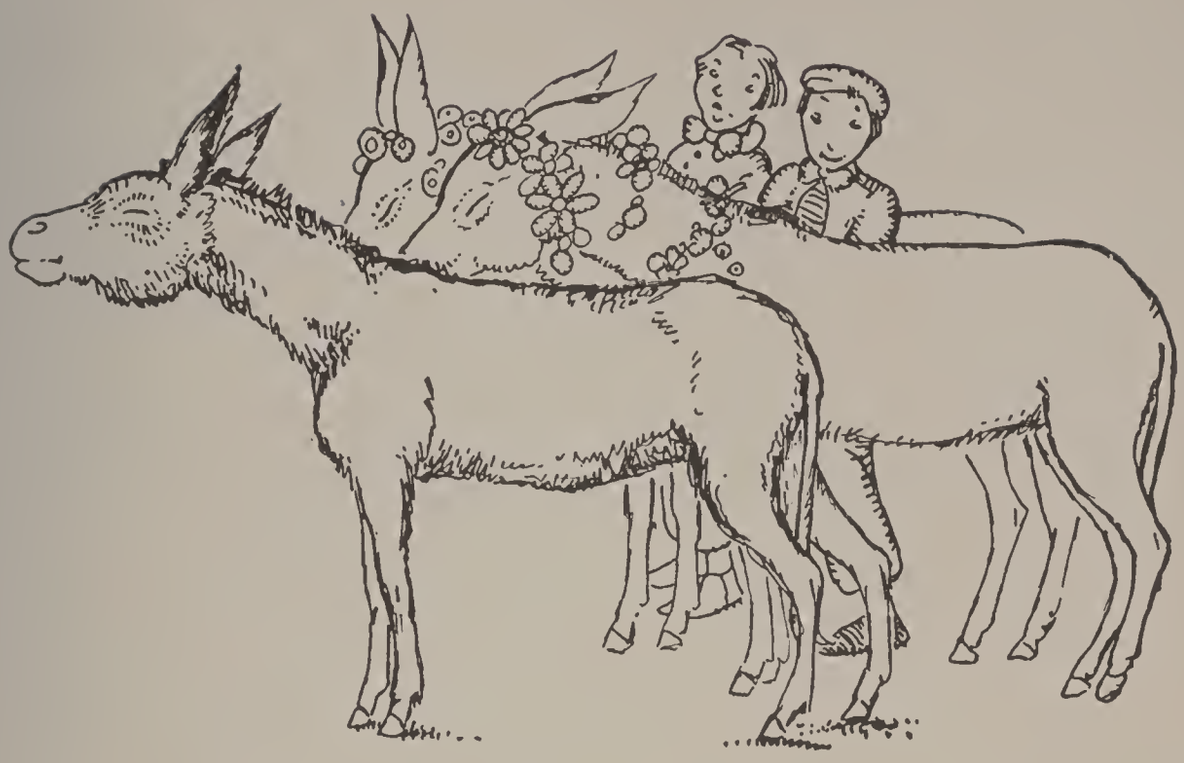
"It is already done," answered the clerk.

"Fine!" said the Mayor. "Is everything ready? One, two, three, go!"

Each boy who was holding back a donkey let go of it and gave it a crack of the whip. All started. Although nobody was holding me, I waited honestly for the time to start. For that reason, all had a little the better of me. But before they had gone a hundred paces, I had caught up with them. There I was at the head of the procession, and I had got there without much trouble. The boys were yelling and cracking their whips to urge their donkeys.

From time to time, I would turn around to see their scared faces, enjoy my triumph, and smile at their efforts. Furious at being outdistanced by me, a poor, forlorn, unknown creature, my rivals increased their efforts to catch up with me, to pass me and to keep one another from getting ahead. Behind me I heard savage cries, kickings and gnashing of teeth; twice they caught up with me and I was almost beaten by Jean's donkey.

I could have used the same means that he had



The start

used to pass his rivals, but I scorned such mean tactics; I saw, however, that I should overlook nothing if I wanted not to be beaten. With a strong spurt, I passed my rival; at that very moment he grabbed me by the tail; the pain almost made me fall, but the honor of winning gave me courage enough to pull away from his bite leaving a piece of my tail-skin in his mouth.

The desire for revenge gave me wings. I ran with such speed that I reached the goal not only the first, but leaving way behind all my competitors. I was out of breath, exhausted, but happy and triumphant.

I listened happily to the applause of the thousands of spectators all around the field. I assumed the air of a victor and proudly trotted back to the mayor's stand, where he was to award the prize. Good

Mother Tranchet came to me, patted me and promised me a good measure of oats. She held out her hand to receive the watch and the purse which the Mayor was about to hand her when Jean and André ran up shouting:

"Stop, your Honor, stop! This is not fair. Nobody knows that donkey. He does not belong to Mother Tranchet any more than he does to anyone else. That donkey doesn't count, my donkey arrived first along with Johnny's; the watch and purse ought to be ours."

"Didn't Mother Tranchet put her coin in the purse?"

"Yes, your Honor, but....."

"Did anybody object when she put it in?"

"No, your Honor, but....."

"Did you make any protest at the start of the race?"

"No, your Honor, but....."

"Then Mother Tranchet's donkey has indeed won the watch and purse."

"Your Honor, please call the town council to settle the question; you haven't the right to do it alone."

The Mayor seemed undecided; when I saw that he hesitated, I quickly seized the watch and purse with my teeth and dropped them in the hands of Mother Tranchet, who, uneasy and trembling was awaiting the mayor's decision.

This intelligent action brought the laughs to our side and earned much applause for me.

"The question has been settled by the winner in

favor of Mother Tranchet," said the Mayor laughing. "Fellow-members of the council, let us go and decide, while eating, whether I was within my right in letting the donkey administer justice. My friends," he added jokingly, looking at André and Jean, "I believe that Cadichon is not the biggest donkey around here."

"Bravo, bravo, your Honor!" they cried on all sides.

And everybody was laughing except André and Jean who went away with clenched fists and looking daggers at me.

As for me, was I happy? No, my pride was offended; I found the Mayor insolent to me when he thought he was scorning my enemies by calling them donkeys. It was ungrateful and cowardly. I had shown courage, patience, intelligence, and that was my reward! After being insulted, I was abandoned. Even Mother Tranchet, in the joy of having a watch and one hundred and thirty-five francs, was forgetting her benefactor. She was no longer thinking of her promise to feed me with a good measure of oats, and there she was going away with the crowd without giving me the reward I had so well earned.

IX

MY GOOD MASTERS

I remained, therefore, in the meadow; I was sad, my tail was hurting me. I was wondering whether donkeys were not better than human beings, when I felt a gentle hand patting me, and I heard a voice no less gentle say to me:

"Poor donkey! They have been mean to you! Come, poor beast! Come to grandmother's; she will have you fed and taken care of better than at your bad masters'. Poor donkey! How thin you are!"

I turned around; I saw a pretty five-year-old boy; his sister, who seemed about three, came up with her nurse.

"Jack, what are you saying to that poor donkey?" asked Jane.

"I'm telling him to come and live at grandmother's; he is all alone, poor thing."

"Yes, Jack; take him; wait, I'll get on his back. Nurse, please put me on the donkey's back."

The nurse put the little girl on my back; Jack wanted to lead me, but I had no bridle.

"Wait, nurse," he said. "I'm going to tie my handkerchief around his neck."

Little Jack tried, but my neck was too big for his

little handkerchief; his nurse gave him hers which was still too short.

"What shall we do, nurse?" said Jack almost crying.

"Let's go to the village and get a strap or a rope. Come, little Jane, get off the donkey."

"No, I don't want to get off," said Jane, clinging to my neck. "I want to stay on the donkey; I want him to take me home."

"But we haven't any strap to lead him; you see very well that he does not move any more than a stone donkey."

"Wait, nurse, you'll see," said Jack. "First, I know his name is Cadichon; Mother Tranchet told me. I'm going to pat him, and I know he'll follow me."

Jack came over to my ear and patting me said in a low voice:

"Go on, little Cadichon, please go."

This little boy's confidence touched me; I noticed with pleasure that instead of asking for a stick to make me go, he thought only of gentle, friendly means. So, scarcely had he finished his sentence and his patting when I started to go.

"You see, nurse, he understands me, he likes me!" said Jack, flushed with joy and his eyes sparkling with happiness, while running ahead to show me the way.

"Does a donkey understand anything? He is going because he is too tired to stay here," she replied.

"But, nurse, don't you see he is following me?"

"Because he smells the bread in your pocket."

"Do you think he is hungry, nurse?"

"Probably; see how thin he is."

"That's true! poor Cadichon! and I didn't think of giving him my bread."

And immediately taking out of his pocket the bread which the nurse had put there for his lunch, he offered it to me.

I had been offended by the nurse's thought and I was glad to prove to her that she had misjudged me, that I was not following Jack through selfishness, and that I was carrying Jane on my back through kindness and a desire to be obliging.

Therefore, I refused the bread offered me by little Jack and contented myself with licking his hand.

"Nurse, nurse, he is kissing my hand," called out Jack. "He does not want my bread! Dear little Cadichon! How I love you! You see very well, nurse, that he's following me because he loves me, not because he wants bread."

"So much the better for you, if you think you have an unusual donkey, a model donkey. As for me, I know all donkeys are stubborn and bad. I don't like them."

"Oh! nurse," said Jack, "poor Cadichon is not bad. See how good he is to me."

"We'll see if that lasts."

"My Cadichon, you will always be good to Jane and me, won't you?" said little Jack, patting me.

I turned toward him and looked at him so kindly that he noticed it in spite of his great youth; then I

turned toward the nurse and glared at her; she noticed it too, for she said immediately:

"What a wicked eye he has! He looks bad; he stares at me as if he wanted to devour me!"

"Oh, nurse," said Jack, "how can you say that? He looks at me so sweetly, just as if he wanted to kiss me."

Both were right, and I was not wrong; I promised myself to be excellent to Jack and Jane and the people of the house who would be good to me; and I had the bad idea of planning to be naughty to those who would mistreat or insult me as the nurse had done. This desire for revenge was the cause of my misfortunes later on.

While chatting we kept on walking and we soon reached the chateau where Jack and Jane's grandmother lived. They left me at the door where I stayed still like a well bred donkey, without even tasting the grass which bordered the sanded path.

Two minutes later, Jack reappeared, pulling his grandmother after him.

"Come and see, grandmother, come and see how gentle he is, how he loves me! Don't believe what nurse says, I beg you," said Jack with hands clasped.

"No, grandmother, don't believe her, please," chimed in Jane.

"Let's see," said grandmother, smiling, "let's see this famous donkey!"

And coming up to me, she touched me, patted me, took hold of my ears, and put her hand up to my mouth without my attempting to bite her or to move away.

"Why! he seems very gentle indeed," said grandmother. "Emily, how could you say he looked dangerous?"

"Isn't he good? Can't we keep him?" asked Jack.

"My dear little one, I believe he is very good; but how can we keep him since he is not ours? We will have to take him back to his master."

"He hasn't any master, grandmother."

"No, he hasn't any master, grandmother," echoed Jane, who repeated everything her brother said.

"How is that? No master? That's impossible."

"Yes, grandmother, that's very true. Mother Tranchet told me."

"Then how did he win the race for her? Since she took him to run for her, she must have borrowed him from somebody."

"No, grandmother, he came all by himself; he wanted to race with the others. Mother Tranchet paid his entry so she could get what he might win, but he hasn't any master. He is *Cadichon,* the don-

key of poor Pauline who died; her parents drove him away and he lived in the forest all winter."

"Cadichon! the famous Cadichon who saved his little mistress from the fire? Oh! I am very glad to know him; he is certainly an extraordinary and wonderful donkey!"

And turning me all around, she looked at me for some time. I was proud to see my reputation so well established; I swelled my chest, opened my nostrils and shook my mane.

"How thin he is! Poor beast! He was not rewarded for his faithfulness," said grandmother seriously and with a tone of reproach. "Let us keep him, my child, let us keep him since he was abandoned and driven away by those who should have taken good care of him. Call Bouland; I'll have the donkey put in the stable with a good bedding of straw."

Jack, delighted, ran to fetch Bouland who came at once.

"Bouland, here is a donkey which the children brought home; put him in the stable and give him something to eat and drink."

"Will I have to take him back to his master afterwards?"

"No, he hasn't any master. It seems he is the famous Cadichon, who was driven off after the death of his little mistress. He came to the village, and my grandchildren found him abandoned in the meadow. They brought him home and we will keep him."

"Madame does well to keep him. There is not his

equal in the whole province. I have been told the most astonishing things about him; you'd think he hears and understands all that is said; madame will see..... Come, Cadichon, come and eat a measure of oats."

I turned around immediately, and followed Bouland who was moving away.

"It's astonishing," said grandmother, "he really understood."

She went back to the house; Jack and Jane wanted to accompany me to the stable. I was put in a stall, and had as companions two horses and a donkey. With Jack's help, Bouland made me a good bedding of straw, and went to get me a measure of oats.

"More, more! Bouland, I beg you," said Jack, "he needs a great deal, he ran so much!"

"But, Master Jack, if you give him too much oats, you'll make him too lively; neither you nor Miss Jane will be able to ride him."

"Oh! He is so good! We'll be able to ride him anyway."

They gave me an enormous measure of oats, and put a pail of water near me. I was thirsty and began by drinking half of the pail of water; then I munched my oats, while rejoicing that I had been taken home by that good little Jack. I had some other thoughts on the ingratitude of Mother Tranchet; I chewed on my hay, and stretched out on my straw bedding; I was as comfortable as a king and soon I fell asleep.

Jack ran ahead to show me the way

X

CADICHON IS SICK

The next day, I had nothing else to do but to take the children riding for an hour. Jack had just given me my oats himself and in spite of Bouland's warnings, he had given me enough to feed three donkeys of my size. I ate the whole of it; I was satisfied. But.....the third day, I felt uncomfortable; I had fever and pains in my head and in my stomach; I could eat neither oats nor hay, and I remained stretched out on my straw.

When Jack came to see me:

"Well," he said, "Cadichon is still lying down. Come, Cadichon, it is time to get up; I am going to give you your oats."

I tried to get up, but my head fell back heavily on the straw.

"My goodness! Cadichon is sick!" cried out little Jack. "Bouland! Bouland! come quickly! Cadichon is sick!"

"Why, what's the matter with him?" asked Bouland. "He has had his breakfast early this morning."

He stepped up to the manger, looked in, and said: "He hasn't touched his oats; he must be sick. His ears are hot," he added, taking hold of my ears. "His side is panting."

"What does that mean, Bouland?" cried out poor Jack, frightened.

"Master Jack, that means that Cadichon has fever, that you gave him too much to eat, and that we must send for the veterinarian."

"What is a veterinarian?" asked Jack, more and more frightened.

"It's a horse doctor. See, Master Jack, I told you so. This poor donkey has been in misery; he has suffered this winter as you see by his hair and his thinness. Then he got overheated by running so fast the day of the donkey-race. You should have given him very little oats and some grass to cool him off, but you gave him as much oats as he wanted."

"Goodness, gracious! My poor Cadichon! He is going to die! And it's all my fault!" said the little fellow, sobbing.

"No, Master Jack, he isn't going to die because of that; we will have to put him on a grass diet and bleed him."

"Will bleeding hurt him?" asked Jack still weeping.

"Why, no! You'll see, I am going to bleed him while waiting for the veterinarian."

"I don't want to see, I don't want to see," cried out Jack, running away. "I am sure that will hurt him."

And he ran away quickly. In the meantime, Bouland took his lancet, put it on a vein in my neck, tapped it a little, and immediately blood spurted out. As the blood flowed, I felt relieved; my head no

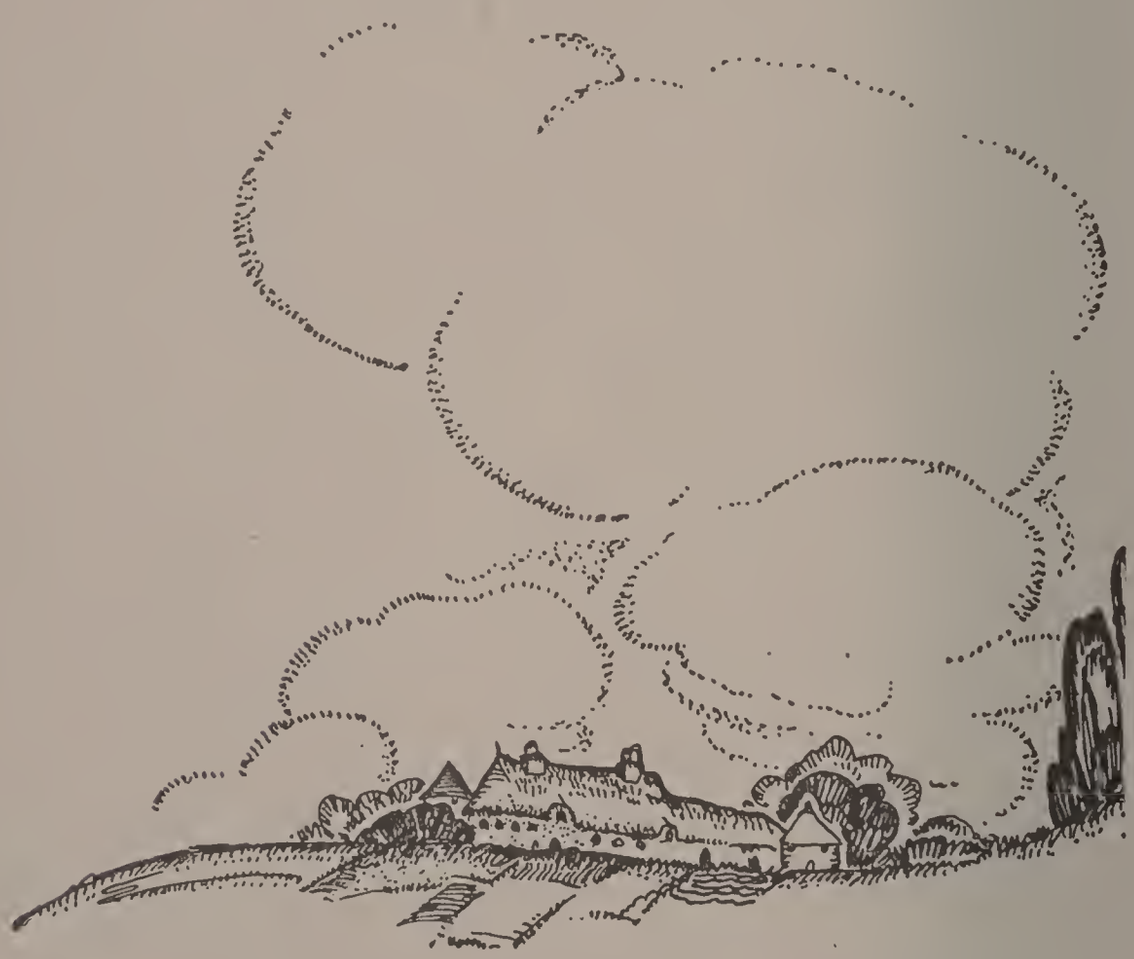
They brought me carrots and cabbages

longer felt heavy; I was no longer gasping for breath and soon felt well enough to get up. Bouland stopped the blood, gave me some bran water, and an hour later let me out in the meadow.

