

Leslie Madeline

# Minnie's Pet Horse



Madeline Leslie

**Minnie's Pet Horse**

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### CHAPTER I.

### THE HORSE AND THE DOG

In the other books of this little series, I have told you about Minnie's pet parrot, her pet cat, and her pet dog. In this one, I shall give you an account of her pet pony, and also tell you anecdotes of other horses.

Star was the name she gave her Shetland pony, I suppose because he had a white star on his forehead, which showed very distinctly from the contrast with his dark bay hair.

He was about three feet high, with a short neck and a long black tail. He was very affectionate and gentle, loving his little mistress, and neighing pleasantly whenever he heard her voice.

The little girl seldom went out to the stable without asking the cook for a piece of bread for Star. Sometimes she did not give it to him at once, but hid it under her apron. The pony soon learned this trick, and, if the bread was not forthcoming, lifted the apron with his teeth, whining like a child, until she put it in his mouth.

During the summer months, Star was kept in the pasture, where the grass was very green. When he was thirsty, there was a clear, running brook at the end of the pasture, where he could go and drink. If the weather was very hot, he liked to go and stand in the water and cool himself.

Star had a companion to stay with him in the pasture, and help him eat the young, sweet clover. This was Nannie, the lamb, who never, if she could help it, was out of his sight for a moment. Wherever Star went, Nannie tried to go too; or, if she could not, she bleated continually, refusing to eat until his return.

Mr. Lee's place contained near a hundred acres. There was a farm house about two hundred rods from the mansion, and a nicely gravelled road leading past the lawn through the garden, connecting them.

Here, almost every pleasant morning, Minnie could be seen trotting her little pony back and forth, and Nannie running along by his side. After a few months, Star became so well accustomed to his young mistress, that he would walk by himself from the stable door, when the groom had buckled on the saddle, to the bottom of the stone steps where she used to mount. Her father soon taught her to put her foot in the stirrup, and mount by herself; and Star would stand quite still, turning his head to see when she was ready; then, when she tightened the reins, and said in her pleasant tones, "Come, pony!" away he would go down the avenue, trotting or cantering, just as suited her best.

As Minnie grew older, her mother sometimes trusted her to go to the village store of an errand; or, if the servants were busy, and there was a letter to be posted, there was nothing easier than for Minnie to run to the gate leading into the pasture, and call out, "Star! Star!!" Then he would come up to the house, following her like a dog, and wait to be saddled.

In the winter the pony occupied a stall in the neat, warm stable; and there, curled down by his side, Nannie lay too, doing her best to keep her favorite warm with her long fleece.

Minnie thought Star a very knowing horse, and she loved to tell her father and mother all the cunning things he did, and how glad he always was to see her, when she went to visit him.

Sometimes her father told her stories of other ponies. I suppose you would like to hear some, and I will tell them to you.

"The first was an account of a horse owned by Dr. Smith, in Ireland. He was a beautiful hackney, and although extremely spirited, was at the same time wonderfully docile.

“The doctor had also a fine Newfoundland dog, named Cæsar. These animals were mutually attached, and seemed perfectly acquainted with each other’s actions. The dog was always kept in the stable at night, and universally lay beside the horse.

“When Dr. Smith practised in Dublin, he visited his patients on horseback, and had no other servant to take care of his horse while in their houses but Cæsar, into whose mouth he put the reins. The hackney stood very quietly, even in that crowded city, beside his friend Cæsar. When it happened that the doctor had a patient not far distant from the place where he paid his last visit, he did not think it worth while to remount, but called to his horse and Cæsar to follow him. They both readily obeyed, and remained quietly opposite the door where he entered until he came out again.

“While he remained in Queen’s county, he had many opportunities of witnessing the friendship and sagacity of these intelligent animals. The horse seemed to be as implicitly obedient to his friend Cæsar, as he could possibly be to his groom.

“The doctor would go to the stable, accompanied by his dog, put the bridle on his horse, and giving the reins to Cæsar, bid him take the horse to the water. They both understood what was to be done, when off trotted Cæsar, followed by the hackney, which frisked, capered, and played with the dog all the way to the rivulet, about three hundred yards distant from the stable. He followed at a great distance, always keeping so far in the rear as to observe their manœuvres. They invariably went to the stream, and after the horse had quenched his thirst, both returned in the same playful manner as they had gone out.

“Sometimes the doctor desired Cæsar to make the horse leap the stream, which was about six feet broad. The dog, by a kind of bark, and leaping up toward the horse’s head, intimated to him what he wanted, which was quickly understood, when he cantered off, and took the leap in a neat and regular style. On one occasion, Cæsar lost hold of the reins, and as soon as the horse cleared the leap, he immediately trotted up to his canine friend, who took hold of the bridle, and led him back through the water quietly.”

“They loved each other,” cried Minnie, “just like Star and Nannie.”

“Such attachments are not uncommon,” rejoined Mr. Lee.

“Many horses will not stay a moment in the stable by themselves, without discovering a great deal of impatience.

“Sometimes they try to break the manger with their fore feet. On one occasion a pony leaped out of a stable door through which manure was thrown, after company which was in the barn yard. A cow, a goat, or a pet lamb, will perfectly satisfy them.”

“A gentleman in Bristol had a greyhound which slept in the stable along with a fine hunter about five years of age. They soon became attached, and regarded each other with the most tender affection. Indeed, the horse was restless and unhappy when the dog was out of sight.

“The gentleman used frequently to call at the stable for the greyhound to accompany him in his walks. On such occasions the horse would look over his shoulder at the dog with much anxiety, and neigh in a manner which plainly said, ‘Let me also accompany you.’

“When the dog returned to the stable, he was always welcomed with a loud neigh, and ran up to the horse, licking his nose. In return, the horse would scratch the dog’s back with his teeth.

