Mabel Osgood Wright

Four-Footed Americans and Their Kin

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IN THE PASTURE

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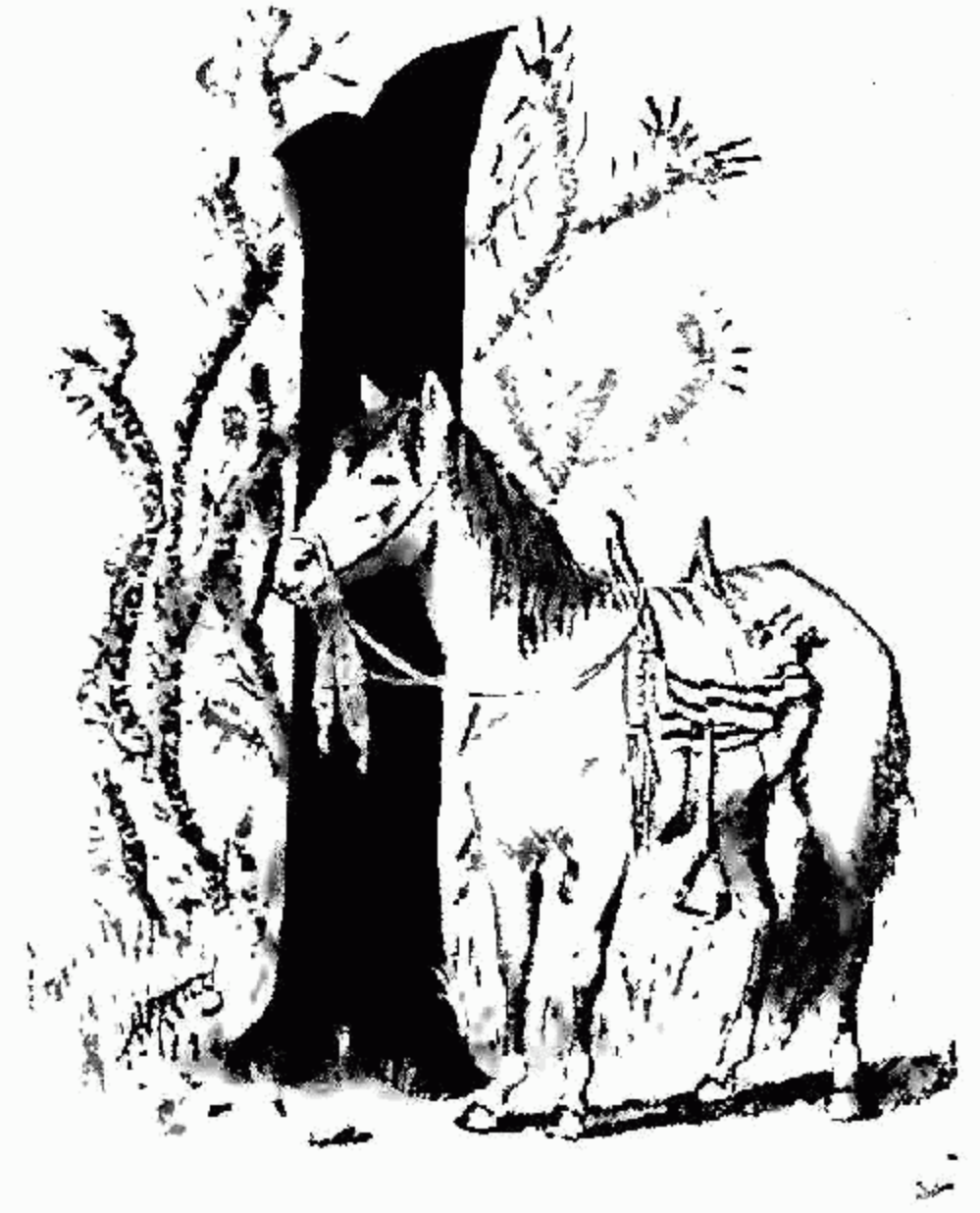


T was circus day down at East Village. Not the common circus, with a Lion, Elephant, a cage or two of Monkeys, a fat clown turning somersaults, and a beautiful lady floating through paper hoops, but a real American circus—the Wild West Show, with its scouts, frontiersmen, Broncos, bucking Ponies, Indians, and Buffaloes.