I was better, but not entirely well; it took me a week to recover. During that time Jack and Jane took care of me with a kindness that I'll never forget. They would come to see me several times a day; they would pick grass for me in order to save me the trouble of bending my head to graze; they would bring me salad leaves from the vegetable garden, cabbage, carrots, and they would bring me to the stable every night, and I would find my manger full of the things I liked best, including salted potato peels.

One day that good little Jack wanted to give me his pillow, because, he said, my head was too low when I slept. Another time Jane wanted to cover me up with her bedspread in order to keep me warm. Another day they put pieces of wool cloth around

my ankles for fear of my catching cold. I was heart-broken not to be able to show them my gratitude, for I had the misfortune of understanding everything and of not being able to say anything. Finally I got better, and I knew that they were planning a donkey party in the woods with all their little cousins.



XI

THE BRIGANDS

All the children were gathered in the court-yard; many donkeys had been collected from all the nearby villages. I recognized almost all those I had seen at the race; Jean's donkey looked at me fiercely, while I cast mocking glances toward him. Jack's grandmother had invited almost all her little grandchildren: Camille, Madeleine, Elizabeth, Henrietta, Jane, Peter, Henry, Louis and Jack. The mothers of all these children were to come with them riding on the donkeys, while the fathers would follow on foot, armed with switches to make the lazy ones go.

Before leaving they quarrelled a little (this usually happened) as to who would take the best donkey. Everybody wanted me, nobody wanted to give me up, so that they decided to draw lots for me. I fell to the lot of little Louis, Jack's cousin. He was an excellent little chap, and I would have been very well satisfied with my fate, if I had not seen poor little Jack secretly wipe his tearful eyes. Every time he looked at me he would begin to cry. That troubled me but I couldn't console him. Besides he had, like me, learned resignation and patience.

He finally made up his mind and got on his donkey, saying to his cousin Louis:

"I shall keep near you, Louis; don't make Cadichon gallop too much so that I cannot keep up with you."

"Why won't you keep up with me? Why not gallop like me?"

"Because Cadichon gallops faster than all the donkeys in the district," replied Jack.

"How do you know that?"

"I saw them race for the prize on the town fête day," answered Jack, "and Cadichon beat them all."

Louis promised his cousin he wouldn't go too fast and then we started off at a trot. My companion was not so bad, so that I didn't have much bother about not beating him. The others followed us as well as they could. We arrived thus at a forest where the children were to see some beautiful ruins of an old convent and its chapel.

There were some ugly rumors about those ruins and nobody liked to go there except with a good crowd. It was said that at night, strange noises seemed to come from the ruins—groans, yells, clinking of chains. Several travelers who had made fun of these tales and had wanted to go and visit them alone had never returned and had never been heard from afterwards.

When each one had dismounted from his donkey and we were allowed to graze with our bridles on our necks, the fathers and mothers took their children by the hand, forbidding them to wander about or to lag behind; I watched them run off and disappear among the ruins with some uneasiness.

A man's head peered cautiously from the brush

Getting away from my comrades I took shelter from the sun under a partly ruined arch standing on a little hill a short distance from the convent. I had hardly been there a quarter of an hour when I heard some noise near the arch. I hid against a ruined wall from which place I could see without being seen. Although dull and deep the noise kept increasing and seemed to come from underground.

It was not long before I saw a man's head peering cautiously from the brush.

"Nothing," said he very low after looking around him. "Nobody.....you can come out, comrades. Let each one take one of these donkeys and bring him along quickly."

He drew back to let a dozen men pass and whispered to them:

"If the donkeys run away, don't bother to run after them. Go quick, and no noise, that's the watchword."

The men slipped along the woods, which were very thick in that part of the forest; they walked cautiously, but quickly. The donkeys, looking for shade, were grazing near the edge of the woods. At a given signal, each of the robbers took one of the donkeys by the bridle and dragged it into the thicket.

These donkeys instead of resisting, of fighting, of hee-hawing to give the alarm, let themselves be taken away like imbeciles; a sheep wouldn't have been more stupid. Five minutes after the robbers reached the thicket at the foot of the arch. They made my companions enter the brush one by one and they disappeared. I heard their steps underground, and then there was silence.

"That's the explanation of the noises that terrified the countryside," I thought; "a band of robbers is hidden in the cellars of the convent. They must be caught; but how? That's the question."

I remained hidden under my vaulted arch from which place I saw all the ruins and the whole countryside. I didn't leave until I heard the voices of the children who were looking for their donkeys. I ran up to prevent them from approaching that arch and thicket which hid so well the entrance to the underground passage that it couldn't be seen.

"Here is Cadichon," called out Louis.

"But where are the others?" said all the children together.

"They must be near here," said Louis' father; "let's look for them."

"We would do well to look for them near the

ravine, behind that arch over there," said Jack's father; "the grass is fine there. They probably wanted to taste some."

I trembled at the thought of the danger they were running and I rushed toward the arch to keep them from passing. They wanted to push me aside, but I resisted them so persistently, barring the passage wherever they wanted to go that Louis' father stopped his brother-in-law and said to him:

"Listen, my dear fellow; there is something unusual in Cadichon's behavior. You know what we were told about that donkey's intelligence. We should mind him, believe me, and go the other way. Besides, it is not likely that all the donkeys have gone to the other side of the ruins."

"You are all the more right," answered Jack's father, "because I see the grass near the arch has been trampled not long ago. I am inclined to believe our donkeys have been stolen."

They returned toward the mothers who had kept the children from scattering about. I followed them with a light heart and satisfaction at having perhaps saved them from a terrible misfortune. They talked in low tones and then they called me.

"How are we going to manage?" said Louis' mother. "A single donkey can't carry all the children."

"Let's put the smallest ones on Cadichon; the bigger ones will follow with us," said Jack's mother.

"Come, my Cadichon; let's see how many you can carry," said Henrietta's mother.

They began by putting Jane in front, as the smallest, then Henrietta, then Jack, then Louis. None were heavy; and I showed by trotting that I could carry all four without being tired.

"Whoa! Cadichon," called the fathers. "Go easy, so that we can hold the little ones."

I began to walk surrounded by the bigger children and the mothers, while the fathers followed and helped the stragglers.

They were nearing home and soon arrived there. There was much surprise when they saw me carrying four children and all the others walking. But when the fathers told about the disappearance of the donkeys and my stubbornness in not letting them come near the arch to look for the lost animals, the servants shook their heads and each one had queerer ideas than the other.

Some said the donkeys had been swallowed up or taken away by devils; others thought that the nuns buried near the chapel had carried them off to ride around the world; others were sure that the angels who watched over the convent changed into ashes and dust any animal straying too near the cemetery where the souls of the nuns used to wander. Nobody had the idea of thieves hidden in the cellars.

Soon after getting back the three fathers went and told grandmother about the probable stealing of the donkeys. Then, they hitched the horses to the carriage to go and complain at the police station of the nearby town. Two hours later they returned with the chief of police and six policemen. I had

such a reputation for being intelligent that as soon as they learned how I resisted the approach of any one toward the arch, they considered the affair a serious one. They were all armed with pistols and carbines and ready to start their search. However, they accepted the dinner that grandmother offered them and sat down to the tables with the ladies and gentlemen.

XII

THE CAVES

The dinner didn't last long; the policemen were in a hurry to start their search before nightfall. They asked grandmother's permission to take me along.

"He will be very useful to us in our expedition, madame," said the chief. "This Cadichon is not an ordinary donkey; he has already done harder things than what we are going to ask of him."

"Take him, gentlemen, if you think he will be needed," answered grandmother, "but do not tire him too much, I beg of you. The poor beast has already made the trip this morning, and he came back carrying four of my grandchildren on his back."

"As for that, madame," answered the chief, "you can rest assured that we will treat him as gently as possible."

I had had my dinner consisting of a measure of oats, an armful of salad, carrots and other vegetables; I had had a drink and was ready to start. When they came for me, I went right to the head of the group, and we started out, with the donkey as a guide for the police. They didn't mind that, for they were nice men. People think sometimes that policemen are harsh and mean, but it is not so.

There is nobody more gentle, more charitable, more patient or more generous than these kind policemen. During the whole trip they took the best possible care of me. They made their horses slow up when they thought I was tired and offered me a drink at each brook we crossed.

It was nearly dusk when we arrived at the convent. The chief gave orders to follow all my movements and to keep together. But as their horses might have hindered them, they had left them in a village near the forest. Without hesitating, I led them to the entrance near the arch close to the bushes where I had seen the twelve thieves come out.

I was worried to see them stay near the entrance and in order to have them move away I took a few steps behind the wall; they followed me. When they were all there, I went back to the bushes and kept them from coming near, when they wanted to follow me. They understood and remained hidden along the wall. Then, I went nearer the entrance to the caves and began to bray with all my might.

I was not long in getting the answer I wanted. All my comrades shut in the cellars answered me eagerly. I took a step toward the policemen who guessed my trick and then I went back to my place near the entrance to the cave. I began to bray again; this time nobody answered me; I guessed that the thieves had tied stones to my comrades' tails in order to prevent them from answering me. Everybody knows that when we donkeys want to bray we raise up our tails; not being able to raise them because of

the weight of the stones, my comrades had to remain silent.

I was still standing two paces from the entrance when I saw a man's head come out of the bushes and look around carefully; seeing only me, he said:

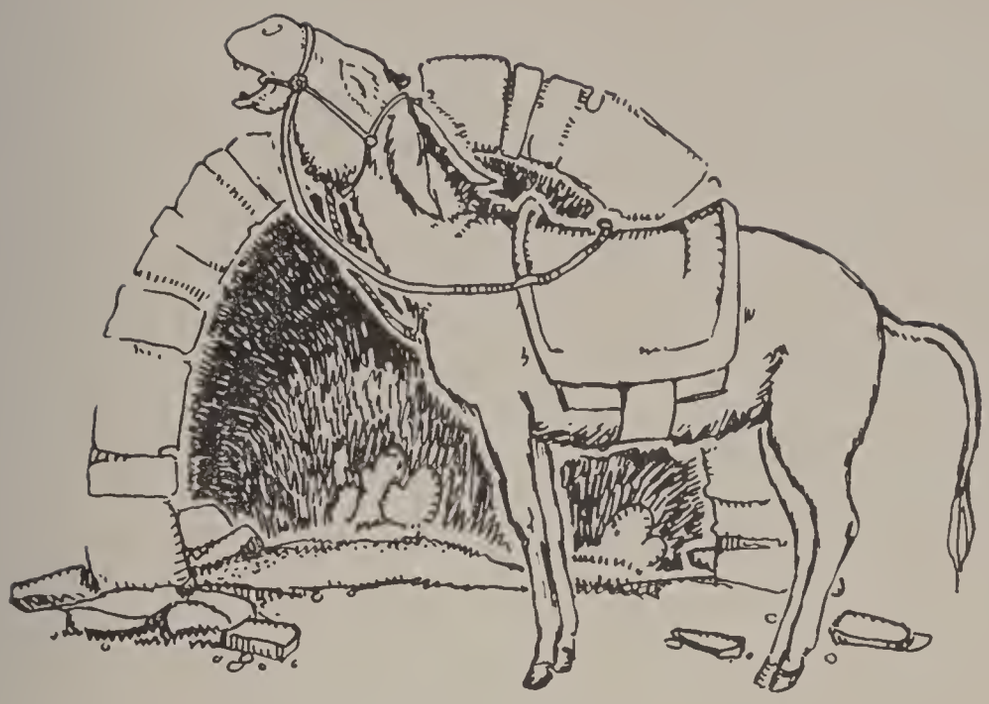
"There is the rascal that we couldn't get this morning. Now you are going to join your comrades, my good singer!"

But as he was going to grab me, I drew back; he followed me, and I drew back still farther till I had brought him to the angle of the wall behind which were my friends the policemen. Before the thief had time to shout, they jumped on him, gagged him, tied him up securely and stretched him out on the ground. I went back again to the cave's entrance and began to bray, knowing that another would surely come out to see what had become of their companion. Indeed I soon saw the bushes pushed aside and another head appear, which looked around with the same caution.

Not being able to reach me this second thief did as the first; as for me, I repeated the same trick and had him caught by the police before he knew what was taking place. I kept this up until I caused six to be captured.

After the sixth, it was useless for me to bray. Nobody appeared. I thought that when they did not see any of the men return, the thieves had suspected some trap and no longer dared to venture out.

Meanwhile night had come, we could hardly see any more. The chief of police sent one of his men



I began to bray with all my might

to get reinforcements in order to attack the rest of the brigands in the cave and to help take away in a wagon the captured prisoners. The remaining men were ordered to divide into two groups to watch both ends of the convent. As for me, they let me do as I pleased after patting me and giving me many compliments for my conduct.

"If he were not a donkey," said a policeman, "he would deserve the cross of honor."

"Hasn't he one on his back?" said another.

"Hush up, you jester," said a third; "you know very well that a cross is marked on the back of all donkeys in order to recall that one of their kind had the honor to be ridden by our Lord Jesus."

"That's why it is a cross of honor," answered the other.

"Silence!" said the Chief in a low voice; "Cadichon is pricking up his ears."

Indeed I heard an unusual noise on the side of the arch; it was not a sound of steps but rather like a crackling and smothered cries. The policeman heard too, but couldn't make out what it was. Finally there came from several airholes and cellar windows of the old convent a thick smoke, then some flames; a few minutes later everything was burning.

"They set fire to the cellars in order to escape by rushing the doors," said the Chief.

"We must run in and put it out, Lieutenant," replied a policeman.

"Don't you do it! Let's watch the exits and if the thieves appear, fire with your carbines; keep the pistols till later."

The Chief had guessed accurately the plan of the brigands; understanding that they were discovered and their comrades prisoners, they expected to escape during the excitement caused by the fire, and thought they might also free their friends.

We soon saw the remaining six robbers and their leader rush out quickly from the exit hidden by the bushes. There were only three policemen at this post. Each one fired before the thieves could use their weapons. Two robbers fell; a third dropped his pistol for his arm was broken. But the other three and their leader rushed fiercely at the police who, sword in one hand, pistol in the other, were fighting like lions.

Before the Chief and two other policemen, who

were watching the opposite side of the convent, had time to rush over, the fight was almost finished. The brigands were all killed or wounded; the leader was still struggling with one policeman, the only one able to stand up, the other two having been seriously wounded. The arrival of reinforcements ended the fight. In the twinkling of an eye the leader was surrounded, disarmed, bound and stretched out.

During the fighting, the fire had gone out; what had been burning was only some brush and small branches. But before exploring the caves, the Chief wanted to wait for the reinforcements he had sent for. It was rather late in the night when we saw six new policemen arrive with the cart which was to carry the prisoners. They were put side by side in the wagon, and the Chief, who was human, had given the order to remove their gags; they swore and said ugly things to the policemen, but the latter paid no attention to them. Two guards were riding on the cart to watch the prisoners; stretchers had been made for the wounded.

During these preparations, I accompanied the Chief when he went to explore the caves escorted by eight men. We followed a long passageway which went steadily downwards, and we reached the caves where the brigands had established their retreat. One of the caves served as a stable and there we found all my comrades; all had stones tied to their tails. As soon as these were removed they all began to bray in concert. In this cave the noise was enough to deafen any one.

"Silence, donkeys!" said a policeman, "or we'll tie on the stones again."

"Let them talk," answered another policeman, "don't you see they are singing the praise of Cadichon!"

"I'd rather have them sing a different tune," resumed the first policeman, laughing.

"Assuredly, that man doesn't like music," I said to myself, aside. "What fault can he find with the voices of my comrades? Those poor fellows were singing their deliverance."

We kept on walking. One of the caves was full of stolen goods. In another they had locked up the prisoners whom they kept as servants; some did the cooking, set the table, cleaned the caves; others made or repaired clothing and shoes. Some of the prisoners had been there for two years; they were chained in two's and all had little bells on their arms and feet so that anybody could know where they were. Two of the thieves remained always near to watch them; they never left more than two prisoners together in the same cave. As for those who were working on clothing, they were all gathered together, but during work hours the end of their chain was attached to a ring fastened in the wall.

Later, I learned that these unfortunates were tourists and visitors to the ruins who had disappeared during the last two years. There were fourteen of them. They told that the bandits had killed three of their number under their very eyes, two because they were ill and one who refused to work.

The police freed all these poor people, brought the donkeys back to the village, took the wounded to the hospital and the thieves to prison. They were tried and condemned, the leader to death and the others to hard labor for life at Cayenne. As for me, I was praised by everybody. Everytime I went out. I heard people say on meeting me:

"That's Cadichon, the famous Cadichon, who is worth more than all the other donkeys in the land put together."

XIII

THE HUNT

The next day was to mark the opening of the hunting season, as I have already said Peter and Henry were ready before everybody; it was their first experience; they had their guns and game-bags slung over their shoulders. Their eyes were shining with happiness; they had assumed a proud and winning manner which seemed to say that all the game of the land was to fall under their shots. I followed them at a distance and saw the preparations for the hunt.

"Peter," said Henry thoughtfully, "when our game bags are full, where will we put the game we kill afterwards?"

"That's just what I was thinking," answered Peter; "I will ask father to bring Cadichon along."

I did not like this idea; I knew that young hunters shoot wildly and at everything without noticing what is in front or near them. Aiming at a partridge they might hit me with their shots, and so I anxiously awaited the outcome of their proposal.

"Father," said Peter to his father who had just come up, "may we take Cadichon along?"

"What for?" asked the father laughing; "you want

to ride a donkey and run down the partridges! In that case, you will first need to attach wings to Cadichon!"

"Why no, father, it's to carry our game when our bags are too full."

"Carry your game!" replied the father, surprised and laughing, "then you think you poor innocent ones, that you are going to kill anything, and even many things?"

"Certainly, father; I have twenty shells in my vest, and I'll kill at least fifteen pieces of game."

"Ha! ha! That's a good one!" the father answered. "Do you know what you two and your friend Auguste will kill?"

"What, father?"

"Time, and nothing else."

"Then, father, I don't know why you gave us guns, and why you ask us to go hunting if you think us so dumb and so awkward as to kill nothing."

"It is to teach you how to hunt, silly little ones," said the father, "that I make you go hunting. One never gets anything the first time; it is only after many misses that one learns to hit."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Auguste, ready also to kill everything in sight. Peter and Henry were still red with indignation when Auguste joined them.

"Father thinks we won't kill anything, Auguste; we will show him we are more clever than he thinks," said Peter.

"Don't worry, Peter; we'll get more than they do."