“One day, when the groom was out with the horse and greyhound for exercise, a large dog attacked the latter, and quickly bore him to the ground. In spite of all the efforts of the groom, the horse threw back his ears, rushed at the strange dog, seized him by the back with his teeth, and shook him till a large piece of the skin gave way. The offender no sooner got on his feet than he ran off as fast as possible.”

## CHAPTER II. HORSE GOING TO CHURCH

When Minnie was in her ninth year, her father's brother and wife made them a visit. This gentleman was exceedingly fond of horses, and a good judge of their excellences.

Minnie was eager to exhibit her pony, and invited her uncle to the stable for that purpose.

When they went to that part of the building where his stall was, the lamb was quietly feeding by the side of her friend; but as soon as she heard a strange voice, she ran under the pony for protection, and popped her head out between his hind feet.

The gentleman laughed heartily at their strange appearance, but after a careful examination of her pet, told her she might well be proud of him, as he had very good points, and was in every way a capital little fellow.

"You must make the most of your uncle Harry," exclaimed her father merrily. "He is an inveterate story-teller, and can give you any amount of information about horses, ponies, &c."

"O, I'm so glad!" cried Minnie, laughing and clapping her hands. "I love to hear stories so dearly!"

"I'm going to try the black mare," said the gentleman. "What do you say to riding with me on the pony?"

"May I, mamma? Please let me," urged the child.

"I have not the slightest objection; my dear."

"Come, then, and I will tell you stories to your heart's content."

They were soon on their way, when, after giving her a few hints about holding her reins, he began: —

"There was once a pony mare which had a young colt. They were put to graze in a field adjoining the River Severn, where there was rich pasturage. One day the pony made its appearance before the gentleman's house to whom she belonged, and, by clattering with her feet and other gestures, drew his attention. A person being sent out, she immediately galloped off through various gates all broken down, occasionally glancing back to be sure she was followed.

"They soon came to a field, through which she passed directly for a spot in the river, over which she hung with a mournful look, and there the colt was found drowned."

"O, how sorry she must have been!" exclaimed Minnie. "I suppose she thought her master could bring the colt to life again."

"I'll tell you another, and a more lively story," said uncle Harry, smiling.

"A noble gentleman in France, called Monsieur de Boussanelle, captain of cavalry in the royal regiment, tells about a horse belonging to his company, which was disabled by age from eating his hay or oats. This horse was fed for two months by a couple of his companions on his right and left, who ate with him. Perceiving his infirmity, they drew the hay out of his rack, chewed it, and then put it before their aged comrade. They prepared his oats for him in the same way."

"I like those horses, they were so kind," urged Minnie. "I hope, uncle, you have a great many stories as good as that."

The gentleman smiled archly, and then proceeded.

"The island of Krutsand, which is formed by two branches of the Elbe, is frequently laid under water, during the time of the spring tides. In the early part of the year 1794, the water one day rose so rapidly that the horses, which were grazing in the plain with their colts, suddenly found themselves standing in deep water; upon which they all set up a loud neighing, and collected themselves as closely together as possible.

“They now seemed to consult together what measures to take to save the colts, that were standing up to the belly in the flood, and soon determined upon a singular course, when some old mares, which had no colts, assisted them in carrying it out.

“The method they adopted was this: Every two horses took a colt between them, and pressing their sides together, kept it wedged in and lifted quite above the surface of the water.

“All the horned cattle in the vicinity had already set themselves afloat, and were swimming in regular columns toward their homes. But these noble mares, with wonderful perseverance, remained immovable under their cherished burden for the space of six hours, till, the tide ebbing, the water subsided, and the colts were out of danger.”

“The inhabitants, who had rowed to the place in boats, viewed with delight this singular manœuvre, whereby their valuable colts were saved from destruction.”

“How very curious!” exclaimed Minnie, gravely; “but I don’t see how they could get the colts up in their places without some one to lift them.”

The gentleman laughed as he assured her that mares who were intelligent enough to make such a plan could easily manage that part. “Do you suppose,” he asked, “that your pony understands any thing you say to him more than the tones of your voice?”

“O, no, uncle!”

“And yet,” he said, “a true blood horse, when at liberty, when two or more persons are conversing, will approach and seem to listen to the conversation. Even the common farm horse is quite obedient to the call of his own name, and will not stir, when desired to stand, until his own name is pronounced.

“They have a kind of reason, too. I have seen a horse who, in ploughing, would walk very steadily toward the directing pole, and halt when his head had reached it. I knew of another horse who seemed to have a just idea of time, and calculated it so correctly, that he always neighed about ten minutes before the time of ceasing work, whether in summer or winter.”

“I don’t see how he could do that, uncle Harry.”

“Horses are very susceptible to music,” he went on. “I owned a horse once who would stop eating, and listen attentively with pricked, moving ears, and steady eyes, the instant he heard the note low G; and I knew of another that was similarly affected by a high note.”

Minnie laughed, as she said, “I mean to try my pony just as soon as I get home.”

“I dare say, if you were to take your accordeon to the stable, he would be delighted. I have watched many of these noble animals on the military field, and there is no doubt they are pleased with martial music.

“I remember hearing of an experiment made in the year 1829, on some of the Duke of Buckleuch’s hunters. A gentleman went toward them in the field, but they were shy of his approach, as he was a stranger, and slowly retreated, till he sounded a small musical instrument, called a mouth *Æolian* harp. On hearing this, they immediately erected their heads and turned round. On his sounding it again, they approached nearer, when he began to retreat, and they to advance. Having gone over a paling, one of the horses came up to him, putting its mouth close to his breast, seeming delighted with the music which he continued to produce. As the other horses were coming up, apparently to follow the example of their more confident comrade, the gentleman retired.



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