Of course the House People at Orchard Farm made a holiday and went down to see the show, giving many different reasons for so doing. Dr. Hunter and Mr. Blake said it was their duty as patriotic Americans to encourage native institutions, and Mrs. Blake said that she must surely go to see that the young people did not eat too many peanuts and popcorn balls. The young people thought that going to the circus was a *must be*, unless one was ill, or had done something very, very wrong, that merited the severest sort of punishment. Mammy Bun, too, who had been groaning about pains in her bones for fully a week, took out her best black bonnet trimmed with a big red rose,—headgear that she only wore on great occasions,—saying:—

"Pears to me nuffin eber does ma reumatiz de heap o' good like hearin' a real circus ban' a playin'. Land alibe, honies! I feel so spry alreddy seems like I'se could do a caike walk dis yer minit."

*****

It was October. Everything looked cheerful at the farm. The maples were dressed in dazzling red and yellow; heaps of red and yellow apples lay under the orchard trees, and the house and barns wore a glistening new coat of yellow paint, with white trimmings and green blinds.

A deeper yellow shone from the fields where jolly pumpkins seemed to play hide-and-seek behind the corn stacks, which the children called wigwams when they played Indian. Everything looked as thrifty as if the outdoor season was beginning instead of nearly at an end; and well it might, for it had been many years since the old farm held such a family. There would be no closed blinds, leaf-choked paths, or snow-drifts left to bury the porch, this winter.

"Yes, the Chimney Swift was right," said the Meadowlark in the old field, to the Song Sparrow who was singing cheerfully in a barberry bush. "We shall be better off than before these House People came; they have already begun to scatter food in the barnyard, though there are enough gleanings about to last us citizens until snow comes. The village boys never think of coming up here now to shoot, as they used to every season when the wind began to blow cold"; and the Meadowlark flew to the top rail of the fence, boldly showing his yellow breast, and giving a note or two to tell how trustful he was.

"Where have you been all summer?" asked Comet, the young trotter, of the big brown farm horses, who had come to drink at the spring in the pasture below the barns. "It is so long since I have seen you I was afraid that you had been sold."

"Oh no, youngster!" replied Tom. "Jerry and I have only been summering up at the wood lots at the far end of the farm. We had our shoes off all the time, and could amuse ourselves as we liked. We never saw a harness or wagon; all the work we did was to roll in the grass or wade in the river to keep the flies off. The grazing up there was simply

delicious, you know,—all sorts of relishing little bits of herbs mixed in with the grass.

"Now that we have had our rest, it is our turn to work, and gray Bess and Billy have gone to the paddock, and we have come to take their places. There is plenty to do on this farm in fall and winter, though it is very lonely. I can remember, when I was a four-year-old, that House People lived in the big barn with all the windows, and they used to ride over the snow in the low wagon without wheels, and we all had fine times together."

"There are fine times here now," said Comet, shaking his mane importantly; "but of course you do not know about them, because you have been away. House People are living here again. We all have great fun and the best of eating, with more picnics than ploughing for the horses. Children play about the farm, who feed me with bunches of pink clover and little lumps of nice-tasting stuff they call sugar. I mistrusted it at first, it looked so like the hard pebbles in the brook, but it chewed up all right when I nibbled some."

"*You* don't look as if you had been having *half* enough to eat, in spite of the good times," said Tom, pityingly. "Only look at your ribs. I can count every one of them. If you were harnessed to a plough, you would come apart at the very first pull. How could you drag a load of hay? As for working in the threshing-machine, those little feet of yours would catch between the slats. What use are thin horses, anyway?" concluded Tom, rather rudely, not realizing that his remarks were impolite, while Jerry looked proudly along his fat sides and pawed the ground with a hoof nearly as large as a dinner plate.

Comet was going to answer angrily and say something very saucy about clumsy work horses, but he stopped himself in time, being every inch a thoroughbred; for good breeding shows in the manners of animals as well as in House People.