"Why more than they?"

"Because we are young, quick, nimble and clever, while our fathers are a little old already."

"That's true," said Henry. "Father is forty-two—Peter is fifteen and I'm thirteen; what a difference!"

"And my father! He is forty-three, and I am only fourteen!"

"Listen," said Peter, "without saying anything, I am going to put the saddle and side baskets on Cadichon. He will follow us and we will make him carry our game."

"Fine, that's fine!" replied Auguste. "Put on the big baskets; if we kill a deer, it will need a lot of room."

Henry was entrusted with the task. I laughed up my sleeve at their foresight. I felt quite sure of not having to carry a deer, and of coming back with the baskets as empty as on leaving.

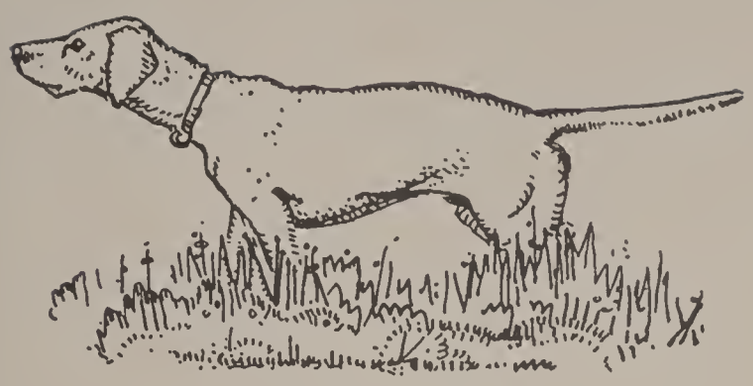
"Let us go," said the fathers. "We'll walk ahead. And you, lads, follow us close. When we are in the fields we will scatter."

"What's this?" added Peter's father in surprise; "Cadichon is following us? Cadichon equipped with two enormous baskets?"

"It is for the young gentlemen's game," said the game keeper smiling.

"Aha! They wanted to have their own way," replied the father. "All right. I am willing to have Cadichon follow the hunt, if he has time to waste."

Smilingly he looked at Peter and Henry who tried to look indifferent.



The dog was pointing

"Is your gun loaded, Peter?" asked Henry.

"Not yet; it's so hard to load and unload that I prefer to wait until I see a partridge."

"Here we are in the fields; for the present let us spread out in a line and shoot only ahead, neither to the right nor to the left so that we don't hit one another."

The partridges were not long in flying on all sides; I had prudently remained behind, far behind; I did right, for more than one slow-going dog was hit by some bird-shots.

The dogs searched, pointed, retrieved; shots were heard all along the line.

I did not lose sight of my three boasting fellows; I saw them shoot often but never pick up anything; none of the three hit a hare or a partridge. They were reckless, shot out of range, too far or too near; sometimes all three shot at the same partridge which flew only all the better. On the other hand the fathers did some real shooting, as many shots as there were pieces of game in the bag. After two hours of

hunting, the father of Henry and Peter came near them.

"Well, boys, is Cadichon well loaded? Is there any room left to empty my game bag which is too full?"

The children did not answer; they saw from the mocking manner of their father that he was aware of their lack of skill. As for me, I ran up and turned one of the baskets toward the father.

"How's that?" asked the father, "nothing in it? Your bags will burst if you fill them too much."

The bags were of course flat and empty. The father smiled at the embarrassed countenances of the young huntsmen, emptied his game bag in one of my baskets and returned to his dog that was pointing.

"I understand why your father gets many partridges!" said Auguste; "he has two dogs to point and retrieve, and we do not have even a single one."

"That's right," replied Henry, "perhaps we killed lots of partridges, only we didn't have any dog to bring them back to us."

"But, I didn't see any fall," said Peter.

"Because when you kill a partridge, it never falls immediately; it flies a little more and falls very far away."

"But," said Peter, "when father and my uncle shoot, their partridges fall right down."

"It seems so to you," said Auguste, "because you are far off, but if you were in their place you would see the partridge skip along for a long time after."

Peter didn't answer but he did not seem to believe

what Auguste said. They were walking less proudly and less jauntily than when they started, and began to ask what time it was.

"I am hungry," said Henry.

"I am thirsty," said Auguste.

"And I am tired," said Peter.

But they had to follow the hunters, who were shooting, hitting and enjoying themselves. Yet they did not forget their young companions, and in order not to tire them too much, they proposed stopping for lunch. The young people accepted joyfully. The dogs were called back and put on a leash, and they all went towards a farm which was a hundred paces away and where the grandmother had sent some provisions.

They sat down on the ground under an old oak tree, and spread out the contents of the baskets. As in all hunting picnics there was a chicken pie, ham, hard-boiled eggs, cheese, marmalade, jam, an enormous cake and some bottles of old wine. The hunters, young and old had a big appetite, and ate enough to scare anyone who might see them. But the grandmother had provided so generously that half was left for the game keepers and farm hands. The dogs had soup to satisfy their hunger and water from the pond to quench their thirst.

"You were not very lucky, children?" said Auguste's father. "Cadichon was not walking like an overloaded donkey."

"No wonder, father," answered Auguste, "we did not have any dog; you had them all."

"Oh! you think that one, two or three dogs would have made you hit the partridges which were flying under your very noses?"

"They wouldn't have made us hit them," Auguste replied, "but they would have brought back those we killed, and. . . . . ."

"Those you killed? You think you killed any partridges?"

"Of course, we did, father," said Auguste, "only since we didn't see where they fell, we couldn't pick them up."

"And you think, that if they fell, you wouldn't have seen them?"

"No, for we haven't as good eyes as the dogs." The father, uncles, even the gamekeepers burst out laughing, which made the children blush with anger.

"Listen," said finally Peter's and Henry's father, "since it is because you had no dogs that your game was lost, each one of you is going to have his own dog when we begin to hunt again."

"But," objected Peter, "the dogs will not follow us, father; they don't know us as well as they do you."

"Well then, to make them follow you, we will give you the two gamekeepers, and we won't start till half an hour later, so that the dogs will not be tempted to follow us."

"Oh! thank you, father!" said Peter, beaming. "That's fine! With the dogs, we are quite sure to get as much game as you did."

Lunch being over, they were rested, and the young

hunters were in a hurry to start out again with the dogs and the keepers.

"We are going to look like real hunters," they said with evident satisfaction.

There they were starting once again, with me following as before lunch, but still at a safe distance. The fathers had told the keepers to walk near the children and prevent any imprudent act. The partridges were starting on all sides, just as in the morning; the youngsters fired just as in the morning; and they killed nothing. . . . . just as in the morning.

Yet the dogs did their duty well; they searched, they pointed, only they did not retrieve, since there was nothing to retrieve. Finally Auguste, out of patience at shooting without hitting, saw one of the dogs pointing. He thought that by firing before the bird started he would surely get it. He aimed, fired . . . . . the dog fell struggling and uttering a cry of pain.

"Zounds! It's our best dog!" exclaimed a keeper, rushing toward the poor animal.

When he arrived, the dog was dying. The shots had struck him in the head; he was still, lifeless.

"That's a fine thing you have done, Master Auguste!" said the keeper who had lifted the poor animal. "I believe the hunt is now over."

Auguste remained motionless and confused; Peter and Henry were much affected by the dog's death; and the keeper, holding back his anger, looked at the animal without saying a word.

I came near to see who was the unfortunate vic-

tim of Auguste's clumsiness and false pride. What was my grief on recognizing Médor, my friend, my best friend! And imagine my horror and sorrow when I saw the keeper lift up Médor and put him in one of the baskets I was carrying on my back! That was the game I was condemned to carry back! My friend Médor, killed by a bad, clumsy, boasting boy!

We turned back in the direction of the farm; the children did not speak, and from time to time the keeper swore under his breath. I found some consolation at the idea of the severe reprimand and scolding the bad marksman was to receive.

When we reached the farm, we found the hunters still there; not having any more dogs, they preferred to rest and await the children's return.

"So soon!" they exclaimed, seeing us return.

"I really think they got big game," said Peter's father. "Cadichon walks as if he were loaded, and one of the baskets looks as if it contained something heavy."

They got up and came toward us. The children lagged behind; their confused manner impressed the men.

"They don't look triumphant," laughed Auguste's father.

"Maybe they shot a calf or a sheep which they took for a rabbit," replied Peter's father.

The keeper came toward them.

"What's up, Michaud? You look as down in the mouth as the hunters."

"There's good reason, Sir," answered the keeper. "We are bringing back a sad prize."

"What is it?" said the father, still laughing. "A sheep, a calf, or a little donkey?"

"Ah! sir," replied the keeper, "there's nothing to laugh at, I tell you. Master Auguste shot your dog Médor, the best in the pack, mistaking him for a partridge."

"What! Médor! How clumsy! I'll never take that chap hunting again!" Turning to his son he said, "Come here, Auguste. That's what your foolish pride and ridiculous boasting led you into! Say good-bye to your friends; you are going to return home at once, and you will put your gun in my room, never to touch it again till you are sensible and prudent."

"But, father," answered Auguste impudently, "I don't know why you are so angry. It happens very often that dogs are shot while on a hunt."

"Dogs! Dogs are shot!" exclaimed the father, astounded. "Really, that's too much! Where did you get those ideas about hunting?"

"But, father," said Auguste in the same impudent manner, "everybody knows that very often the best hunters shoot dogs."

"My dear friends," said the father, turning toward the other men, "will you excuse me for having brought along so stupid a fellow as Auguste. I didn't think him capable of such impudence and foolishness."

Then, turning toward his son:

"You heard my orders, sir, go!"

"But, father. . . . . ."

"Silence! I say. Not a word more, if you don't want to get a caning."

Auguste lowered his head and went off ashamed.

"You see, children," said the father to Peter and Henry, "what happens when you pretend to be able to do what you cannot do. What happened to Auguste might have happened to you too. You all imagined that nothing was easier than shooting, and that to hit, one had only to want to. See the result; all three of you have made fools of yourselves since morning; you have scorned our advice and experience; and finally you three are the cause of the death of my poor Médor. From all of that, I see that you are too young to go hunting. In a year or two we will see. Until then, go back to your little gardens and childish plays. Everybody will be better off."

Peter and Henry bowed their heads without answering. Sadly they returned home; the children, by themselves wanted to bury in the garden my unfortunate friend, whose story I am going to tell you. You will see why I liked him so much.

XIV

MÉDOR

I had known Médor for a long time; I was young, and he was still younger when we met and loved one another. I was living then wretchedly with those bad farmers who had bought me from a donkey dealer and from whom I had run away so cleverly. I was thin, for I was always suffering from hunger.

Médor who had been given to them as a watch-dog and who turned out to be an excellent hunting dog, was less unhappy than I; he amused the children who would give him bread and sometimes milk. Furthermore he admitted to me that when he could slip into the dairy-room with the farmer's wife or the servant he always found a way to get a few mouthfuls of milk or cream and to grab a few lumps of butter which splashed off from the churn when they were making it. Médor was good-hearted; my thinness and weakness made him pity me; one day he brought me a piece of bread and gave it to me smilingly:

"Eat, my poor friend," he said to me in his language; "I have enough with the bread they feed me, while you have only thistles and poor grass, and hardly enough at that."

"Good Médor," I answered him, "you deprive yourself for me, I am sure; I don't suffer as much as you think. I am accustomed to eat little, sleep little, work a lot and be whipped."

"I am not hungry, my friend," said Médor to me, "I assure you I am not hungry. Prove your friendship for me by accepting my little gift. It is not much, but I offer it to you with pleasure and if you refuse me, I'll feel hurt."

"Then I accept, my good Médor," I answered him, "because I love you; and I admit this bread will do me much good, for I am hungry."

And I ate good Médor's bread while he joyfully watched the eagerness with which I crunched it and swallowed it. I felt myself all cheered up by this unusual meal; I said so to Médor hoping in this way to show my gratitude to him better; the result was that every day he brought me the biggest piece of all he received.

At night he came to lie down near me under the tree or bush where I chose to spend the night; we would converse then without anybody being able to hear us, for we would talk yet without speaking. We animals don't utter words as men do, but we understand one another by winks, motions of the head, ears, tail and so we talk among ourselves like human beings.

One evening I saw him coming, sad and downcast.

"My friend," he said to me, "I fear that in the future I can't bring you a part of my bread; the masters have decided that I was big enough to be

tied up all day, and that they would let me free only at night. Besides, the mistress scolded the children because they gave me too much bread; she forbade them to give me anything in the future, because she wanted to feed me herself, and with little in order to make me a good watch-dog."

"My good Médor," I said to him, "if it is the bread you bring me that is troubling you, don't worry, I no longer need it; this morning I discovered a hole in the wall of the hay shed; I have already pulled out a little hay, and I can easily eat some every day."

"Really," said Médor, "I am happy for what you tell me; but I took great pleasure in sharing my bread with you. And then, to be tied up all day long, not to come to see you any more, that's sad."

We chatted for some time, and he left me very late.

"I'll have time to sleep during the day," he said, "and you have not much to do at this time of year."

Indeed, all the next day passed without my seeing my poor friend. Toward evening I was waiting for him impatiently when I heard his cries. I ran near the hedge; I saw the farmer's wife holding him by the skin of his neck while Julius was whipping him with a carriage whip.

I rushed across the hedge through a badly closed opening; I went at Julius and bit his arm so as to make him drop the whip. The woman let go of Médor who ran off, which was what I wanted; so I let go of Julius' arm and I was returning to my

pasture when I felt my ears grabbed; it was the farmer's wife who was angrily calling to Julius:

"Give me the big whip so I can teach this bad animal a lesson! There never was a worse donkey in the world! Give me the whip or beat him yourself!"

"I can't move my arm," said Julius, crying. "It's all numb."

The woman grabbed the whip which had dropped to the ground and ran to me to avenge her mean boy. You can imagine I was not foolish enough to wait for her. I jumped and ran off whenever she was near catching me; she continued pursuing me and I running away, being always very careful to keep out of range of the whip.

I enjoyed this race very much; the woman's anger was rising as she got more tired; I made her run and sweat without exerting myself; she was dripping with perspiration and exhausted without having had the pleasure of hitting me even with the tip end of her whip. My friend was sufficiently avenged when the race was ended.

I looked around for him, for I had seen him run toward the pasture, but before showing himself he was waiting till his cruel mistress had gone.

"Wretch! Rascal!" cried the enraged woman going away; "you will pay for this when you have your pack saddle on."

I was alone. I called. Médor timidly stuck his head out of the ditch where he had hid; I ran to him.

"Come!" I said to him. "She is gone. What did you do? Why did she have Julius beat you?"

"Because I had grabbed a piece of bread one of the children had put on the ground; she saw me, rushed at me, called Julius, and ordered him to beat me without mercy."

"Didn't anybody defend you?"

"Defend me! Yes, in this manner! They all called out 'Well done! Serves him right! Beat him, Julius, so he won't do it again.' 'Don't worry,' replied Julius, 'I won't be light handed; you'll see how I make him squeal.' And at my first cry they all clapped their hands and cried: 'Bravo! Do it again!' "

"Wicked rascals!" I exclaimed. "But why did you take that piece of bread, Médor? Hadn't they given you your supper?"

"Why yes, I had eaten; but the bread in my soup was so crumbled that I couldn't get any out for you, and if I could have carried off that big piece the children dropped you would have had a real feast."

"My poor Médor, you were beaten on account of me!..... Thanks, my friend, many thanks! I'll never forget your friendship, your kindness! But don't do it again, I beg you. Do you think that bread would have given me pleasure if I had known that it was to make you suffer? I would prefer a hundred times to live on thistles only and to know you are well treated and happy."

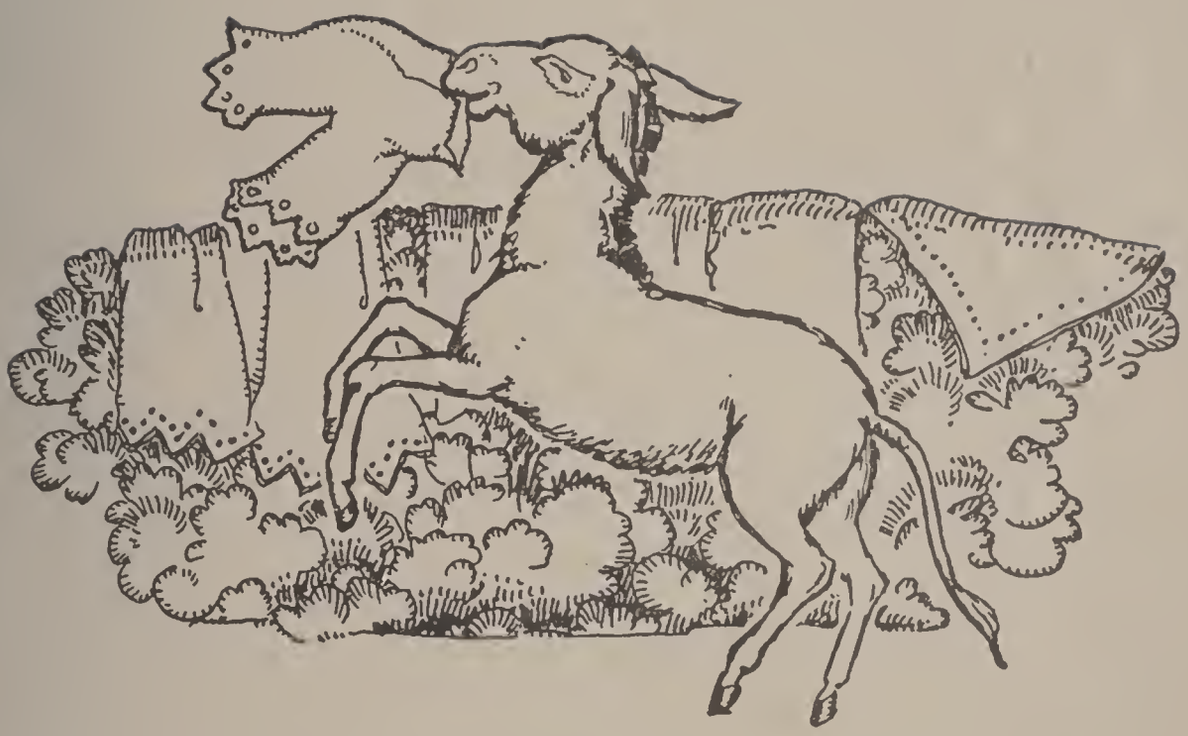
We chatted a long time more, and I made Médor promise not to put himself in a position to be beaten on my account; I promised him to play all kinds of

tricks on the farm people, and I kept my word. One day I threw Julius and his sister into a ditch full of water and I ran away leaving them splashing and wading around.

Another day I chased the little three-year-old boy as if I wanted to bite him; he ran and yelled with a fright which gave me great joy. Another time I pretended to have an attack of colic and I rolled on the highway with a load of eggs on my back; all the eggs were broken; although the mistress was furious, she didn't dare to beat me; she believed I was really sick; she thought I was going to die and the money I had cost them would be lost, so instead of beating me she led me back and gave me some hay and bran. In all my life I never played a better trick and that night in telling it to Médor we roared with laughter.

Another time I saw all their linen spread out on the hedge to dry; I took all the pieces one after another with my teeth and threw them on the manure pile. Nobody saw me doing it; when the mistress didn't find the linen and after looking all around found it on the manure she went into a frightful rage; she beat the servant who beat the children, and they in turn beat the cats, the dogs, the calves and the sheep. It was a pleasing racket for me, for everybody yelled, swore and raved. And Médor and I spent another very merry evening.

Thinking over all these mean tricks since, I have reproached myself sincerely, because I took revenge on innocent people for the faults of the guilty. Médor blamed me sometimes, and advised me to be



I took all the pieces

better and more generous. But I didn't listen to him and I became more and more wicked; I was well punished for it as you will see later.

One day, a day of sadness and mourning for me, a passing gentleman saw Médor, called him, patted him; then he went to speak to the farmer and bought the dog for a hundred francs.

The farmer, who thought he had a dog of little value, was delighted; my poor friend was at once tied with a bit of rope and taken away by his new master; he looked at me sadly. I ran on all sides to look for a passage in the hedge; the openings were all closed tight; I did not even have the consolation of saying farewell to my dear Médor.

Since that day I was terribly lonesome; a short while later took place the episode of the market and my flight into the forest of Saint Evroult. During the years which followed this adventure I thought often, very often, of my friend and I wanted to find him again; but where could I look? I knew that his new master did not live in that region, that he had come there only to see one of his friends.

When I was brought to your grandmother's by my little Jack, imagine my happiness on seeing shortly after my arrival, my dear friend Médor with your uncle and your cousins Peter and Henry. The surprise was general when they saw Médor run to me, give me many caresses, and I follow him everywhere. They thought that it was for Médor the joy of being in the country; and for me that I was very glad to have a companion on my outings. If they

could have understood us, and guessed our long conversations, they would have understood what attracted us to one another.

Médor was happy about everything I told him; of my calm and happy life, of the kindness of my masters, of my good and even glorious reputation in the land. He groaned with me at the story of my sad adventures; he laughed, while blaming me, at the tricks I had played on the farmer who had bought me from Georgie's father. He shook with pride at the account of my triumph in the donkey race; he growled at the ingratitude of Pauline's parents, and he shed some tears over the sad fate of that unfortunate child.

XV

THE WISE LITTLE DONKEY

One day I saw the children run into the meadow near the mansion, where I was eating peacefully. Louis and Jack were playing near me, having a good time climbing on my back; they thought themselves as nimble as acrobats, but I must admit they were rather clumsy, especially good little Jack, who was fat, chubby, more thickset and not as tall as his cousin. Sometimes Louis succeeded, by catching hold of my tail, in climbing (he said *leaping*) on my back; Jack made strenuous efforts to do the same thing; but the fat little boy would roll and fall back panting, and could only succeed with the help of his cousin who was a little older.

To spare them such efforts, I had placed myself near a little mound of earth. Louis had already shown his agility; Jack had also climbed without great effort, when we heard the merry group of children coming on the run.

"Jack, Louis," they called, "we are going to have lots of fun; we are going to the county fair day after to-morrow, and we are going to see a trained donkey."

"A trained donkey? What's a trained donkey?" asked Jack.

I placed myself near a little mound of earth

"It is a donkey that does all kinds of tricks," said Elizabeth.

"What tricks?" asked Jack.

"Tricks . . . . . why . . . . . tricks . . . . . tricks, you know," said Madeleine.

"He will never be as clever as Cadichon," said Jack.

"Bah! Cadichon!" said Henry. "He is very good and very intelligent for a donkey, but he won't be able to do what the donkey at the fair will do."

"I am quite sure that if we taught him, he would."

"First," said Peter, "let's see what this trained donkey does, we will see afterward if he is more clever than Cadichon."

"Peter is right," said Camille, "let us wait until after the fair."

"Well, what will we do after the fair?" asked Elizabeth.

"We will argue," said Madeleine, laughing.

Jack and Louis remained silent, after whispering something to one another; they let the children go away. After making sure that they could neither be seen nor heard, they began to dance around me, laughing and singing:

"Cadichon, Cadichon,
We'll take you to the fair;
A trained donkey is there;
You'll see what he can do;
Then you can do it too.
The world will sing your praise;
A racket they will raise,
And we'll cheer with the rest.
Cadichon, Cadichon
Be sure to do your best."

"What we are singing is very pretty," said Jack, stopping suddenly.

"It's because it is in verse."

"Verse?" said Jack. "I thought it was difficult to make verses."

"Very difficult as you see, not difficult if good you be. Do you see? That's more verse," said Louis.

"Let's run and tell it to my cousins."

"No, no," said Louis, "if they heard our verses, they would guess what we want to do; we have to surprise them right at the fair."

"But, do you think father and uncle will be willing to have us take Cadichon to the fair?"

"Certainly, when we tell them secretly that we

want to show the trained donkey to Cadichon," replied Louis.

"Come quickly and ask them."

They were both running toward the house when the fathers were just coming to the meadow to see what their children were doing. "Father, father!" they shouted, "come quick; we have something to ask you."

"Speak, children, what do you want?"

"Not here, father, not here," they said mysteriously, each one dragging his father into the meadow.

"What's up?" said Louis' father laughing. "Into what plot do you want to draw us?"

"Sh!.....father, sh!..... Listen, please. You know that day after to-morrow there is to be a trained donkey at the fair."

"No, I didn't know it," said Louis' father, "but what have we to do with trained donkeys, since we have Cadichon?"

"That's exactly what we say, father," replied Louis, "that Cadichon is more clever than all of them. My sisters and all my cousins are going to the fair to see this donkey, and we would like to take Cadichon there so that he can see what the donkey does and then do the same."

"What?" said Jack's father. "You would put Cadichon in the crowd to look at the donkey?"

"Yes, father," said Jack, "instead of going in the carriage, we could ride Cadichon and get quite near the circle where the trained donkey will do his tricks."

"I am perfectly willing," replied Jack's father, "but I don't believe Cadichon will learn much in a single lesson."

Jack turned to the little donkey. "Cadichon, won't you be able to do as well as that trained donkey?"

Jack looked at me with such an anxious face while asking that question that I began to bray to reassure him, while laughing inwardly at his anxiety.

"Do you hear, father? Cadichon says 'yes'," Jack called out triumphantly.

The two fathers began to laugh, each kissed his nice little boy and went away promising that I would go to the fair and that they would come with the children and me.

"Oh!" I said to myself, "they have doubts about my skill. It is astonishing that the children have more intelligence than the fathers."

The day of the fair arrived. An hour before the departure they gave me a thorough cleaning; they combed and brushed me till I became impatient; they put on me a brand new saddle and bridle. Louis and Jack asked leave to go a little while before the others in order not to be late.

"Why are you going ahead of us," asked Henry, "and how are you going?"

"We are going on Cadichon," Louis replied, "and we are going ahead because we don't want to ride quickly."

"Just you two?"

"No," said Jack, "father and uncle are coming along."

"It is going to be mighty tiresome to go slowly all that distance," said Henry.

"We won't mind it with our fathers along," said Louis.

"I prefer to go in the carriage," Henry said, "we will get there way ahead of you."

"No," said Jack, "you won't, because we will start before you."

As they finished speaking they led me out all saddled and decorated. The fathers were ready; they placed the two little boys on my back and I set off slowly in order not to make the fathers run.

An hour after, we reached the fair grounds; there were already many people near the circle marked off by a rope, where the trained donkey was to show his cleverness. The fathers of my little friends had them placed with me right near the rope. My other masters and mistresses soon joined us and took places near us.

A rolling of the drum announced that my learned colleague was going to appear. All eyes were fixed on the gate; finally it was opened and the trained donkey appeared. He was thin and sickly; he looked sad and worried. His master called him; he went to him without hurrying and even with a look of fear; I saw from that, that the poor animal had been well whipped to learn what he knew.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said the master, "I have the honor of presenting to you MIRLIFLORE, the prince of donkeys. This donkey, ladies and gentlemen, is not a donkey like his brothers. He is a

clever donkey, more clever than many of you; he is a super-donkey and has no equal. Come, Mirliflore, show what you can do; and first greet these ladies and gentlemen, like a well-bred donkey."

I was naturally proud, this speech made me angry; I resolved to get revenge before the end of the performance.

Mirliflore took three steps forward and bowed dolefully.

"Now, Mirliflore, go and take this bouquet to the prettiest lady in the audience."

I laughed at seeing many hands half stretched out ready to receive the bouquet.

Mirliflore walked around the circle and stopped in front of a fat, ugly woman who, I found out later, was the master's wife, and who had a lump of sugar in her hand. Mirliflore deposited his flowers.

This lack of taste made me indignant; I jumped over the rope into the circle, to the great surprise of the audience; I bowed gracefully to the front and back, to left and right, I walked with assured step to the fat lady, took away the bouquet and went to place it in Camille's lap; I returned to my place amid the applause of the whole crowd. Each wondered what this meant; some people thought it had all been arranged beforehand, and that there were two trained donkeys instead of one; others seeing me with my little masters, and knowing me were delighted with my intelligence.

Mirliflore's master seemed much troubled; Mirliflore was indifferent to my triumph; I began to think

I placed the bouquet in Camille's lap

he was really stupid, a thing rather rare among us donkeys. When there was silence once more, the master again called Mirliflore.

"Come, Mirliflore, show these ladies and gentlemen that after being able to recognize beauty you can also recognize stupidity. Take this cap and put it on the head of the most stupid person in the audience."

He presented the donkey with a magnificent dunce cap decorated with bells and many-colored ribbons. Mirliflore took it between his teeth and went toward a fat red-faced fellow who bowed his head to receive the cap before the donkey got there. Because of his resemblance to the fat woman wrongly proclaimed as the most beautiful, it was easy to see that this fat fellow was the master's son and partner.

"Now is the time," I thought, "to avenge myself for this imbecile's insulting remarks."

And before they could think of holding me back, I again jumped into the arena, ran to the other donkey, snatched the dunce cap from him just when he was about to place it on the fat fellow's head. Before the master could say anything, I ran to him, I placed my forefeet on his shoulders and wanted to put the cap on his head.

He pushed me aside violently and became all the more furious because applause, mixed with laughter was heard on all sides.

"Bravo! donkey," they shouted, "that one is the real trained donkey!"

Made bold by the applause of the crowd, I made another effort to put on the dunce cap. As he drew back, I went forward, and we ended by having a real sprinting match. The man ran away at top speed, I after him, unable to put the cap on him, yet not wanting to hurt him. Finally, I was clever enough to jump on his back, placing my forelegs on his shoulders, and as I leaned on him with my full weight, he fell. I took advantage of his fall to jam down the cap on his head; then I pushed it down to his chin. I stepped aside immediately; the man got up, but not being able to see and somewhat dazed from his fall, he began to turn around and jump about.

To complete the farce, I began to imitate him in a funny way, by turning and jumping like him; I stopped this burlesque imitation, now and then, to

bray in his ears, and then I would get on my hind legs and leap like him, sometimes forward, sometimes sideways.

It is impossible to depict the laughter, the applause and the joyful stamping of the whole audience; never did any donkey in the world have such success, such triumph. The circle was invaded by hundreds of people who wanted to touch me, to pat me, to see me at close range. Those who knew me were proud of me; they told a lot of stories, some true, some false, in which I played an important part.

Once, they said, I put out a fire by working a pump all by myself; I had climbed to a fourth floor, opened the door of my mistress' room, grabbed her while asleep on her bed, and as the flames were raging in the stairways, I had jumped out of a fourth floor window after placing my mistress on my back; neither of us was hurt because the guardian angel of my mistress had held us up in the air and let us drop to the ground very gently.

Another time I had killed fifty bandits all by myself, by strangling them one after the other with a single bite so that none of them had time to wake up and warn his comrades. After that I had rescued from caves, one hundred and fifty prisoners whom these thieves had chained up in order to fatten them up and eat them. Finally, another time, I had won races with the best horses in the land; I had run seventy-five miles in five hours without stopping.

As these stories spread, the admiration increased; they massed and pressed around me; the policemen

were obliged to hold back the crowd. Fortunately the parents of Louis, Jack and my other masters had taken away the children as soon as the crowd had gathered around me. I had a lot of trouble to escape, even with the help of the police; they wanted to carry me in triumph. In order to escape this honor, I was obliged to pretend to bite here and there, and even to rear a few times; but I was careful not to hurt anybody, it was only to frighten people and open a passage.

Once I got rid of the crowd, I looked for Louis and Jack; I did not see them anywhere. Yet, I did not want my dear little masters to return home all the way on foot. Without losing any time looking for them, I ran to the stable where our horses and harnesses were always kept. I went in and did not find them; they had gone. Then, running at full speed on the highway which led back home, I was not long in catching up with the carriages in which they had piled up the children on the parents' laps; there were about fifteen of them in two carriages.

"Cadichon! There's Cadichon!" all the children shouted on seeing me.

The carriages stopped; Jack and Louis asked leave to get down to pat me, compliment me and go home on foot; then Jane and Henrietta, after that Peter and Henry and finally Elizabeth, Madeleine and Camille did likewise.

"You see," said Louis and Jack, "we know Cadichon's ability better than you; see how intelligent he was! He understood the tricks of that Mirliflore."

"That's true," said Peter; "but I would really like to know why he was so anxious to put the dunce cap on the master. Did he understand that the master was silly and that a dunce cap is the sign of stupidity?"

"Certainly, he understood," said Camille, "he is bright enough for that."

"Oh! Oh!" said Elizabeth, "you say that because he gave you the bouquet as the beauty of the audience."

"Not at all," she replied, "I was not thinking of that, and now that you speak of it, I remember that I was very much surprised and would have liked him to take the bouquet to mother for she was the most beautiful woman there."

"But you represented her," Peter said, "and then I think that after auntie, the donkey couldn't have made a better choice."

"And I, am I so ugly?" asked Madeleine.

"Certainly not," answered Peter, "but each one to his own taste, and Cadichon's taste made him choose Camille."

"Instead of speaking of ugly and handsome ladies," said Elizabeth, "we ought to ask Cadichon how he was able to understand what that man was saying."

"What a pity Cadichon can't speak! What stories he could tell us!"

"Who knows whether he does not understand us?" said Elizabeth. "I read the 'Memoirs of a Doll'; does a doll see and understand things? This doll wrote that she understood and saw everything."

"Do you believe that?" asked Henry.

"Certainly, I believe it," Elizabeth replied.

"How could the doll write?" said Henry.

"She used to write at night with a tiny hummingbird quill and hid her Memoirs under her bed."

"Don't believe such nonsense, my poor Elizabeth," Madeleine said, "a lady wrote those 'Memoirs of a Doll' and to make the book more amusing she pretended to be the doll and to write as if she were a doll."

"Don't you think a real doll wrote them?" Elizabeth asked.

"Of course not," answered Camille. "How can a doll which is not alive, which is made of wood, skin, and full of sawdust, think, see, hear and write?"

While chatting we reached the mansion; the children all ran to their grandmother who had remained home. They told her all I had done and how I had astonished and amused everybody.

"But this Cadichon is truly marvelous!" she said, coming to pat me. "I have known very intelligent donkeys, more intelligent than any other animal, but I have never seen any like Cadichon. You must admit people are very unfair toward donkeys."

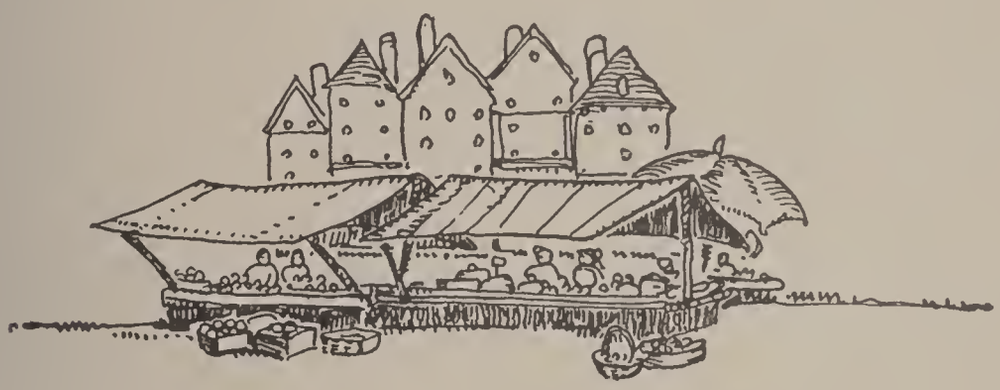
I turned to her and looked at her gratefully.

"You would really think he understood me," she continued. "My good Cadichon, you may be sure I'll never sell you as long as I live, and I will always have you cared for as if you understood everything happening around you."

I sighed on thinking of the age of my old mistress. She was fifty-nine years old and I only nine or ten.

"My dear little masters, when your grandmother is dead, keep me please, don't sell me, and let me die in your service."

As to the unfortunate master of the trained donkey, I repented bitterly later for the trick I had played on him, and you will see the harm I had done while wanting to show my cleverness.



XVI

THE FROG

The boasting fellow who had killed my friend Médor had been forgiven, probably because of the excuses he gave; he had even been permitted to return to your grandmother's. I couldn't bear him as you can well imagine and I looked for every opportunity to play him some mean trick, for I could hardly be called charitable, and I had not yet learned to forgive.

This boy Auguste was a coward, and he would always boast of his courage. One day his father had brought him on a visit, and the children had suggested a walk in the park. Camille, who was running ahead, suddenly leaped aside and shrieked.

"What's the matter?" cried Peter, running to her.

"I was frightened by a frog that leaped on my foot," answered Camille.

"You are afraid of frogs, Camille?" Auguste said. "I am not afraid of anything, not of any animal."

"Then, the other day, why did you jump so high when I told you a spider was crawling on your arm?" asked Camille.

"Because I misunderstood what you said to me."

"What do you mean, misunderstood? It was easy enough to understand."

"Certainly, if I had heard well; but I thought you said: 'A spider is crawling over there.' And I jumped to see it better, that's all."

"The idea!" said Peter, "that is not true, for you said to me while jumping, 'Peter, take it off, please.' "

"I meant to say: 'Go away, so that I can see it better.' "

"He is lying," said Madeleine to Camille in a low voice.

"I think so too," replied Camille, in the same tone.

As for me, I was listening to the conversation and took advantage of it as you will see. The children had seated themselves on the grass; I had followed them. Coming near them I saw a little green frog; it was very near Auguste whose partly open pocket made what I planned to do very, very easy. I approached noiselessly, I seized the frog by a leg and put it in the little boaster's pocket. Then I drew away so that Auguste would not guess that I had given him that nice little present.