"No," he answered after a moment, "I can't plough, nor drag a load, nor work the threshing-machine; but horses are made for different kinds of work. You do not think a cow useless because she gives milk instead of doing any sort of pulling, do you? Now I can drag the little wagon over to the railway station—where the great iron horse drags the string of covered wagons along the ground on the queer shiny fence rails—in half the time it takes you to go round the ten-acre lot. When I hear that horse coming, breathing hard and roaring, I prick up my ears, and you can hardly see my feet when they touch the road, for I do not want that great roaring horse to get there before I do. So the master is pleased, and always takes me. How would you like to go fast like that?" said Comet, smiling behind a bunch of grass.

"I couldn't go fast if I wanted to," said Tom, honestly. "I tried it once, when a plough-chain fell and banged my heels. They called it running away, I believe. My! how warm I was. Everything looked red as the sun in August, and a warm rain storm rolled off my coat on to the grass. That is what it seemed to me, but the farmer said, 'Tom is too fat and soft. See how he sweats!' and they skimped my dinner for a month."

"Well, then, to continue," said Comet. "We animals haven't been shut up all summer except in stormy weather; the bars have been down between all the best pastures.

Even Sausage, the sow, and her nine little pigs, have been out walking every day, and her sty has had fresh bedding in it the same as if they were Cow or Horse People.

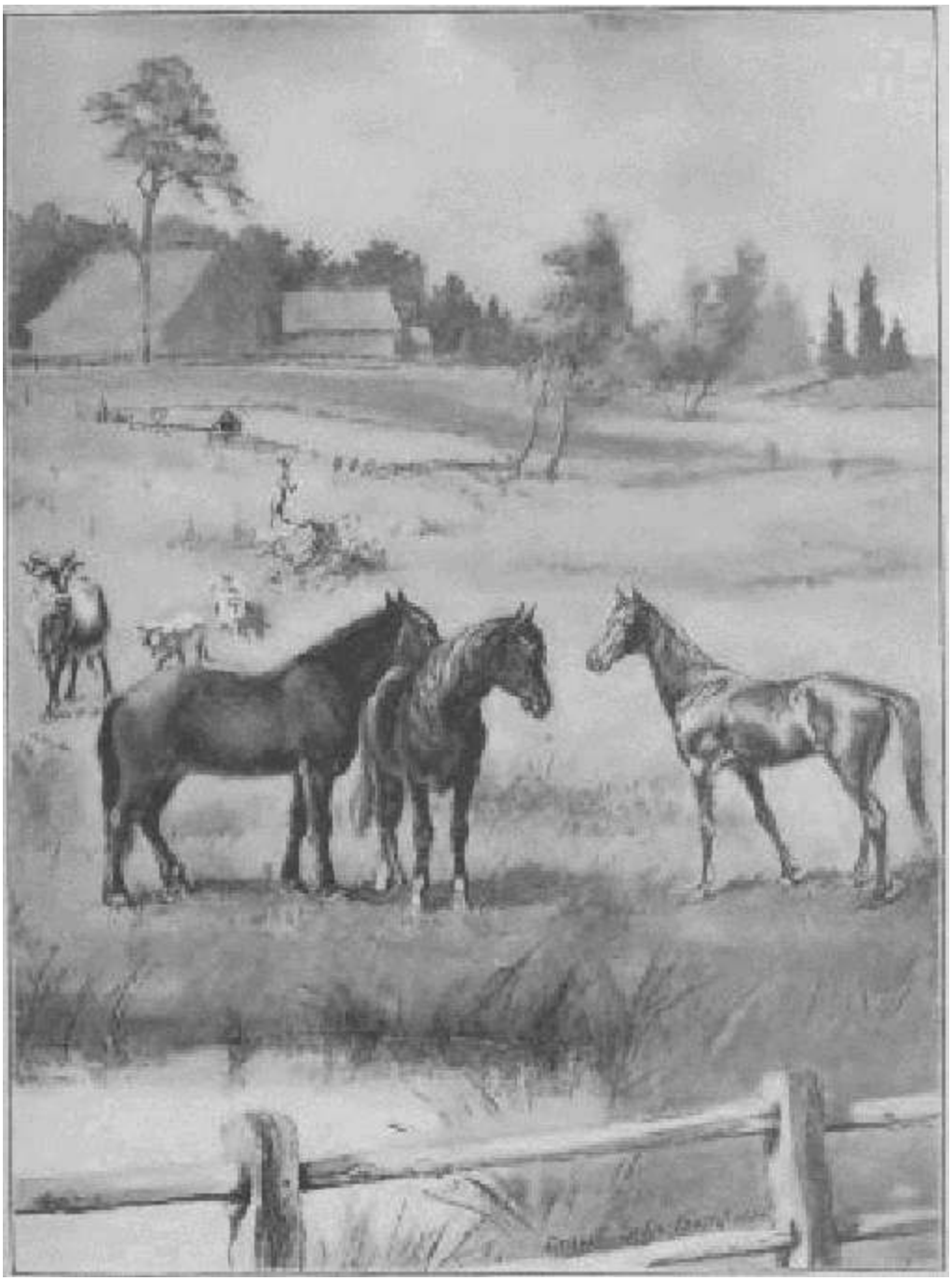
"We had so much freedom that I thought at first that there would be a great many fights, but we have all behaved beautifully. Even Nanny Baa, the stubborn old sheep, and Corney, the mischievous goat, have not butted any one or fought each other.