I could not hear well what they were saying, but I could see that Auguste continued to show off by saying he was not afraid of anything, not even lions. Thereupon the children all protested, when he had to blow his nose. He put his hand in his pocket, took it out while screaming in fright, got up quickly and cried:

"Take it out! Take it out! Please, please, take it out, I'm afraid! Help! Help!"

"What's the matter, Auguste?" said Camille, half laughing, half scared.

"A bug, an animal! Take it away, please!"

"What animal? Where is it?" asked Peter.

"In my pocket," said Auguste. "I felt it; I touched it! Take it away, take it away! I'm afraid, I don't dare!"

"You can take it away yourself, you coward," answered Henry indignantly.

"Look!" said Elizabeth, "he is afraid of an animal in his pocket, and he wants us to take it out, while he does not dare touch it!"

Although a little frightened at first, the children ended by laughing at Auguste's contortions because he did not know how to get rid of the frog. He felt it crawling and wriggling in his pocket. Each time the frog moved his fright became greater. Finally losing his wits and crazy with fear, he did not think of any other way of getting rid of the creature which he felt moving but did not dare touch, than by taking off his coat and throwing it on the ground.

He remained in his shirt sleeves; the children burst out laughing and rushed to the coat. Henry partly opened the pocket; when the prisoner saw the light of day, it jumped through the opening, narrow as it was and everyone could see a nice little green frog which was frightened and jumping about.

"The enemy is fleeing," said Camille, laughing.

"Take care he does not run after you!" Peter said.

"Come no nearer," said Henry, "he might eat you up!"

"There is nothing so dangerous as a green frog!" said Madeleine.

The frog jumped about

"If it were only a lion," Elizabeth said, "Auguste would rush at him. But a green frog! All his courage could not protect him from its claws."

"And don't forget its teeth!" said Louis.

"You can pick up your coat now," said Jack catching the frog, "I am keeping your enemy a prisoner."

Auguste remained ashamed and motionless before the children's laughter and jokes.

"Let's help him dress," called out Peter, "he hasn't the strength to put on his coat."

Auguste wanted to run away but all the children, big and small, ran after him, Peter holding out the coat he had picked up while the others chased the runaway and barred his path.

It was a very amusing chase for all except Auguste who, blushing with shame and anger, ran to right and left only to meet an enemy everywhere. I had begun to take part in the game. I galloped in front and behind him, increasing his terror by my brayings and my attempts to catch him by the seat of his trousers.

Once I caught him, but he pulled so hard that a piece of cloth remained between my teeth, and that

only made the children laugh all the more. I finally succeeded in getting a good grip on him; he yelled so that I thought I must have had hold of something more than the cloth of his trousers. He stopped short; Peter and Henry rushed to him first; he wanted to continue fighting them off, but I pulled gently, and that made him yell again and then he became as gentle as a lamb; he stood like a statue while Peter and Henry put on his coat.

I released my hold as soon as they no longer needed my help, and went away with joy in my heart because I had succeeded so well in making him ridiculous. He never knew how that little green frog got into his pocket, and since that fateful day, he never again dared to boast of his courage . . . that is, in front of the children.

XVII

THE PONY

My revenge should have been gratified, but it was not; I held against that unfortunate Auguste a feeling of hatred which made me play another trick on him for which I repented later. After the frog incident we were rid of him for nearly a month, but one day his father brought him around again, and nobody was pleased by his visit.

"What shall we do to amuse that fellow?" Peter asked Camille.

"Propose a donkey party in the woods," Camille answered. "Henry will ride Cadichon, Auguste will take the farm donkey and you will take your pony."

"That's a fine idea," said Peter. "I only hope he will be willing."

"He will have to be," Camille said, "have the pony and donkeys saddled; when they are ready, you'll make him get on his."

Peter went to find Auguste who was teasing Louis and Jack by pretending to help them with his suggestions for beautifying their little garden; he turned everything upside down, pulled out the vegetables, replanted the flowers, cut the strawberry plants and made a general disorder. The poor little fellows were

trying to stop him from doing it, but he would push them away with his foot or with the spade. When Peter got there he found them crying over the ruins of their flowers and vegetables.

"Why do you torment my little cousins, Auguste?" asked Peter, showing his displeasure.

"I am not tormenting them; on the contrary, I am helping them."

"What if they don't want to be helped?" asked Peter.

"But I want to do a good deed for them, anyway," Auguste replied.

"He is tormenting us because he is twice our size," said Louis, "he wouldn't dare to do it to you or Henry."

"I wouldn't dare! Don't repeat that word, little one."

"No! you wouldn't dare! I guess Peter and Henry are stronger than a little green frog."

At those words "little green frog" Auguste blushed, shrugged his shoulders disdainfully, and said to Peter:

"What did you want of me, my little friend? You seemed to be looking for me."

"Yes, I came to propose a donkey party," answered Peter coldly, "they will be ready in a quarter of an hour, if you want to go for a ride in the woods with Henry and me."

"Certainly, nothing would suit me better," Auguste replied eagerly, and pleased to end the complaints of Jack and Louis.

Peter and Auguste went to the stable, where they asked the coachman to saddle the pony, my farm comrade and myself.

"Ah!" said Auguste, "you have a pony! I am very fond of ponies."

"Grandmother gave it to me."

"Then you know how to ride?"

"Yes, I have been at the riding school for two years."

"I would like very much to ride your pony."

"I advise you not to, if you haven't learned how."

"I didn't learn how but I can do it as well as anybody else."

"Have you ever tried?"

"Many times. Who does not know how to ride?"

"When did you ride? Your father has no saddle horses."

"I didn't ride a horse, but I rode donkeys; it's all the same."

"I repeat, dear Auguste," said Peter holding back a smile, "if you have never gone horseback riding, I don't advise you to ride my pony."

"Why not? You can let me do it just once for a trial."

"Oh! it is not a question of refusing you; it is because the pony is rather lively, and . . ."

"Well?"

"Well—he might throw you off."

"Rest assured, Peter, I am more skillful than you think. If you will lend him to me, I shall be able to drive him as well as you."

"Have your own way then," Peter replied, "take the pony, I'll take the farm donkey, and Henry will ride Cadichon."

Henry came to join them; we were all ready to leave. Auguste approached the pony, which was restless and jumping about. Auguste looked at him, somewhat worried.

"Hold him well till I get on," he said.

"There is no danger, sir," said the coachman, "the animal is not vicious; there is no need to be afraid."

"I am not at all afraid," answered Auguste offended, "do I look as if I were afraid, I, who am not afraid of anything?"

"Except little green frogs!" said Henry in a low voice to Peter.

"What did you say, Henry? What did you whisper to Peter?"

"Oh, nothing interesting," said Henry mischievously, "I thought I saw a little green frog over there on the grass."

Auguste bit his lips, blushed but did not answer. He managed to climb on the pony and began pulling on the reins; the pony reared; Auguste clung to the saddle.

"Don't pull, sir, don't pull; you don't drive a horse like a donkey," said the coachman smiling.

Auguste let go of the reins. I started ahead with Henry. Peter followed on the farm donkey. Maliciously, I began to gallop; the pony tried to get ahead of me, which made me go all the faster; Peter and Henry laughed. Auguste yelled and held on to the

mane; we were all running, and I decided not to stop until Auguste would fall off.

The pony, excited by the laughs and yells was not long in passing me; I followed him closely, nibbling at his tail when he seemed to want to slow up. We galloped like that for fully fifteen minutes, Auguste almost falling at each step but still holding on to the pony's neck.

To hasten his fall, I nipped the pony's tail a little harder and he began to rear up with such force, that at the first rearing Auguste was on the pony's neck, at the second, he went over its head and fell on the grass where he remained stretched out and motionless.

Believing him hurt, Peter and Henry jumped down and rushed over to him to pick him up.

"Auguste, Auguste, are you hurt?" they asked him worried.

"I don't think so, I don't know," answered Auguste still trembling with fear.

When he stood up, his legs were bending, his teeth chattering; Peter and Henry looked him over and not finding a scratch or hurt of any kind looked at him with pity and scorn.

"It is too bad to be such a coward," said Peter.

"I—am n—not—a coward—only—I was—frightened," answered Auguste with his teeth still chattering.

"I hope you won't insist on riding my pony," added Peter. "Take my donkey; I am going to take back my pony."

And without waiting for Auguste's answer, he leaped lightly onto the pony.

"I would prefer Cadichon," said Auguste, coaxingly.

"Have your own way again," answered Henry. "Take Cadichon; I'll take Grison, the farm donkey."

The first thing I wanted to do was to prevent that bad boy from riding me; but then I thought of another scheme which would complete his outing and help me show my dislike and ill feeling for him. So I let my enemy peacefully bestride me, and I followed the pony at a distance. If Auguste had dared to whip me to make me go faster I would have thrown him off; but he knew how much my little masters liked me, and he let me trot as I pleased.

All along the way I was careful to pass near the brush, and above all the thorns, holly and briars so that my rider's face was brushed by the prickly branches of these bushes. He complained to Henry who answered him coldly: "Cadichon only rides badly when he does not like the driver; probably you are not in his good graces."

We soon started on the way back to the house; this ride did not amuse Henry and Peter who heard Auguste grumbling steadily as other branches hit his face; he was scratched to perfection; I had good reasons to believe he did not have any better time than his companions.

My horrible scheme was going to take effect. Coming back past the farm, we came along past a ditch. I had let Peter and Henry go ahead; when I

got near the ditch, I raced towards the edge, and gave a kick which threw Auguste right in the middle of the mire. I remained peacefully watching him flounder around in this black mud which partly blinded him.

He wanted to yell but the dirty water got into his mouth; he was up to his ears in it and he couldn't find the edge of the ditch. I was laughing inwardly. "Médor," I said to myself, "Médor, you are avenged." I was not thinking of the harm I might do to that poor boy, who had killed Médor through clumsiness more than malice; I did not realize that perhaps I was the more wicked of the two.

Finally when Peter and Henry got off their donkey and did not see Auguste or me, they were astonished at this delay. They retraced their steps and perceived me at the edge of the ditch watching with satisfaction my enemy splashing around. They came up and realizing that Auguste was in grave danger of being suffocated by the mud, they could not refrain from crying out on seeing the cruel position he was in. They called the farm hands who held out to him a pole which he grabbed and so they drew him out on the end of it. When he was on solid ground, nobody wanted to go near him as he was plastered with mud.

"We have to go tell his father," said Peter.

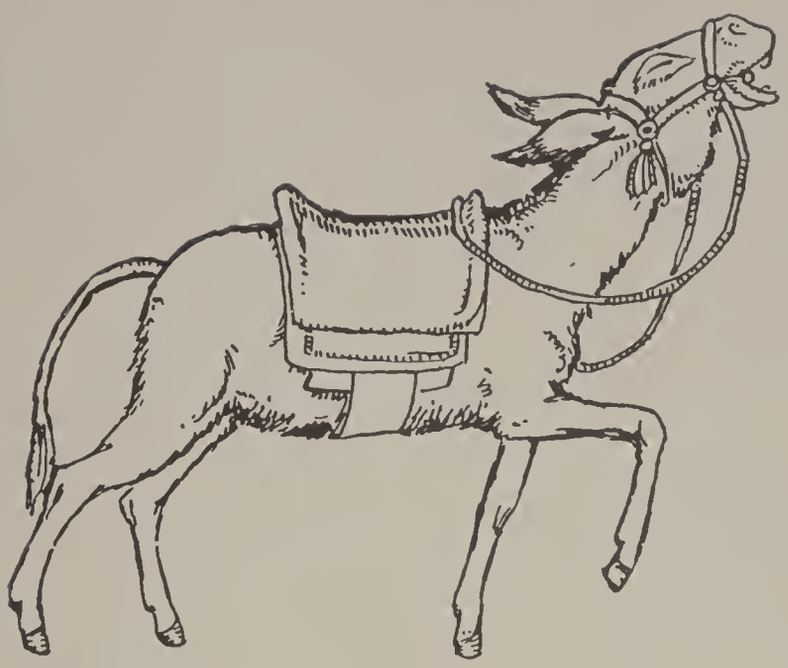
"And my father too, and my uncles," said Henry, "so they can tell us what to do to clean him."

"Come on, Auguste, come on; follow us, but at a distance," said Peter; "this mud has an unbearable smell."

Auguste followed at a distance

Auguste, now very humble, black with mud and hardly seeing well enough to walk, followed them at a distance while the farm hands could be heard exclaiming. I formed the vanguard, jumping about, running and braying with all my might. Peter and Henry seemed dissatisfied with my merriment; they shouted to me to keep still.

This unusual noise attracted the attention of the whole household. Everyone recognized my voice and knowing that I brayed thus only on special occasions, came to the window; so, that when we arrived within sight of the mansion, we saw the faces of the curious peering through the window panes and heard exclamations and extraordinary bustle. A few minutes after, everybody, big and little, old and young, had come down and made a circle around us. Auguste was in the center each one asking what



Every one recognized my voice

was the matter and fleeing at his approach. The grandmother was the first to say:

"We must wash this poor boy and see whether he has been hurt."

"But how can we wash him?" said Peter's father. "A bath must be prepared."

"I will take charge of that," said Auguste's father. "Follow me, Auguste; I see by the way you walk that you are not much hurt. Come to the pool; you are going to take a dip and when all the mud is off, you'll soap yourself and finish cleaning up. The water is not cold at this season. Peter will be willing to lend you some underwear and clothes."

And he went toward the pool. Auguste being afraid of his father, had to follow him. I rushed over to witness the long, painful operation; that sticky greasy mud clung to skin and hair. The serv-

ants had hurried to bring underwear, soap, clothes and shoes. The fathers helped to scrub Auguste who came out, after half an hour, almost clean but shivering and so ashamed that he did not want to be seen, and got his father to take him home immediately.

Meanwhile everybody wanted to know how this accident could have happened. Peter and Henry told about the two falls.

"I believe," said Peter, "that both were caused by Cadichon who does not like Auguste. Cadichon nipped my pony's tail, a thing he never does when any one of us is riding him; thus he made the pony gallop; the pony kicked and off fell Auguste. I was not present at the second fall, but by Cadichon's triumphant manner, his joyous hee-haws and general attitude, it is easy to guess he purposely threw Auguste, whom he detests, into the mud."

"How do you know he detests him?" asked Madeleine.

"He shows it in a thousand ways," said Peter. "The day of the green frog, don't you remember how he chased Auguste, caught him by the seat of his trousers, and held him while we put on the coat. I watched his face meanwhile. Looking at Auguste he had a wicked expression he saves for people he detests. He does not look at us like that. With Auguste his eyes shine like burning coal; he really looks like a demon. Don't you, Cadichon," he added, staring at me, "and haven't I guessed that you hate Auguste and were so bad to him on purpose?"

I answered by braying and then licking his hand.

"Do you know," said Camille, "Cadichon is really a most extraordinary donkey? I am sure he hears and understands us."

I looked at her gently, and going near her, put my head on her shoulder.

"What a pity, my Cadichon," said Camille, "that you are becoming more and more angry and naughty and that you are making us like you less and less; and what a pity you can't write! You must have seen many interesting things," she continued, stroking my head and neck. "If you could write your memoirs, I am sure they would be very amusing."

"Poor Camille," said Henry, "what nonsense you are talking. As if Cadichon, a donkey, could write memoirs."

"A donkey like Cadichon is in a class by himself," Camille replied.

"Bah! All donkeys are alike and no matter what they do are never anything but donkeys."

"There are donkeys and donkeys," insisted Camille.

"Which doesn't prevent people from saying when a person is stupid, ignorant and stubborn: 'Stupid as a donkey; ignorant as a donkey; stubborn as a donkey'; and if you said to me 'Henry, you are a donkey,' I would be angry, because surely I would take that for an insult."

"You are right," said Camille, "and yet I feel and see, first that Cadichon understands many things, that he loves us, and that he has extraordinary intel-

ligence; and then that donkeys are donkeys only because they are treated as donkeys, that is, harshly and even with cruelty; then they can neither love their masters nor serve them well."

"Then according to you, it is through cleverness that Cadichon had the bandits discovered, and that he does so many things that seem extraordinary?"

"Certainly, it is through his intelligence and because he wanted to do it that Cadichon had the bandits discovered. In your opinion, why did he do it?"

"Because he had seen his comrades go into the caves in the morning and he wanted to join them."

"And what about the tricks of the trained donkey?"

"He did that because of jealousy and mischief."

"And the donkey race?"

"His donkey's pride."

"And at the fire when he saved Pauline?"

"Just by instinct."

"Keep still, Henry, you make me impatient."

"I assure you that I like Cadichon very much; only I take him for what he is, a donkey, and you make a genius of him. Please note that if he has the intelligence and will power you say he has, then he is wicked and hateful."

"How is that?"

"Because, by making fools of the trained donkey and his master, he prevented them from earning the money they needed for their living. Then because he played a thousand tricks on Auguste who never

did anything to him. And finally because he makes himself feared and disliked by all the animals whom he bites and chases with kicks."

"All that is true; you are right, Henry. I prefer to believe for Cadichon's good name that he does not know what he does nor the harm that he does."

And Camille ran off with Henry, leaving me alone and dissatisfied with what I had just heard. I felt indeed that Henry was right but I did not want to admit it to myself, and above all I was not willing to change and control my feelings of pride, anger and revenge.

The Chateau

XVIII

THE PUNISHMENT

I remained alone till evening; nobody came to see me. I was lonesome, and in the evening I went near the servants who were taking fresh air outside the servants' quarters and talking among themselves.

"If I were madame," said the cook, "I would get rid of this donkey."

"He is really getting too wicked," the maid said. "Look at the trick he played on poor Auguste; he might have killed or drowned him."

"Did you see how gay he was afterwards?" asked the valet. "He ran about, leaped and brayed as if he had done a fine thing."

"Wait," replied the coachman, "he'll pay for it; I'll give him a good thrashing for his supper."

"Be careful," warned the valet, "if madame finds out—"

"How would she? Do you think I am going to beat him right under her eyes? I'll wait until he is in the stable," said the coachman.

"You may have a long wait," the valet replied. "This animal who does as he feels like, often comes in very late."

"Well, if he bothers me too much, I'll know how to make him go in and nobody will suspect it either."

"How will you go about it?" the maid asked. "This bad donkey will bray as only he knows how, and will arouse the whole household."

"Never mind!" replied the coachman. "I'll choke his trumpet, they won't even hear him breathe."

And everybody burst out laughing. I thought them very bad; I was angry; I tried to think of a way to avoid the punishment with which I was threatened. I would have liked to jump on them and bite them all. But I did not dare for fear they would go and complain to my mistress; and I had a vague feeling that my mistress was tired of my tricks and might chase me away from her house. While I was thinking the maid called the coachman's attention to my wicked eyes.

The coachman shook his head, got up, entered the kitchen, came out again as if to go to the stable and passing in front of me slipped a noose on my neck; I drew back to break the rope and he pulled to make me go forward; we each pulled in opposite directions, but the more we pulled, the more the rope strangled me; from the first moment I had tried in vain to bray; I could hardly breathe and I was forced to give in to the coachman.