"We've had a chance to hear about the world and the other animals in it too, for a circus has been camping a few fields further down."

"I don't like a circus," interrupted Jerry, decidedly. "There are always a lot of bad-smelling, foreign beasts in cages with a circus, that a respectable farm fourfoot should not encourage. Then there is a terrible noise,—worse than milk-pans falling off the fence,—that they call a band; it makes me forget myself and dodge and dance all over the road. Yes, indeed, I well remember the first circus I ever heard. It came here when we were five-year-olds. Tom and I upset a load of cabbages, and they rolled all the way down Long Hill into the brook."

"There were no foreign wild beasts in *this* circus," said Comet, proud of his knowledge. "I put my head through the fence bars and had a fine chance to talk to some of the horses. There were several kinds of Horse Brothers there that I had never seen before; different even from the long-eared Donkey and Mule Brothers." Here Comet stopped, took a bite of grass and a drink of water, waiting to see if Tom and Jerry were interested.

They were, and as Comet looked up he saw that some of the other animals were coming down to drink,—Daisy, the finest cow in the herd, and Nanny Baa, sauntering all alone, the other sheep not having yet missed her, while Corney, the goat, whose whole name was Capricornus, danced about on a rock, charging at an imaginary enemy in the sky.



Tom, Jerry and Comet.

"What other horses did you see?" asked Tom and Jerry together, as the others came up.

"There were small horses, homely and thin, with straight necks and rolling eyes. Some of these were brown, and

some all mixed brown and white. They ran up and down the field, clearing the old division fence at a jump. These were called Indian Ponies, and men they called Indians, with small eyes and dark rusty faces, rode on them for exercise. Beside these there were some others, called Burros, with longish ears, who did not seem to know how to either trot or run, and some of the small horses kept jerking and humping up their backs, so that the men could not ride them.

"Who told you all these names?" asked Tom, suspiciously.

"There was an old horse who did not work in the circus, but only helped draw wagons, who stayed by the fence and talked to me. He had seen a great deal of life in his day, and what do you think he said about those strange horses? That they were not born and raised on nice farms like you and me; that they came from the west country where they run wild until they are old enough to work, and they live in great flocks as the Crows do hereabouts. Every horse has a mark on his side, put there by the man who owns him. When they are young they have fine sport, but when it is time for them to work, men ride after them on swift horses and catch them by throwing a rope loop over their heads, and sometimes this hurts them very much, and they are also sorry to leave their friends.

"Out in the west country where these horses lived, the plains are full of fourfoots,—not Horse and Cow People,—but real wild fourfoots, strange as any of the Elephants or Lions. There are more kinds of them than you could ever dream of, even if you ate a whole bushel of oats for supper.

"The Horse said that they belong to older American families than any of us farm animals, and that once these

four-footed Americans and the Red Indian Brothers, who lived in tents, owned all the country, and there were no real House People or farm fourfoots here at all."

"That must have been a long time ago," said Jerry. "I remember my grandmother, and she never said anything about wild people, and I never knew about any other animals but ourselves."

"Who am *I*, pray?" squealed a Squirrel, scampering along the fence. "How ignorant you are not to know that I belong to a *very* old family."

"You don't count," neighed Jerry. "I never thought you were an animal."

"Not an animal, hey? I will show you what a sharp-toothed animal I am, some fine day, and nibble up your dinner when you are asleep," and the Squirrel jumped over Jerry's back, and ran up a tree.

"My friend told me," continued Comet, "that some of those wild fourfoots are working for their living in this very circus. They are quite rare now, though they used to be as plentiful in the west pastures as ants in a hill. He showed me some of these beasts this very morning when they were being led down to the village."

"What did they look like?"

"Something like bulls, with low backs and great heavy heads, all bushy with thick brown wool. My friend said they are called Bison by the Wise Men; but in the circus and out where they used to live, every one calls them Buffaloes."

"I wonder if they are related to me?" said Daisy, who had joined the group.

"They are not as handsome as you, though they might belong to your family," said Comet, politely.

"Perhaps I may have some wild cousins," said Sausage, rooting up the turf. "I wonder what they eat?"

"I should like to go and meet my wild relations, if I have any," said Corney. "I wonder if they could beat me at butting and sliding down hill?"

"Humph, it is very strange about all these wild things," said Jerry. "I—My, they are making that bang noise again, down at the village!"

"That is the band. I think the circus is over," said Comet.

"Which Horse Brother dragged the people down there, and who went?" asked Daisy, who was always inquisitive.

"They all went, and they walked with their own feet, because the Doctor knows that we do not like smells and noises," said Comet. "They are coming back up the hill now. Nat is following 'way behind, carrying something. Ugh! It is a big snake, and he has it by the tail. I hate snakes; they look up so suddenly out of the grass when one is feeding, and they always seem to be by the nicest bunch of clover."

"Perhaps the people will stop here to rest, and we may hear something about our wild brothers," said Daisy.

"I think Dodo has sugar for me," said Comet to Tom and Jerry. "I will drop a piece, and you can pick it up, and see how you like it."

"Comet is quite a gentleman, if his ribs *do* show," muttered Tom to his companion, looking pleased, while the other animals lingered about the spring, waiting for the House People.

"Here are the horses that I haven't seen before from the grass farm; and Comet, too, and Daisy!" cried Dodo, climbing over the fence. "Please stop a bit, Uncle Roy, and let me give them some of my popcorn balls; I'm *sure* they will like them, and Corney simply loves peanuts."

"What did I tell you?" whispered Comet to Tom, as Dodo chirped for him to come to her.

II

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THE ANIMAL TREE

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OME up on the fence too, please, uncle," coaxed Dodo, and Dr. Hunter climbed over the pasture bars, seating himself on

the fence in answer to her request to 'stop a bit while she fed the animals.' He motioned to Rap, who was rather tired with his walk, to come beside him, while Nat and Dodo divided the contents of their pockets into little heaps.

"Give the popcorn to Daisy and the horses," said Dodo. "The peanuts are for Corney; we can toss them up, and see him hop and scramble to catch them. It's lots of fun. Sausage can have all the mixed crumbs, 'cause she likes grubby things. Please, Nat, won't you bury your snake, or hang it up, or something? Whichever way I look, it seems to be too near."

"I'll hang it up on the tree, because I'm going to put it in a glass jar to keep. Daddy has gone back to the village to buy me some alcohol to pour on it."

"Ugh! what do you want it for? If I were you, I'd rather have the money the alcohol costs to buy a new butterfly net."

"Uncle Roy says it is as fine a rattlesnake as he ever saw. That is why he bought it off the man from the mountain, who killed it. There aren't any hereabouts now. A good thing, too, because they are biters; but I want it for my collection. I haven't many reptiles, you know; only a garter snake, two lizards, and a frog—whoa! Tom, eat fair; your mouth is twice as big as Comet's."

"How queer Daisy's tongue feels—it tickles my hand," said Dodo. "She licks everything into her mouth, but the horses take food in their lips. Uncle Roy, please come down here and see how queerly Daisy eats, and oh, my! she hasn't any top front teeth, either. Is she very old? Do look; her jaws wiggle as if she was chewing gum!"