In this way he took me to the stable of which the servants had obligingly opened the door. Once I was

in my stall they put on my halter, took off the rope which was choking me, and after carefully closing the door the coachman took a cart driver's whip and began to beat me mercilessly, without anybody coming to my rescue. It was useless to bray, to struggle, my young masters didn't hear me and the wicked coachman could make me pay to his heart's content for all the tricks of which he accused me.

He finally left me in a pitiful state of grief and pain. That was the first time since I came to that house that I had been humiliated and punished. Since then, on thinking things over, I realized that I had brought this punishment on myself.

The next day, it was rather late when they let me out; I had a good mind to bite the coachman's face, but I was stopped, as on the preceding day by the fear of being sent away. I started toward the house; I saw the children gathered together in front of the porch talking in a lively manner.

"There's that bad Cadichon," said Peter, watching me come nearer. "Let's chase him away for he could easily bite us or play us a mean trick as he did to poor Auguste the other day."

"What did the doctor say?" Camille asked.

"He said Auguste is very ill," Peter replied. "He has fever and he is delirious."

"What does delirious mean?" said Jack.

"You are delirious when you have such high fever that you no longer know what you are saying; you don't recognize anybody; you think you are seeing things."

"What does Auguste see?" said Louis.

"He thinks he is seeing Cadichon who wants to jump on him, who bites him, tramples upon him; the doctor is worried. Father and my uncles went there."

"How mean of Cadichon to have thrown Auguste in that disgusting hole!" said Madeleine.

"Yes, it is very mean, sir," called out Jack, turning toward me. "Go, you are wicked! I don't like you any more."

"Neither do I! nor I! nor I!" repeated all the children together. "Go away, we don't want to have anything to do with you."

I was dismayed. All, even my little Jack whom I always loved tenderly, all were chasing me, were driving me off.

I went away a few steps, slowly; I turned around and looked at them so sadly that Jack was moved; he ran to me, took my head and said to me fondly:

"Listen, Cadichon, we don't like you now; but if you are good, I assure you we will like you again as we did before."

"No, no, never as before!" exclaimed all the children. "He is too bad!"

"You see, Cadichon, that's what happens when you are bad," continued little Jack, patting my neck. "You see that nobody wants to like you..... But," he added whispering, "I still like you a little and if you are not bad any more, I'll like you a great deal, just as before."

"Be careful, Jack," Henry warned, "don't get too near him; if he bites or kicks he will hurt you."

"There is no danger; I am quite sure he won't bite any of us."

"Pray, why not?" said Henry. "Didn't he throw Auguste twice?"

"Oh! Auguste; that's different; he does not like him."

"And why doesn't he like him?" Henry asked. "What did Auguste do to him? Some fine day he might hate us too."

Jack did not answer for there was nothing to answer; but he shook his head and turning toward me, he gave me such a fond patting that I was moved to tears. The desertion of all the others made my dear little Jack's caresses all the more precious and for the first time, I was really sorry for what I had done. Uneasily I thought of unfortunate Auguste's illness. In the afternoon they learned that he was still worse, that the doctor feared for his life. My young masters went to see him toward evening; the girl cousins waited impatiently for their return. "Well?" they cried as soon as they saw the boys returning. "What news? How is Auguste?"

"Not at all well," answered Peter; "yet not as ill as at noon."

"It is pitiful to see the poor father," Henry said, "he cries and sobs and begs God to leave him his son; he said such touching things that I had to cry."

"We are all going to pray with him in our evening prayer; won't we, my friends?" said Elizabeth.

"Certainly, with all our hearts," said all the children at the same time.

Jack was weeping

"Poor Auguste!" said Madeleine, "I hope he does not die!"

"The poor father would go crazy with grief," said Camille, "because he has no other children."

"Where is Auguste's mother?" Elizabeth asked, "we never see her."

"It would be astonishing if we did, for she has been dead for ten years," replied Peter.

"The strange part is that she died after falling in the water at a boat ride."

"What? Was she drowned!" said Elizabeth.

"No," replied Peter, "they got her out of the water immediately. But it was during warm weather, she got chilled by the cold water and was so frightened that she had fever, was delirious exactly like Auguste and she died a week later."

"Heavens!" said Camille, "I hope that does not happen to Auguste."

"That's why we must pray a great deal; perhaps God will grant us what we ask Him."

"Where is Jack?" asked Madeleine.

"He was here a little while ago; he must have gone home," answered Camille.

The poor child had not gone home, but was kneeling behind a big box and his face hidden in his hands, was praying and weeping.

And I was the one responsible for Auguste's illness, for his father's worry and for my little Jack's grief! That thought made me very sad and I said to myself that I should not have avenged Médor. "What good to him was Auguste's fall?" I asked myself. "Did that bring back Médor to me? Did my revenge do anything more for me than make me feared and detested?"

Impatiently I waited for the next day and news of Auguste. I was among the first to hear, for Jack and Louis had me harnessed to the little cart to go to Auguste's. On reaching there we met a servant rushing to get the doctor and he told us that Auguste had spent a bad night and had just had a convulsion which frightened the father. Jack and Louis waited to see the doctor who was not long in coming and who promised to give them news when he came out.

A half hour later he came down the steps. "Well, Dr. Tudoux, how is Auguste?" asked Louis and Jack.

"Not bad, not bad, my friends!" replied Dr. Tudoux slowly. "Not as bad as I feared."

"Aren't these convulsions dangerous?" said Louis.

"No, no; it was just the result of nervous excitement. I have given him something to quiet him; it won't be serious."

"Then, Dr. Tudoux," said Jack, "you are not worried; you don't think he is going to die?"

"No, no, it won't be serious, not at all."

"I am so glad!" Louis and Jack replied joyfully. "Thank you, Dr. Tudoux. Good-bye, we are going back quickly to reassure our cousins."

"Wait just a minute," Dr. Tudoux said, "isn't this Cadichon?"

"Yes, it is Cadichon," replied Jack.

"Then be careful; he might just as well throw you in a ditch as he did Auguste. Tell your grandmother she would do well to sell him; he is a dangerous animal."

Dr. Tudoux bowed and went away. I remained so astonished and humiliated that I did not think of starting till my little masters had repeated three times:

"Come, Cadichon, get up!..... Come Cadichon, we are in a hurry! Do you want us to stay here all night, Cadichon? Get up, get up!"

Then I started and I went full speed till we reached the house porch where all the cousins, aunts and uncles, fathers and mothers were waiting.

"He is better!" cried Jack and Louis; and they began to tell about their conversation with Dr. Tudoux, without forgetting his last piece of advice.

I waited for the grandmother's decision with great impatience. She thought a moment.

"It is certain, my dear children, that Cadichon does not deserve to be trusted any more; I advise the youngest of you not to ride him; at his first mischief, I will give him to the miller, who will use him to carry his bags of flour; but I want to give him an-

other trial before reducing him to that state of humiliation; maybe he will reform. We will give him a few months' trial."

I was sadder and sadder, humiliated and more repentant; but I could only repair the harm I had done by dint of patience and gentleness. I was beginning to suffer in my pride and my affections.

There was better news of Auguste the next day; a few days after he was convalescent and no one was worried any more at the mansion. But I could not help remembering him, for I heard constantly around me:

"Beware of Cadichon! Remember Auguste!"

XIX

THE REPENTANCE

From the day I had scratched Auguste's face by galloping near the brambles and had thrown him into the mud, there was a visible change in the manners of my little masters, their parents and the servants. Even the animals didn't treat me as before. They seemed to avoid me; when I came, they went away; they were silent in my presence; for I have already said while speaking of Médor that we animals understand one another without speaking like people, that we use our eyes, ears and tails instead of words. I knew only too well what had caused this change, and I was more annoyed than hurt, when one day, being alone as usual and lying at the foot of a fir tree, I saw Henry and Elizabeth coming over; they sat down and continued talking.

"I believe you are right, Henry," said Elizabeth, "and I agree with you; neither do I like Cadichon nearly as well as before he was so mean to Auguste."

"And it is not only Auguste. Do you remember at the Laigle Fair, when he was so mean to the master of the trained donkey?" said Henry.

"Ha! Ha!" laughed Elizabeth. "Yes, I do remember very well. He was so funny! Everybody

laughed, but all the same, we all thought that he showed a lot of wit, but no kindness."

"That's so!" said Henry. "He humiliated that poor donkey and his master, the trainer. I learned that the unlucky fellow was obliged to leave without earning a thing, because everybody made fun of him. When they went away his wife and children were weeping: they had nothing to eat."

"And that was Cadichon's fault."

"Certainly. If it had not been for him, the poor fellow would have earned enough to keep him going for a few weeks."

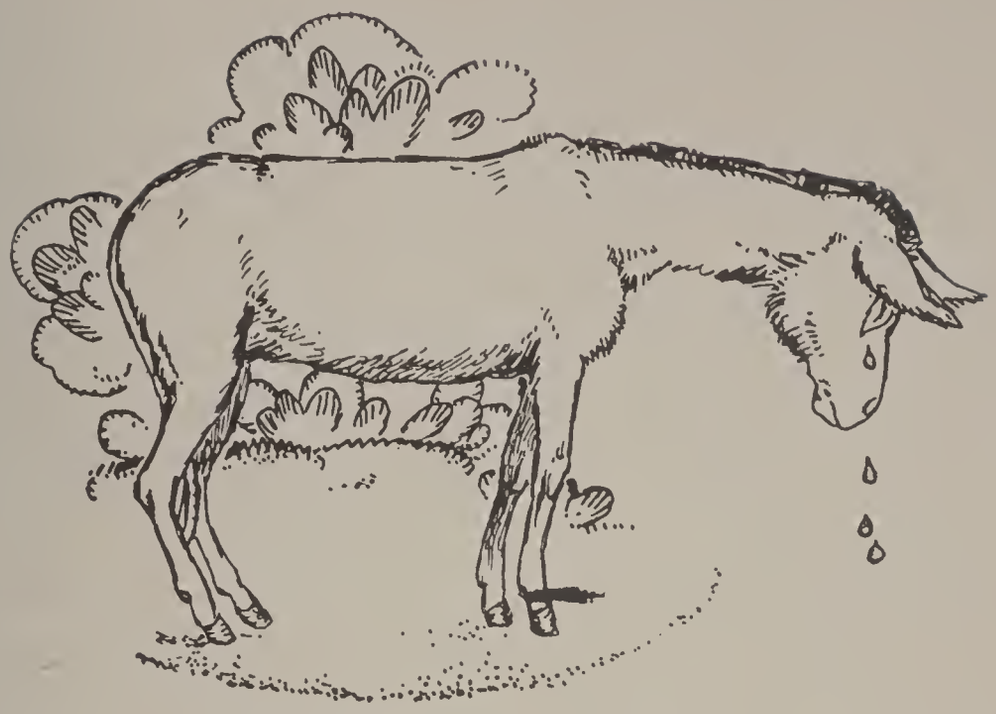
"And then, do you remember what they told us of his misdeeds at his former masters'? He would eat the vegetables, break the eggs, dirty the linen. Really, I am like you. I don't like him any more."

Elizabeth and Henry got up and continued their walk. I remained sad and downcast. First I wanted to get angry and to plan some revenge; then I thought they were right. I had always taken revenge; what good had my revenge done me? It just made me more miserable.

First I had broken the teeth, arms and ribs of one of my mistresses. If I had not had the good luck to escape I would have been beaten to death.

I had played hundreds of tricks on my other master who had been good to me as long as I was not lazy and wicked; after that he had treated me badly and I had been very unhappy.

When Auguste killed my friend Médor, I didn't stop to think that he did it through clumsiness rather



"What shall I do?" I wondered sadly

than wickedness. If he was stupid, it was not his fault; I had persecuted that poor Auguste and had ended by throwing him in a mud pool and making him very sick.

And then what a lot of tricks I had played and didn't tell about!

Thus I had ended by being disliked by everybody. I was alone; no one came near me to cheer me, to pat me; even the animals ran from me.

"What shall I do?" I wondered sadly. "If I could speak, I would tell them all I am sorry; I would apologize to all those I have harmed, and say that I would be good and gentle in the future; but I can't make myself understood. I can't speak!"

I threw myself on the grass and cried, not like human beings who shed tears, but in the bottom of my heart; I cried, I sighed at my misfortune, and for the first time I really repented.

"Ah, if I had only been good! If instead of wanting to show my wit, I had shown kindness, gentleness, patience! If I had been as good to all as I had been to Pauline! How they would like me!

I thought for a long, long time. I made now some good plans, now some bad ones.

Finally, I decided to be good in order to win back the friendship of all my masters and companions. I immediately tried out my new resolutions.

For some time I had had a comrade I treated very badly. It was a donkey that had been bought for my youngest masters to ride, because they were afraid of me since I almost made Auguste drown. Only the bigger boys were not afraid of me; and when we had a donkey party, little Jack was the only one who always asked for me while formerly everybody fought to get me.

I looked down on this comrade; I always passed in front of him and kicked and bit him if he tried to get ahead of me. The poor animal had ended by always yielding the first place to me and giving in to all my fancies.

In the evening, when the time came to go back to the stable, I reached the door almost at the same time as my comrade; he stepped aside briskly to let me enter first; but as he was a few steps ahead of me, I stopped in my turn and signalled to him to go ahead. The poor donkey tremblingly obeyed, worried by my politeness and afraid I was making him go first so that I could play some trick on him like biting or kicking him.

He was much astonished at being safe and sound in his stall and at seeing me peacefully settled in mine.

Seeing his astonishment, I said to him: "Brother, I have been bad to you, I won't be any more; I have been proud, I won't be ever again; I have scorned and humiliated you and treated you badly, I won't do it again. Forgive me, brother, and in the future, consider me a comrade, a friend."

"Thanks, brother," the poor donkey answered joyously. "I was unhappy, I'll be happy; I was sad, I'll be merry; I was alone, I'll feel loved and protected. Thanks again, brother; love me, for I love you already."

"In my turn, it's for me to thank you, for I have been bad and you forgive me; I want to like you and you give me your friendship. Yes, in my turn, I say thank you."

And we continued to chat while eating our supper. That was the first time, for I had never condescended to talk to him. I found him better and wiser than I was myself, and I asked him to help me keep my new resolutions; he promised with as much affection as modesty.

The horses who witnessed this chat and my unusual gentleness looked at one another and at me with surprise. Although they spoke in low tones, I heard them say:

"That's a farce on the part of Cadichon," said the first horse; "he wants to play some mean trick on his comrade."

"Poor donkey, I am sorry for him," said the second horse. "Suppose we tell him to beware of his enemy?"

"Not right now," answered the first horse. "Silence! Cadichon is mean! If he hears us he will get revenge."

I was hurt by the bad opinion these two horses had of me; the third had not said anything; he had put his head over the stall partition and was watching me attentively. I looked at him sadly and humbly. He seemed surprised, but he did not move, and remained silent, still watching me.

Tired by my day's outing, weary by the sadness and regret over my past life, I lay down on the straw and I noticed that my bedding was less good, less thick than my comrade's. Instead of getting angry as I would have done before, I said to myself that it was right.

"I have been bad; I am being punished; I have made myself detested, they are making me feel it. I ought to be glad they did not send me to the mill, where I would have been beaten, overworked and badly housed."

I groaned for some time and fell asleep. On waking up, I saw the coachman enter, and he made me get up with a kick, took off my halter and left me free to go; I remained at the door and I was surprised when I saw him comb and brush my comrade carefully, put on him my beautifully trimmed bridle and my English saddle and then lead him to the porch.

Uneasy, trembling with emotion, I followed him;

what was my grief and sorrow to see Jack, my beloved little master, come near my comrade and mount him after some little hesitation. I remained motionless, broken-hearted. Good little Jack noticed my trouble, for he came near me, patted my head and said to me sadly:

"Poor Cadichon! See what you did! I can't ride you any more; father and mother are afraid you will throw me down. Good-bye, poor Cadichon; don't worry, I still love you."

And he left slowly, followed by the coachman, who called to him:

"Be careful, don't stay near Cadichon, Master Jack; he'll bite you; he'll bite the donkey; he is bad, you know."

"He was never bad to me, nor will he ever be," answered Jack.

The coachman touched the donkey with his whip; he began to trot and I soon lost sight of them. I remained where I was, lost in my grief. What made it worse was that I could not make known my repentance and good resolutions. No longer able to bear the great weight of my grief, I ran off not knowing where. I ran for a long time, breaking hedges, jumping over ditches, crossing fences and rivers: I stopped only in front of a wall I could neither break nor cross.

I looked about me. Where was I? I thought I recognized the place, yet I could not exactly place it. I walked along the wall, for I was wet with perspiration; I had run for several hours, judging by the

position of the sun. The wall soon ended; I turned around the end of it and drew back in surprise and terror. I was two steps away from Pauline's grave.

My grief became all the more bitter.

"Pauline! my dear little mistress!" I exclaimed, "you loved me because I was good; I loved you because you were good and unhappy. After losing you, I found other masters who were as good as you, who treated me kindly. I was happy. But all is changed; my bad character, the desire to show off my wit and satisfy my desire for revenge, destroyed all my happiness: nobody likes me now; if I die nobody will miss me."

I was weeping bitterly, inwardly, and for the hundredth time I reproached myself for my faults. Suddenly, I had a consoling thought to give me courage. "If I become good," said I to myself, "if I do as much good as I have done harm, perhaps my young masters will love me again, especially my dear little Jack who still loves me a little. But what shall I do to show them I have changed and that I repent?"

While I was thinking of my future, I heard heavy steps approaching the wall and a man's voice speaking angrily.

"What's the good of crying, silly? Tears won't give you bread, will they? Since I haven't a thing to give you, what do you want me to do? Do you think I have a well filled stomach myself, I who have not swallowed anything but air and dust since yesterday morning?"

"I am very tired, father."

"Well, let's rest a quarter of an hour in the shade of this wall. I am willing."

They turned to the wall and came and sat down right beside the grave, where I was. Surprised, I recognized the poor master of Mirliflore with his wife and son. They were all thin and seemed exhausted.

The father looked at me; he seemed surprised and said after some hesitation:

"If I see straight it is the very donkey, the villain of a donkey who made me lose so much money at the Laigle Fair..... Rascal!" he continued, speaking to me, "you were the cause of Mirliflore being torn to pieces by the mob, you prevented me from earning enough money to live on for more than a month; you will pay for all that, you will!"

He got up, came toward me; I did not try to get away, feeling certain I had deserved this man's anger. He seemed astonished.

"It is not he," said he, "for he does not move any more than a log..... What a lovely donkey," he added, touching me. "If I could have him for only a month, you wouldn't lack bread, my boy, nor would your mother either, and my own stomach, too, would be less hollow."

My decision was made right away; I resolved to follow this man for several days, to suffer anything in order to repair the harm I had done him, and help him earn some money for himself and his family.