"No, little girl; none of the Cow Family have any front upper teeth. A well-behaved cow sticks out her tongue with a sidewise motion to guide the grass into her mouth, while in the Horse Family the habit is to seize it with the lips, and then nip it between the teeth."

"Yes, but, uncle!" cried Nat, jumping hastily over the fence to dodge Corney, who was tired of eating peanuts one by one, and, giving a sudden butt, had seized bag and all; "Uncle Roy, cows are ever so fond of chewing. They eat all the morning, and then they go under the trees and chew, chew, chew, all the afternoon; but horses gobble their food once for all."

"I'm very glad you have noticed this, Nat. The cow is built upon a different plan from the horse. The horse has a complete set of upper and under teeth, and a single stomach—something like our own—to receive the food. The cow has four stomachs. When she eats, the food goes into the first stomach, where it stays a while to grow soft. After Daisy has filled this first stomach, she goes to rest for a while, brings up the softened food into her mouth, and chews it again. This softened food is called the 'cud.'"

"Oh, now I know what Rod meant," cried Dodo, clapping her hands, "when he said the cows were chewing their 'cud.' They were lying under the trees, and didn't seem to have anything near them to eat. I thought cud must be moss or something. Do any other of our animals beside cows have several stomachs and chew cud?"

"Yes, all the animals that belong to the Meat Family: Sheep and Goats, and, among their wild American brothers,

the Deer and the very Buffalo that you saw at the show this afternoon."

"Were those strange beasts any relations of our farm animals?" asked the children in one breath.

"Were our farm animals once wild like the Buffaloes, and did they live far out West? Who first caught them and made them tame?" gabbled Dodo, only stopping when her breath failed.

"Our farm animals were never, in the true sense, natives of this country. In the far back days, before the pale-faced voyagers came to these shores, the Red Brothers had no horses to carry them, nor cows to give them milk. They followed the war-path and game-trail on foot, and their clothing and tent homes were made of the skins of the beasts they took with bow, arrow, and spear. Time was when they had not even spears and arrows.

"When the pale-faced settlers came to America they brought the useful animals from their old homes with them: pigs, sheep, horses, goats, cows, dogs, cats, etc.,—so though these have lived here as the people have, long enough to be citizens, they are not native or *indigenous* Americans any more than we ourselves. That distinction belongs to the Indian, Peccary, Buffalo, Musk Ox, Mountain Goat, Bighorn, Wolf, and Wildcat, who are the wild cousins of House People and their farm fourfoots. The horse alone has no *living* wild cousin here, though there were horses in America ages ago."

"Then those horses that the Indians rode at the show, who hopped around so, weren't really wild at all," said Nat, with a look of great disappointment. "They seemed really,

truly wild, and *how* the Indians stuck on and dodged and fired their guns!"

"They are wild in the sense that they were born on the open prairie and lived in vast herds, but they are the great-grandchildren of tame horses. In the southwest, as well as in South America, vast herds of these horses, descended from those brought in by the Spanish, roamed at large. From time to time the Indians dashed into the troops and lassoed those that they desired and rode them as we saw the Indians do this afternoon, but they are not true four-footed Americans like that little Chipmunk over there, who is stealing a few peanuts that Corney overlooked, or like the sly, fat Woodchucks that we are trying to trap in the orchard."

"Please, Uncle Roy, can Dodo and I put halters on Tom and Jerry and see if we can ride them round the field without any saddles?" said Nat, looking fearlessly up at the big horses, whose mouths barely touched the top of his head.

"You can try, if you like," laughed the Doctor, "but I'm afraid it will be too hard travelling for Dodo. No, you will risk a bumping? Very well, then, but tell Rod to bring blankets and surcingles."

In a few minutes Rod came, strapped a folded blanket on each horse, and gave Nat Jerry's halter, but insisted upon keeping hold of Tom.

"Now, if I only had something to shoot with, we could play circus. Hoo-oo-ooh!" cried Nat, trying to imitate an Indian cry, at which sound Jerry galloped very quietly down the pasture, switching his tail. But to Nat it seemed as if he was seated on an earthquake, and he clutched Jerry's mane,

whereupon the horse gave a little kick of surprise and cantered heavily back to the spring.