When they set out again, I followed them; first they didn't notice it; but when the father turned

around several times and saw me at their heels, he wanted to chase me away. I refused and kept returning near or behind them.

"Isn't it queer," said the man, "how this donkey persists in following us! Great Scott, if he likes it, let him keep it up."

Arriving in a small town, he went to an innkeeper and asked him for food and lodging, saying very honestly that he didn't have a cent in his pocket.

"I have enough of the beggars around here without adding those who don't belong here, my good fellow," answered the innkeeper; "go and get a lodging elsewhere."

I rushed over to the innkeeper and bowed to him several times in a way that made him laugh.

"You have there 'an animal who is not a fool," said the innkeeper, laughing. "If you want to amuse us with his tricks, I will give you board and lodging."

"I can't refuse," said the man; "we'll give you a performance, but after we have been fed; after fasting, one hasn't the voice to command."

"Come in, come in, you'll be served at once," answered the innkeeper. "Madelon, my good woman, a dinner for three and something for the donkey."

Madelon served them a good soup which they swallowed in a twinkle of an eye; then a good boiled dinner with cabbage which disappeared as rapidly, finally a salad and cheese, which they ate less greedily, for their hunger was appeased.

I was given some hay which I scarcely touched; for my heart was heavy and I was not hungry.

Madelon served them a good soup

The innkeeper went to call together the whole town to see me bow; the courtyard was filled with people and I entered the circle where my master led me. He was very much embarrassed, not knowing what I could do and if I had the education of a trained donkey. Taking a chance, he said to me:

"Bow to the audience."

I bowed right and left, forward and backward, and everybody applauded me.

"What are you going to have him do?" said his wife in low tones, "he won't know what you want."

"Perhaps he has learned it. Trained donkeys are intelligent; I'll try anyhow."

"Come Mirliflore," (I sighed at this name), "go and kiss the prettiest lady in the audience."

I looked to right and left; I noticed the innkeeper's daughter, a pretty brunette of fifteen or sixteen years who was standing behind other people. I went to her, pushing aside with my head those that were in the way; I put my nose on the little one's forehead and she began to laugh and seemed happy.

"Come, father Hutfer, you coached him, didn't you?" said several people, laughing.

"No, on my honor," answered Hutfer, "I didn't even expect that."

"Now, Mirliflore," said the man, "go and fetch something, anything at all you find, and give it to the poorest man in the crowd."

I went toward the room where we had just eaten, grabbed a bread loaf, and bringing it out triumphantly, I put it in the hands of my new master. There

was general laughter, everybody applauded, a friend called out:

"This is not your doing, father Hutfer; this donkey is really clever; he has indeed profited by his master's lessons."

"Are you going to let him have his loaf of bread all the same?" said some one in the crowd.

"As for that, no," said Hutfer; "give it back to me, Mr. Donkey-man; that is not in our agreement."

"That's true, innkeeper," answered the man; "and yet my donkey told the truth when he made of me the poorest man in the crowd—for we had not eaten since yesterday morning, my wife, son and I, just because we didn't have a cent to buy a piece of bread."

"Give them that loaf, father," said Henrietta Hutfer, "there is plenty in the bread-chest, and the good Lord will make us earn that one back again."

"That's you to a T, Henrietta," said Hutfer, "if I listened to you I'd give away my shirt."

"We are none the poorer, father; God has always blessed our crops and household."

"All right if you wish it.....let him keep the bread, I am willing."

At these words, I went to him and bowed deeply, then I went to get between my teeth a little bowl, and I presented it to each one so that he might put in his offering. When I had made my round, the bowl was full; I went and emptied it in the hands of my master, bowed and withdrew gravely amid the applause of the crowd.

I presented the bowl to each one

My heart was satisfied; I felt happy and encouraged in my good resolutions. My new master seemed delighted; he was going to withdraw when all gathered around him and begged him to give a second performance the next day. He promised eagerly and then he and his wife and son went indoors to rest.

When they were alone, the wife looked all around and seeing only me with my head resting on the window sill she said in a low voice: "Husband, it is very queer just the same. How strange—this donkey rising from a cemetery, who takes a liking to us and makes us earn money! How much have you in your hands?"

"I have not counted it yet," said the man. "Help me; here, take a handful, I'll take the rest."

"I have eight francs and four pennies," said the woman after counting.

"And I have seven and a half francs," said the man.

"That man has enough to live on for a week," I said to myself. "I am going to return to my masters; perhaps they will be glad to see me again."

I withdrew from the window and went to eat some thistles which grew on the edge of a ditch; then I entered the inn's stable where I already found several horses occupying the best places. I went modestly into a corner nobody wanted; there I could think to my heart's content because nobody knew me and nobody bothered about me. At the end of the day, Henrietta Hutfer entered the stable, looked to see whether each had what he needed, and noticing me in my damp, dark corner, without bedding or hay or oats, she called a stable boy.

"Ferdinand," she said, "give this poor donkey some straw, so that he doesn't lie on the damp ground. Put some hay and oats in front of him, and find out if he wants a drink."

"Miss Henrietta," Ferdinand said, "you will be the ruin of your father, you are too kind to everybody. What difference does it make to you whether this animal lies on a hard floor or on soft bedding? It is wasted straw, I think."

"You don't think I am too good when I am good to you, Ferdinand. I want everybody well treated here, animals as well as people."

"And there are many people who could easily be taken for animals although they are two-legged!" said Ferdinand teasing.

"That's why they say: 'Let your ears grow and eat grass,' " replied Henrietta, smiling.

"I wouldn't say that to you, Miss. You are clever and cunning as a monkey."

"Thanks for the compliment, Ferdinand. If I am a monkey, what are you?"

"Oh! Miss, I didn't say you were a monkey; if I used the wrong words, it's because I am a donkey, a cucumber, a goose."

"No, no, not all that, Ferdinand, but only a chatterbox that speaks when he ought to work. Make the donkey's bedding," she added seriously, "and give him something to eat and drink."

She left; grumbling, Ferdinand did what his young mistress had ordered. While arranging my bedding, he pricked me with his pitchfork, and in bad humor threw me some hay, a handful of oats and placed a pail of water near me. I was not fastened, I could have gone away, but I preferred to suffer a little more, and to give the next day, to finish my good work, my second and last performance.

Indeed, in the afternoon of the next day, they came to get me. My master led me to the village square which was full of people. The town-crier had gone around all the morning, announcing me thus: "This evening! Gala performance of the trained donkey called Mirliflore. Time: Eight o'clock; place: The square opposite the town hall and school."

I began all over again my tricks of the day before and I added a few graceful dances; I danced a waltz, a polka and played the harmless prank on Ferdinand

of inviting him to waltz, by braying in front of him and presenting my forefoot to him as an invitation. First he refused; but as they yelled: "Yes, yes, a waltz with the donkey!" he leaped into the circle laughing and began to do a thousand leaps and turns, which I imitated as best as I could.

Finally, being tired, I left Ferdinand prancing around all alone. I went to get a bowl as I had done the day before. Not finding any, I took a basket between my teeth and made my rounds, presenting the basket to each one. It was soon so full that I had to empty it into the pocket of the one they thought was my master; I continued to pass the basket; when everybody had given me something, I bowed.

I waited until my master had counted the money I had made him earn that night, and learned he had more than thirty-four francs. Feeling that I had done enough for him, that my former sin was wiped out and that I could return home, I bowed to my master, and going through the crowd, I trotted off.

"Look! there's your donkey going away," said Hutfer the innkeeper.

"He is surely stepping along quickly," said Ferdinand.

My would-be master turned around, looked at me uneasily and called out: "Mirliflore! Mirliflore!" and seeing me continuing my trot, I heard him shout piteously:

"Stop him! stop him! please! He is taking away my bread and butter. Run, catch him; I promise you another performance if you bring him back to me."

"Where did you get that donkey?" said a man named Clouet, "and how long have you had him?"

"I have had him . . . since he belongs to me," answered my false master a little embarrassed.

"I understand," answered Clouet; "but how long has he belonged to you?"

The man didn't answer.

"It seems to me I recognize him," said Clouet, "he resembles Cadichon, the donkey of the Herpinière mansion; unless I am mistaken, it is surely Cadichon."

I had stopped; I heard murmurs; I saw the embarrassment of my master, when at the moment least expected, he rushed through the crowd and ran in the direction opposite mine, followed closely by his wife and child.

Some wanted to run after him, others said it was useless since I had run away and the man was taking away only his own money which I had made him earn honestly.

"And as for Cadichon," somebody added, "he will be able to find his way, and won't let himself be caught unless he wants to."

The crowd broke up and each went home; I started my homeward journey hoping to reach my real masters before night; but I had a long way to go; I was tired and I had to rest when about three miles from the mansion—night had come—the stables were probably closed; I decided to lie down in a little clump of fir trees close by a brook.

XX

THE ATONEMENT

The next morning I was up early, and was quietly nibbling the grass on the front lawn. Very soon the children all trouped out after their breakfast was finished. Camille and Madeleine suggested playing house; the children had built an oven in their garden; they used to heat it with dry wood they gathered themselves. The proposition was joyfully accepted; the children ran to get kitchen aprons then came back to prepare everything in their garden. Auguste and Peter brought some wood; they broke the branches in two and filled the oven with sticks.

Before lighting it, they got together to decide what they would serve for lunch.

"I am going to make an omelette," said Camille.

"I shall make coffee custard for desert," said Madeleine.

"I'll cook some chops," said Elizabeth.

"And I cold veal with vinaigrette sauce," said Peter.

"I, potato salad," said Henry.

"I, strawberries and cream," said Jack.

"I'll prepare the slices of bread and butter," said Louis.

"I'll get cherries," said Jane

"I'll grate the sugar," said Henrietta.

"I'll get cherries," said Jane.

"And I'll cut the bread," said Auguste, "set the table, get the wine and water and serve everybody."

And each went to the kitchen to get what he needed for the dish he was to furnish.

Camille brought back eggs, butter, salt, pepper, a fork and frying pan.

"I need some fire to melt the butter and cook my omelette," she said. "Auguste, Auguste, some fire please."

"Where shall I make a fire?" asked Auguste.

"Near the oven; hurry, I'm beating the eggs."

"Auguste, Auguste," called Madeleine; "run to the kitchen and get me some coffee for my custard, I am whipping the cream; quick, hurry!"

"I have to light a fire for Camille," said Auguste.

"Afterward; go quickly and get my coffee; it won't take long and I am in a hurry."

"Auguste, Auguste," Elizabeth called out to him, "I need some hot coals and a broiler for my chops; I am finishing trimming them nicely."

Auguste, who was coming back with the coffee, started again to get the broiler.

"I need some oil for my vinaigrette sauce," said Peter.

"And I some vinegar for my salad, Auguste," said Henry, "quick, the oil and vinegar."

Auguste, who was bringing the broiler, ran back to get the oil and vinegar.

"Well!" said Camille, "what about my fire, is that how you light it, Auguste? My eggs are beaten, you're going to make me spoil my omelette."

"They gave me so many errands," Auguste replied, "I haven't had time to light your fire yet."

"Where are my hot coals, Auguste?" Elizabeth asked, "you forgot them?"

"No, I didn't, Elizabeth, but I couldn't get them; I had to keep on the run."

"I won't have time to broil my chops; hurry, Auguste."

"I need a knife to cut my bread; quick, a knife, Auguste." said Louis.

"I haven't any sugar for my strawberries," Jack said, "grate some sugar, Henrietta; go on, hurry."

"I am grating as fast as I can," she replied, "but I am tired; I am going to rest a little. I'm so thirsty."

"Eat somes cherries," Jane said, "I'm thirsty, too."

"What about me? I'm going to taste a few, it cools the mouth," said Jack.

"I am going to have some refreshment too," said Louis, "it's very tiring to make slices of bread and butter."

And there were the four of them around the basket of cherries.

"Let's sit down," said Jane, "it will be more comfortable."

They refreshed themselves so well that they ate up all the cherries; when none were left, they looked at one another nervously.

"There are none left," said Jane.

"We will be scolded," said Henrietta.

"Goodness, what shall we do?" asked Louis, somewhat worried.

"Let's ask Cadichon to come to our rescue," said Jack.

"What can Cadichon do? He can't make cherries appear in place of those we ate," said Louis.

"That's all right. Cadichon, my good Cadichon, come and help us; see our basket is empty, try to fill it."

I was quite near the four little gluttons. Jack put the empty basket under my nose to make me understand what he was expecting of me. I sniffed at it and then trotted off; I went to the kitchen where I had seen them put down a basket of cherries. I took it between my teeth and trotted away with it, then I set it down in the midst of the children still seated in a circle near the cherry pits and stems they had put in a plate.

A cry of joy greeted my return. The others all

turned around at this cry and asked what the matter was.

"It's Cadichon! It's Cadichon!" cried out Jack.

"Keep still," said Jane to him, "they will know we ate the cherries."

"Never mind, let them know it!" answered Jack. "I want them to know also how good and clever Cadichon is."

And running to them, he told them how I had repaired the damage done by their appetites. Instead of scolding the four little ones, they praised Jack for his frankness, and also gave compliments to my intelligence.

During this time, Auguste had made a fire for Camille and procured some hot coals for Elizabeth. Camille was cooking her omelette. Madeleine was finishing her custard. Elizabeth broiled her chops. Peter was slicing the veal and getting it ready for the seasoning; Henry was turning and mixing his potato salad while Jack made a mush of his strawberries and cream. Louis was finishing his pile of slices of bread and butter; Henrietta was grating sugar which overflowed the sugar bowl; Jane was cleaning the cherries and Auguste, perspiring and panting was setting the table, running to get fresh water to cool the wine; and to make the table look prettier he made paper boats filled with radishes, pickles, sardines and olives. He had forgotten the salt, and had not thought of forks, knives and spoons; he discovered that some June bugs and flies had fallen into the glasses and plates. When everything was

ready, when all the dishes were placed on the tablecloth, Camille tapped her forehead.

"Ah!" she said, "we forgot only one thing: to ask our mothers' permission to lunch outdoors and eat our own cooking."

"Let's run quickly," cried out all the children, "Auguste will watch the lunch."

And rushing toward the house, they all scrambled into the living room where the fathers and mothers were gathered.

The parents were surprised by the sudden appearance of the children who were red and out of breath and dressed in aprons which made them look like kitchen helpers.

Each child ran to his own mother and asked permission to lunch outdoors, but spoke so quickly that at first the requests were not understood. After several questions and explanations, permission was granted and they returned very quickly to rejoin Auguste. Auguste had disappeared.

"Auguste! Auguste!" they shouted.

"Here I am, here I am," answered a voice which seemed to come from the sky.

They all raised their heads and perceived Auguste perched on the top of an oak tree. He began to come down slowly and cautiously.

"Why did you climb up there? What a crazy idea!" said Peter and Henry.

Auguste was still coming down without answering.

When he was on the ground, the children saw with surprise that he was pale and trembling.

They sat down on the grass around the tablecloth

Why did you climb up the tree?" Madeleine said. "What happened?"

"Without Cadichon you wouldn't have found again either me or your lunch," Auguste replied, "I climbed up that oak to save my life."

"Tell us what happened. How could Cadichon have saved your life and preserved our lunch?"

"Let's sit down at the table," Camille said, "we'll listen while eating, I'm starving to death."

They sat down on the grass around the tablecloth; Camille served the omelette, which was voted excellent; in turn, Elizabeth served her chops; they were very good, but a little too well done. Then came the rest of the lunch. While they were eating, Auguste told the following story:

"Scarcely had you left, when I saw two large farm dogs running this way, attracted by the odor of the meal; I picked up a stick, and I thought I would make them go away by shaking it at them. But they saw the chops, omelette, bread and butter and cream; instead of being afraid of my stick they wanted to go for me; I threw it at the bigger dog who leaped on my back—"

"How's that, on your back?" said Henry, "then he had gone around you?"

"No," answered Auguste, blushing, "but as I had thrown my stick, I no longer had anything with which to protect myself and there wouldn't have been any sense to have myself eaten up by hounds."

"I see," answered Henry mockingly, "you had turned around and were running away."

"I was going away to look for you," said Auguste, "the hungry beasts ran after me when Cadichon came to my help by seizing the bigger dog by the skin of his back; he shook him while I climbed up the tree; the other jumped at me and caught me by my coat and would have torn me to pieces if Cadichon had not come to my rescue again. He gave a final good bite to the first dog which was tossed in the air and fell down a few steps away, bruised and bleeding; then Cadichon bit the tail of the one which was holding my coat tail and that made him let go immediately. After dragging him a little distance, Cadichon whirled around quickly and gave him a good kick in the jaw, which must have broken several of his teeth. The two dogs ran off howling, and I was preparing to get down from the tree when you returned."

They admired my courage very much, and also my presence of mind, and each came over to me, patted and applauded me.

"You see," said Jack triumphantly and with a happy look in his eye, "that my friend Cadichon has become excellent again; I don't know whether you like him, but I like him more than ever. Won't we always be good friends, my Cadichon?"

I answered as best as I could by a joyous braying; the children began to laugh, and sitting down again at the spread, they continued their meal. Madeleine served her custard.

"What good custard!" said Jack.

"I want some more," said Louis.

Jack crushed the berries in the cream

"So do I, so do I!" said Henrietta and Jane.

Madeleine was pleased at the success of her custard. It is fair to say that each had succeeded very well, that all the lunch was entirely eaten up. Poor Jack had, however, a moment of disappointment. He was in charge of the strawberries and cream. He had put sugar in the cream and had poured in the cleaned berries.

So far, so good; unfortunately he had finished his task before the others. Seeing he had plenty of time, he wanted to perfect his dish and began to crush the berries in the cream. He crushed and crushed so long and so well that the berries and cream were nothing but a mush which must have tasted fine but didn't look very attractive.

When Jack's turn came and he wanted to serve his strawberries:

"What's that you are giving me?" exclaimed Catherine. "Red mush? What is it? How did you make it?"

"It is not red mush," said Jack a little confused, "it's strawberries and cream. It's very good, Camille, I assure you. Taste it, you'll see."

"Strawberries?" said Madeleine, "where are the berries? I don't see them. What you are giving us is disgusting."

"Why, yes, it's disgusting," chimed in all the others.

"I thought it would be better crushed," said poor little Jack with tears coming to his eyes. "But if you want, I'll go quickly and pick other strawberries and get cream at the farm."

"No, my little Jack," said Elizabeth, touched by his grief, "your dish must be very good. Please give me some. I'll eat it with great pleasure."

Jack kissed Elizabeth; his face looked happy once more, and he served her a big dishful.

The other children, moved like Elizabeth, by Jack's kindness and good intentions asked for some too, and after tasting it declared it was excellent, better than if the berries had been left whole.

Little Jack, who had anxiously watched their faces while they were eating his dish, became happy again when he saw the success of his invention; although there was not much left, he had some himself, enough to make him sorry he had not prepared more.