"I think T-o-m is falling to pieces," chattered Dodo, as Rod ran him round the pasture. "He—is—so—fat, too, my legs can't bend down;—I—guess I'll stop, please," and Rod swung her down to the wall beside her uncle.

"A circus isn't as easy as it looks," said Nat, wiping his face, and Rap laughed heartily and pounded his crutch on the fence.

"Farm horses are *not* saddle horses," said Comet to himself.

"I'm all mixed up about animals," said Dodo in a few minutes when she had caught her breath. "Our farm animals aren't real Americans, yet Daisy is a kind of cousin of the wild Buffalo, because she has no upper front teeth and chews a cud. Birds seem so much easier to understand. Birds are animals with a backbone, a beak for a mouth, and two legs. They wear feathers and lay eggs. But these others are different in their mouths and stomachs and feet, and some have horns and some don't. Some have little tails like Corney, and some long hairy tails like the horses, and oh, Uncle Roy, that snake there is all tail!

"Olive says bugs, and beetles, and flies, are animals, too, and beetles are crusty, and caterpillars are squashy, and flies are buzzy, and I'm sure I never can tell who is who. Birds look something alike, even when they are as different as a Hummingbird and a Duck; but I *can't* understand how all the other animals are related."

"Not so fast, dearie," said the Doctor, laughing at her inquiries until the tears ran down his cheeks. "The

differences and the relationships of these animals are no harder to remember than they are among the birds. You know that with them their beaks and feet were arranged to suit their needs. Have you forgotten how we classified the birds, and the little table of the Animal Kingdom that you wrote?"

"Yes," said Nat, hesitating; "that is, I did know, but I've forgotten most of it."

"I remember," said Rap, "that you said classifying was to put the animals together that were the nearest alike, and the two great divisions of the Animal Kingdom were animals without backbones and animals with them."

"Olive says my sponge is an animal," said Dodo, doubtfully. "Surely it can't have any backbone, for if it did it would scratch my face; but then it was full of prickles when it was new, perhaps its backbone was crumpled up!"

"I must try to make this Animal Kingdom and its chief divisions more clear to you," said the Doctor, pausing a minute as he looked across the pasture. "Do you see that great chestnut tree yonder, with the thick trunk and wide-spreading branches?"

"Yes, indeed," said Rap, "and it bears the fattest, sweetest nuts of any tree hereabouts; but it takes a very hard frost to open them."

"I remember how good the nuts used to be, but now I want you all to notice the way in which the tree grows. Above ground there is a thick straight part which is called the trunk; then this soon divides into large branches. A little further up these thick branches separate into smaller branches yet, until they end in little slender twigs.

"The Animal Kingdom is like this tree in the way in which the different members all are developed side by side, interlacing and depending upon each other. It is difficult to tell some of the lowest branches of the animal tree from plants: as none of these animals of the first branches have any backbones, they are called Invertebrates, and their inside parts are held together in a little tube."

"Are birds on one of the high branches?" asked Dodo.

"Yes, one of the very highest, next to the great branch, where man himself sits, surrounded by all his faithful four-footed friends, just as he is when he walks about every day."

"Do House People and fourfoots belong on the same great branch?" said Rap, looking puzzled. "What is it called, please?"

"It is the Mammal branch, the highest of all, and it has so many little branchlets and twigs that it is large enough to be a tree all by itself."

"Exactly *how* are the other Mammals like us, and what does Mammal mean? Do they all have warm red blood like ours?" asked Dodo, who was celebrated for cutting her fingers.

"They all have warm red blood, but so have birds; there are other differences that you will learn later. The one thing that makes them Mammals is that they suckle their young with milk."

"M—mammals; m—milk," sang Dodo. "Why, that is as easy to remember as 'Billy Button bought a buttered biscuit'! Please tell us the names of some nearby Mammals, Uncle Roy."

"All the farm and house fourfoots are Mammals; also the wild Deer, Wolves, Foxes, Rats, Mice, Squirrels, Moles, Skunks, Weasels, and Woodchucks, beside many others you do not know even by name."

"So all those nuisance animals are Mammals too," said Dodo, meditatively.

"Nuisance animals! Which are those?" asked Rap.

"The naughty, bothersome ones that eat things and bite holes in the house, and dig up the orchard, and smell, oh, so bad! Why, Rap, don't you remember the evening we thought there was a black and white rooster by the orchard wall, and Quick and I tried to catch it, and it turned out to be a Skunk? Then my clothes had to be boiled so hard they were no more use, and Quick tried to get away from himself for almost two weeks."

"Oh, yes, I do. Mammals must have a great many shapes, Doctor," continued Rap, thoughtfully. "How are they made into families?—the same way as birds?"

"In very much the same way. To-night, after supper, I will draw you a picture of a part of this wonderful animal tree, and tell you the names of some of its branches, and perhaps you will remember a few of them. I do not wish to bother you with long words, but there are a few that you must learn.

"The history of this animal tree is the most interesting story in the world, and the Wise Men call it Zoölogy, after two Greek words that mean the 'history of animal life.'"

"Then that is the reason why an out-door menagerie is called a Zo-o-logical Garden," said Nat, stumbling a trifle over the word. "Daddy was reading to mother about such a

beautiful garden for wild animals that is going to be made near New York,—the very biggest in the world,—so that every one in America can see how the animals live. Perhaps we can go there some day and see all the Mammals."

"Daisy gives milk, so I am very sure I know one Mammal anyway," said Dodo, who was growing a little tired. "Oh! oh!" she cried, suddenly jumping off the fence. "The sun is going down pop. I never noticed it, and Rod said I might help milk to-night. He's taking the cows in now. Won't you come and see me do it, Uncle Roy?"

"You help milk?" laughed Nat. "Who taught you how?"

"Rod; I've had four lessons, and I can milk almost a quart. Then my hands grow all weak and shaky, and Rod says it's enough for once, both for me and for the cow. Daisy is the only one that will let me."

"Poor, patient Daisy," laughed the Doctor. "To be sure we will come and see this famous milkmaid."

Dodo led the way to the cow barn, where each cow had a clean stall marked with her name. Then she tied a queer sort of apron round her waist, made, like Rod's, out of a meal sack, hunted for a small stool, also like Rod's, and prepared in a very businesslike manner to wash off Daisy's bag with a sponge and some clean water.

"Bravo! Bravo!" cried the Doctor. "My little farmer has already learned that everything about milk, from the animal to the pans, should be very clean."

"Zig-zig-zig-zig," said the milk, spattering on the bottom of the pail. In a few minutes the spattering stopped.

"Now it's beginning to purr like a cat," explained Dodo. "It does that when the milk begins to fill up a little."

Dodo kept bravely at it until her fingers, now red and tired, had coaxed about a quart from Daisy.

"That will go for to-night," she said, "though I'm sure I milked more last time. I'm dreadfully thirsty; suppose we drink this now, Uncle Roy. There's a glass by the well, Nat,"—and the milk rapidly disappeared.

"M—mammals; m—milk," sang Dodo, skipping ahead toward the house, as the short twilight hurried after the sun.

"I wish the days were longer," sighed Rap, turning to go home.

"But evening with a wood fire in the wonder room is lovely," sang Dodo, "and to-night uncle he, will draw a tree,"—she sang; then stopped and laughed at her rhyme.

"Uncle Roy," she whispered, "it's been such a happy day, can we have Rap to help finish off by toasting crackers in the wonder room, and see you draw the animal tree? Yes? I'll give you a bear's hug!"

"I reckon there will be a frost to-night," said Rod, passing on his way to the house with the milk-pail.

"Frost!" shouted Nat, dancing round in glee. "Frost—chestnuts, Rap,—and to-morrow will be Saturday!"

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"How do you like this?" said Comet, looking up from his oats over to Tom and Jerry, as the stable door closed with a click. "Box stalls and two bundles of clean straw apiece, and warm bran mash for you beside. Did you ever have anything as nice as this where you were this summer?"

"I think the House People here understand a horse's feelings," answered Jerry, plunging his nose into his supper.