Lunch over, they began to wash the dishes in a big tub which had been left out the day before and was filled with rain water.

That was not the least amusing part of the lunch, and the dishes were not finished when the study-hour bell rang, and the parents called in their children to set to work. They asked for an extra quarter of an hour to finish wiping and arranging the dishes. It

was granted. Before the quarter of an hour had passed, everything was brought back to the kitchen, put in place, the children were at work, and Auguste had bid them goodbye and was on his way home.

Before going away, Auguste called me, and seeing me approach ran over to me, patted me and thanked me by words and gestures for what I had done for him. I was pleased to see this feeling of gratitude. It confirmed my idea that Auguste was better than I had judged him at first; that he did not keep a grudge and that if he was a coward and a little stupid, that was not his fault.

A few days later, I had an opportunity to do him another service.

XXI

THE BOAT

"What a pity we can't have a picnic lunch every day, as we did last week. It was such fun!" said Jack.

"And what a good lunch!" said Louis.

"What I liked best was the potato salad and cold veal with vinaigrette sauce," said Camille.

"I know why," said Madeleine, "because mother forbids you to eat anything with vinegar in it."

"That's possible," said Camille laughing, "what you don't eat often always tastes best especially if you like it naturally."

"What shall we do today to amuse ourselves?" said Peter.

"That's right," said Elizabeth, "it's our Thursday holiday. We can do what we like until dinner time."

"Suppose we catch a mess of fish in the big pond?" said Henry.

"That's a good idea!" said Camille. "We'll have a dish of fish for Friday, fish-day."

"How will we fish? Have we any lines?" asked Madeleine.

"We have enough hooks; what we need is canes to attach our lines to," said Peter.

"Here is Auguste coming," said Camille, "maybe he has some lines home; we could send somebody for them with the pony."

"I'll go with Cadichon," said Jack.

"What do you want to go and get with Cadichon, my friends?" said Auguste on arriving.

"Fish poles," said Peter. "Have you any, Auguste?"

"No, but you don't need to go so far to get some; with knives we can make as many of them as we want."

"That's right," said Henry. "Why didn't we think of it?"

"Come on," said Auguste, "and cut some in the woods. Have you knives? I have mine in my pocket."

"I have an excellent one Camille brought me from London," said Peter.

"And I have the one Madeleine gave me," Henry said.

"I have a knife too," said Jack and Louis together.

"Come with us then," said Auguste, "while we cut the big branches you'll remove the bark and the little twigs."

"And what shall we do in the meantime?" said Camille, Madeleine and Elizabeth.

"Prepare what is needed for fishing," answered Peter, "bread, worms, hooks."

And they all scattered, each going about his own task.

I went peacefully toward the pond and I waited

more than half an hour for the children's arrival. Finally I saw them coming, each carrying his pole, hooks and other things they might need.

"I think we ought to beat the water," Henry said, "to make the fish come to the surface."

"On the contrary," said Peter, "we must not make the least noise; the fish will all go down to the bottom if we frighten them."

"I think it would attract them to throw bread crumbs in the water," said Camille.

"Yes, but not much," Madeleine said, "if we give them too much they won't be hungry any more."

"Wait, let me do it," said Elizabeth, "get busy preparing the hooks while I throw them bread."

Elizabeth took the bread; at the first crumb she threw, half a dozen fish leaped at it. Elizabeth threw some more. Louis, Jack, Henrietta and Jane wanted to help her; they threw so much that the fish, now well fed, would not touch any more of it.

"I am afraid we threw them too much," said Elizabeth, in a low voice to Louis and Jack.

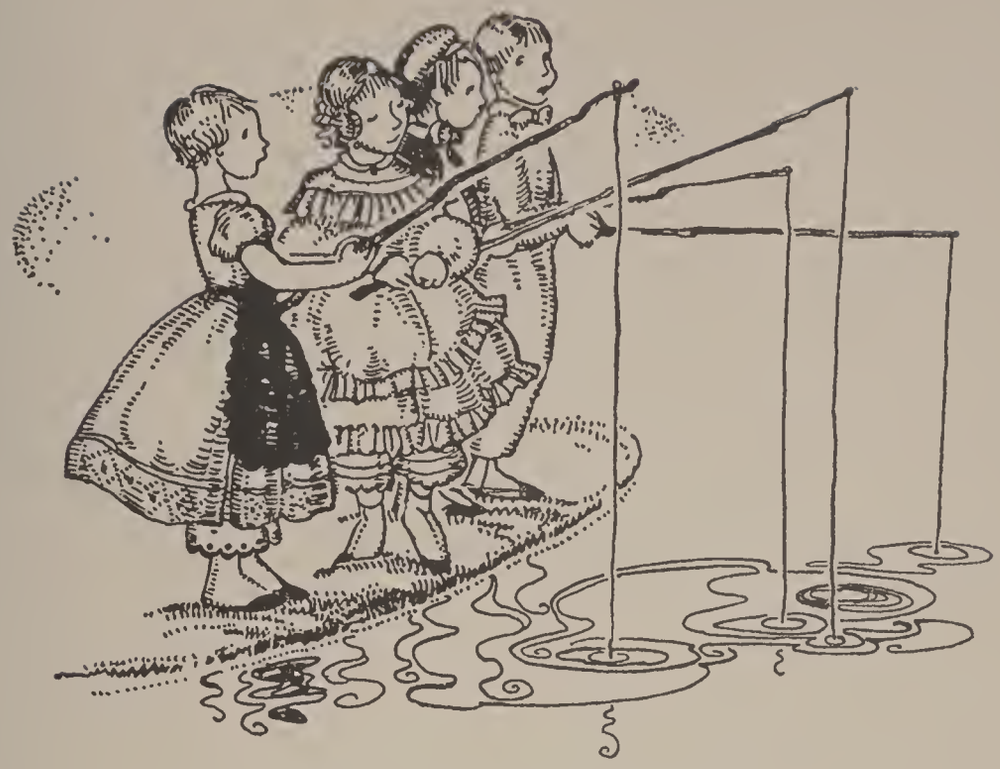
"What difference does that make?" replied Jack. "They'll eat the rest tonight or tomorrow."

"But they won't bite; they're not hungry any more."

"Too bad!" said Jack. "Our cousins won't be glad of that."

"Let's not say anything; they are busy with their hooks; maybe the fish will bite all the same."

"The hooks are all ready," said Peter bringing the



Each waited for several minutes

lines, "let us each take our line and cast it in the water."

Each did what Peter said. They waited for several minutes, being careful not to make any noise; the fish didn't bite.

"This is not a good place," Auguste said, "let's go farther on."

"I don't think there are any fish here, for there are several crumbs that have not been eaten."

"Go to the end of the pond, near the boat," said Camille.

"It's very deep there." replied Peter.

"What does it matter?" Elizabeth spoke up. "Are you afraid the fish will drown?"

"Not the fish," Peter answered, "but one of us if he happened to fall in."

"How can we fall in?" Henry asked. "We don't get near enough the edge to slip or roll into the water."

"That's true," said Peter, "but all the same I don't want the little ones to go."

"Oh please, Peter," Jack asked, "let me go with you; we'll stay very far from the water."

"No, no, stay where you are," Peter replied, "we'll come back soon, for I don't think we'll find any more fish there than we do here. Besides," he added, lowering his voice, "it's your fault that we have not been able to catch anything. I saw you; you threw ten times too much bread. I don't want to tell it to the others but it serves you right to be punished for your mischief."

Jack did not insist any more and told the other guilty ones what Peter had just said to him. They resigned themselves to stay where they were, still waiting for the fish to be willing to let themselves be caught, and still not catching any.

I had followed Peter, Henry and Auguste to the end of the pond. They cast their lines; no more success than in the other place. It was useless for them to change places or drag their hooks; the fish didn't appear.

"My friends," said Auguste, "I have an excellent idea. Instead of being bored, waiting till it pleases the fish to come and get caught, let's make a good haul, let's take fifteen or twenty at once."

"How can we get fifteen or twenty, since we can't even catch a single one?"

"With a net called a sweep-net," replied Auguste.

"But that's very difficult; father says you have to know how to cast it."

"Difficult!" said Auguste, "what a joke! I've cast a sweep-net, ten times, twenty times. It's very easy."

"Did you catch many fish?" asked Peter.

"I didn't catch any," Auguste answered, "because I was not casting the net into the water."

"What?" said Henry. "Where were you casting it then?"

"On the grass, or on the ground, just to practice casting."

"But," objected Peter, "that is not the same thing at all; I am sure you would cast very badly on the water."

"Badly! You think so?" Auguste said. "You'll see whether I cast badly. I am going to run and get the sweep-net which is drying in the sun in the yard."

"No, Auguste, please," Peter replied. "If something happens father will scold us."

"What do you expect to happen?" Auguste said, "since I tell you that my family always fish with the sweep-net. I'm going, wait for me, I won't be long."

And Auguste ran off leaving Peter and Henry dissatisfied and worried. He was not long in returning dragging the sweep-net after him.

"There," he said, stretching it on the ground. "Now, oh fish, beware!"

He cast the sweep-net rather skillfully and drew it out cautiously and slowly.

"Pull a little faster!" said Henry.

"No, no," said Auguste, "you must pull it back very gently so as not to tear the net and let any fish escape."

He continued pulling and when it was all out, the net was empty: not a fish had been caught.

"Oh," said he, "the first time doesn't count. We must not be discouraged. Let's do it again."

He cast again but didn't succeed any better the second time.

"I know what's the matter," said he, "I am too near the shore; there is not enough water. I am going to get in the boat; since it is quite long, I'll be far enough from shore to spread out my sweep-net well."

"No, Auguste," said Peter, "don't go into the boat; you might catch your net in the oars and rigging and you'll tumble into the water."

"Why, you're like a two-year-old baby, Peter," answered Auguste; "as for me, I have more courage than you. You'll see."

And he dashed into the boat which was swaying right and left. Auguste was afraid, although he pretended to be joking, and I saw that he was going to do something awkward. He unfolded and stretched his net badly for he was hindered by the motion of the boat; his hands were not steady and his feet not much more. However, self-pride won and he cast the sweep-net. But the cast was stopped by the fear of falling into the water; the net caught on his left shoulder and dragged him so that he fell head first into the pond.

Peter and Henry shrieked with terror, answering the cry of anguish which unfortunate Auguste uttered while falling. He was tangled up in the net; and that hindered his movements and didn't let him swim to get back to the surface and near the shore. The more he struggled, the tighter did the net get around his body. I saw him sinking little by little. A few moments more and he would be gone. Peter and Henry couldn't go to his rescue, since neither knew how to swim. Before they could get help, Auguste was sure to perish.

It didn't take me long to make a decision; leaping resolutely into the water, I swam toward him and dived, for he was already quite a bit below the surface. With my teeth, I seized the net which was wrapped around him; I swam toward the shore, pulling him behind me; I climbed the very steep slope of the shore, still dragging Auguste at the risk of giving him several bumps. Hauling him over stones and roots, I brought him to the grass where he remained motionless.

Peter and Henry, pale and trembling, ran up to him and after some trouble got him out of the net enclosing him. When Camille and Madeleine came over, they asked them to go and get help.

The little ones who had seen from far Auguste's tumble, also came on the run and helped Peter and Henry wipe his face and soaking wet hair. The house servants were not long in coming. They carried off Auguste who hadn't regained consciousness and the children remained alone with me.

"Excellent, Cadichon!" shouted Jack. "You're the one who saved Auguste's life! Did you all see how bravely he leaped into the water?"

"Yes, indeed!" said Louis. "And how he dived to catch Auguste."

"And how cleverly he dragged him on the grass!" said Elizabeth.

"Poor Cadichon! You are all wet!" said Jack.

"Don't touch him, Jack," said Henrietta. "He is going to wet your clothes; see how the water is dripping off him."

"Oh, bah! What difference does it make if I am a little wet?" said Jack, putting his arm around my neck; "I won't get as wet as Cadichon."

"Instead of patting him and throwing bouquets at him," said Louis, "you'd do better to take him to the stable; we'll give him a good rub-down with straw, and some oats to warm him up and give him back his strength."

"That's so; you are right. Come, my Cadichon."

"How will we give him a rub-down?" asked Jane.

"With handfuls of straw until he is quite dry."

I followed Jack and Louis who walked toward the stable and beckoned me to follow them. Both began to rub me with such eagerness that they were soon perspiring. Yet they didn't stop till they had dried me well. In the meantime Henrietta and Jane took turns combing and brushing my mane and tail. I was superb when they finished, and I ate with unusual appetite the measure of oats Jack and Louis presented to me.

I was superb when they finished

"Henrietta," said little Jane to her cousin in a low tone, "Cadichon has a lot of oats; he has too much."

"That does not matter;" Henrietta replied, "he was very good; that's his reward."

"I'd like to take a little away," said Jane.

"Why?"

"To give to our poor rabbits who never get any, and who like it so much," she answered.

"If Jack and Louis see you take Cadichon's oats, they will scold you."

"They won't see me," Jane said. "I'll wait until they are not looking."

"Then you'll be a little thief, for you'll be stealing Cadichon's oats and he won't be able to complain since he can't talk."

"That's true," said Jane sadly. "My poor rabbits would be so glad to have some oats!" And Jane sat down near my trough, watching me eat.

"Why are you staying there, Jane?" asked Henrietta. "Come with me to see how Auguste is getting along."

"No," answered Jane, "I prefer to wait until Cadichon has finished eating, because if he leaves any oats, I'll be able to take it without stealing it, and give it to my rabbits."

Henrietta tried to make her leave, but Jane refused and stayed near me. Henrietta went away with her cousins.

I ate slowly; I wanted to see whether, once alone, Jane would give in to the temptation of treating her rabbits at my expense. From time to time she looked at my trough.

"How he eats!" she said aloud. "He will never get through..... He can't be hungry any more and yet he keeps on eating..... Oats are going ..... I hope he does not eat it all.....if only he would leave a little!....."

I would have eaten all I had before me, but I took pity on the poor child; she didn't touch the oats, though she wanted to. So I pretended I had enough and left my trough with half of the oats in it; Jane shouted with joy, jumped to her feet and put handfuls of oats in her black silk apron.

"How good and kind you are, my nice Cadichon," she said. "I never saw a better donkey than you! Everybody likes you because you are so good..... The rabbits will be very glad! I'll tell them you gave them the oats."

I heard her telling them how good I was

And Jane who had finished pouring it all in her apron ran away. I saw her reach the rabbit hutch and heard her telling them how good I was, that I was not greedy at all, that they ought to follow my example and that since I had left oats for rabbits, they ought to leave some for the little birds.

"I'll come back soon," she said to them, "and I'll see whether you have been as good as Cadichon."

She then closed their door and ran to join Henrietta.

I followed her, in order to find out about Auguste; coming near the house, I was pleased to see Auguste seated on the grass with his friends. When he saw me arriving, he got up, came to me, patted me and said:

"Here's my saviour. If it weren't for him, I'd be dead. I had fainted when Cadichon seized the net and pulled me to shore; but before that, I saw

him clearly, jump into the water and dive to save me. I'll never forget the service he rendered me and I'll never come here without greeting Cadichon."

"That's right, Auguste," said the grandmother. "If you are really kind you should be grateful to an animal as well as to a person. As for me, I shall always remember Cadichon's services to us, and I have decided that whatever happens, I'll never give him up."

"But, grandmother," said Camille, "a few months ago you wanted to send him away to the mill. He would have been so unhappy there."

"But, dear child," answered the grandmother, "I didn't send him away. For a moment, I had the idea, it's true, after the trick he played on Auguste, and because of the many little misdeeds the whole household was complaining of. But I decided to keep him here because of his past favors. Now, not only will he remain with us, but I'll watch and see that he is happy."

"Thanks, thanks, grandmother!" cried Jack, jumping at her neck and almost throwing her down; "I'll be the one to take care of my dear Cadichon; I'll like him, and he'll like me more than the others."

"Why do you want Cadichon to like you more than the others, my little Jack? That is not fair."

"Yes, indeed, grandmother," Jack replied, "it's fair because I like him more than my cousins do, and because when he was naughty and nobody liked him, I still liked him a little—even a lot," he added, laughing. "Isn't that so, Cadichon?"

I went and put my head on his shoulder. Everybody began to laugh and Jack continued.

"Don't you want Cadichon to like me more than you, my cousins?"

"Yes, yes," they all answered, laughing.

"And don't I like Cadichon better than you do, and haven't I always?"

"Yes, yes," they all shouted at once.

"You see, grandmother," Jack said, "that since I brought you Cadichon, since I like him most, it is fair that Cadichon should like me most."

"I am willing, dear child," replied the grandmother, smiling, "but when you are not around you can't take care of him."

"But I'll always be around, grandmother."

"No, my dear child, you won't always be there since your father and mother take you with them when they go away."

Jack became sad and thoughtful; he remained with his arm leaning on my back and his head on his hand.

Suddenly his face lighted up.

"Grandmother," said he, "will you give me Cadichon?"

"I'll give you anything you want, my dear little one," said the grandmother, "but you won't be able to take him back to Paris with you."

"No, that's true; but he'll be mine and when father has a place, we'll send for Cadichon."

"I'll give him to you on that condition, my child; meanwhile he will live here, and probably longer than I do," said the grandmother. "Don't forget that Cadichon belongs to you, and I leave to you the care of making him live happily for evermore."

CONCLUSION

From that day on, my little master Jack seemed to like me more than ever. As for me, I did my best to make myself useful and agreeable, not only to him, but to all the people in the house. I had no cause to regret my efforts at reform, for everybody became more and more fond of me. I continued to watch over the children, to keep them from several accidents, and protect them from wicked people and vicious animals.

Auguste often came to the house; he never forgot to visit me as he had promised to do, and each time he brought me a dainty tidbit: now an apple or a pear, now bread and salt of which I was especially fond, or else a handful of lettuce or some carrots; indeed, he never forgot to give me something I liked. That proves how mistaken I was about his disposition since I had considered him bad just because the foolish boy had sometimes been silly and boastful.

A conversation between Henry and his cousins gave me the idea to write my Memoirs. Henry al-

I continued to watch over the children

ways maintained that I didn't know what I was doing nor why I did anything. His cousins and Jack above all insisted that I was obeying my intellect and will power and knew what it was all about.

I took advantage of a very hard winter which didn't allow me to venture much outdoors, to compose and write down several of the important events of my life. Perhaps you will enjoy them, my young friends, but at any rate they will help you to understand that if you want to be well served you must treat your servants well.

You will learn, too, that some people are not as stupid as they look; that a donkey, like everyone else has a heart to love his masters and to feel their bad treatment, a will-power to get revenge or to

show affection, and that he may, according to his masters, be happy or unhappy, be a friend or an enemy, even if only a donkey.

Now I am living happily, beloved by everybody, cared for like a friend by my little master Jack. I am growing old, but donkeys live to a ripe old age, and as long as I can walk and keep up, I will put my strength and intelligence at the service of my masters.