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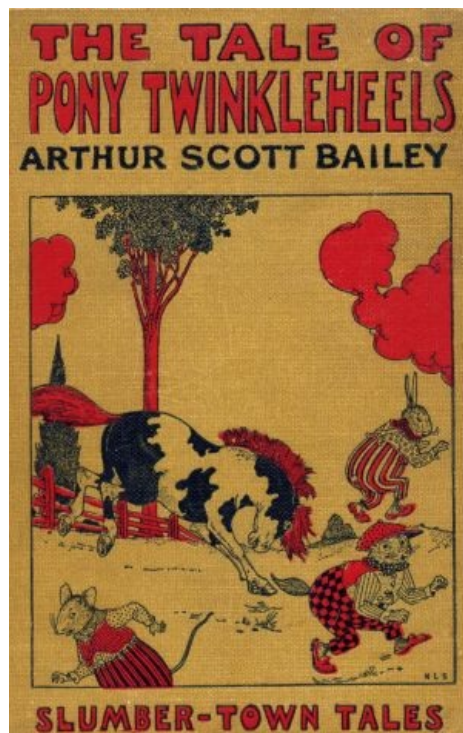
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SLUMBER-TOWN TALES
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THE TALE OF
PONY

TWINKLEHEELS

BY
ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY

Author of
"SLEEPY-TIME TALES"
(Trademark Registered)
"TUCK-ME-IN TALES"
(Trademark Registered)

ILLUSTRATED BY
HARRY L. SMITH

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Twinkleheels Races With Ebenezer.

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S SLUMBER-TOWN TALES
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BY
ARTHUR SCOTT BAILEY

AUTHOR OF
SLEEPY-TIME TALES (Trademark)

THE TALE OF THE MULEY COW
THE TALE OF OLD DOG SPOT
THE TALE OF GRUNTY PIG
THE TALE OF HENRIETTA HEN
THE TALE OF TURKEY PROUDFOOT
THE TALE OF PONY TWINKLEHEELS
THE TALE OF MISS KITTY CAT

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THE TALE OF PONY TWINKLEHEELS

[Pg 1]

I A BIG LITTLE PONY

When Johnnie Green sent him along the road at a trot, Twinkleheels' tiny feet moved so fast that you could scarcely have told one from another. Being a pony, and only half as big as a horse, he had to move his legs twice as quickly as a horse did in order to travel at a horse's speed. Twinkleheels' friends knew that he didn't care to be beaten by any horse, no matter how long-legged.

"It's spirit, not size, that counts," Farmer Green often remarked as he watched Twinkleheels [Pg 2]

tripping out of the yard, sometimes with Johnnie on his back, sometimes drawing Johnnie in a little, red-wheeled buggy.

Old dog Spot agreed with Farmer Green. When Twinkleheels first came to live on the farm Spot had thought him something of a joke.

"Huh! This pony's nothing but a toy," he had told the farmyard folk. "He's a child's plaything—about as much use as the little woolly dog that lives down by the sawmill."

One trip to the village and back, behind Johnnie Green's glistening new buggy, was enough to change Spot's opinion of the newcomer. Back from the village Twinkleheels came clipping up the road and swung through Farmer Green's front gate as fresh as a daisy. And old Spot, with his tongue lolling out, and panting fast, was glad to lie down on the woodshed step to rest. [Pg 3]

"My goodness!" said Spot to Miss Kitty Cat. "This Twinkleheels is the *goingest* animal I ever followed. He doesn't seem to know the difference between uphill and down. It's all the same to him. I did think he'd walk now and then, or I'd never have travelled to the village behind him."

"He's not lazy, like some people," Miss Kitty Cat hissed; and then crept into the farmhouse before Spot could chase her. She had a poor opinion of old Spot. And she never failed to let him know it.

It was true that Twinkleheels was not lazy. And it was just as true that he liked to play. When Johnnie Green turned him loose in the pasture he kicked and frisked about so gayly that Jimmy Rabbit and Billy Woodchuck and their friends had to step lively now and then, to get out of his way. They said they liked high spirits, but that Twinkleheels was almost too playful. [Pg 4]

When Twinkleheels took it into his head to do anything he did it without the slightest warning. If he decided to shy at a bit of paper he was out of the road before Johnnie Green knew what had happened. And if he wanted to take a wrong turn, just for fun, he darted off so fast that he usually had his way before Johnnie could shout "Whoa!" Everybody said that he was as quick as Miss Kitty Cat. And that was the same as saying that there wasn't anybody any quicker—unless it was Grumpy Weasel himself.

But Twinkleheels and Miss Kitty were not alike in any other way; for Twinkleheels was both merry and good-natured. He let Johnnie Green pick up his feet, one at a time, and clean them. And the worst he ever did was to give Johnnie a playful nip, just as Johnnie himself might have pinched the boy that sat in front of him at school. [Pg 5]

Only, of course, Johnnie Green wouldn't have used his teeth to do that. [Pg 6]

II FUN IN THE PASTURE

The first time he tried to catch Twinkleheels in the pasture, Johnnie Green found his new pet entirely too playful to suit him. In response to Johnnie's whistling Twinkleheels came galloping towards the bars. But when he caught sight of the halter that Johnnie held he stopped short. And he snorted, as if to say, "I don't believe I'll go with you. I'm having too much fun here."

"Come on!" Johnnie called. "We're going to the village."

But that news didn't catch Twinkleheels. When Johnnie Green began to walk towards him Twinkleheels waited until his young master reached out a hand to take hold of his mane. Then Twinkleheels wheeled like a flash and tore off across the pasture, leaving Johnnie to clutch the empty air. [Pg 7]

Johnnie chased him, crying, "Whoa! Whoa!" It seemed that the faster he ran the faster Twinkleheels drew away from him. So Johnnie soon fell into a walk. At last Twinkleheels stopped and waited for him, pricking up his ears at Johnnie's whistle. Now, however, he wouldn't let Johnnie get within a dozen feet of him.

"This is great sport!" Twinkleheels chuckled as he dashed away again.

Johnnie Green, however, did not enjoy the sport. After following Twinkleheels all over the pasture he became tired and breathless. [Pg 8]

Back toward the barn he turned at last.

As he climbed over the fence he looked at Twinkleheels, who stood on a knoll and regarded him pleasantly.

"I'll get you yet!" Johnnie called to him. "You needn't think you can beat me!"

Twinkleheels dropped his head, flung his hind feet into the air twice, and galloped off. He was sorry that Johnnie Green had stopped chasing him.

Johnnie found his father at work in the barn.

"What shall I do?" Johnnie asked him. "I can't catch Twinkleheels. I've been trying for about an hour. And he won't let me get near enough to him to grab him."

Farmer Green laughed.

"He's a rascal," he said. "You'll have to coax him with something to eat. Put a few handfuls of oats in the four-quart measure and hold it up so he can see it. Shake it, too, so he can hear the oats swishing around in it. You'll get him that way." [Pg 9]

Johnnie Green hastened to carry out his father's plan. And he was smiling as he stepped through the doorway, holding the four-quart measure and shaking it to hear the sound that the oats made inside it. Then his father called to him.

"You'd better keep the halter behind you, when you get to the pasture," Farmer Green said. "If Twinkleheels saw it he might not come—oats or no oats."

Johnnie Green chuckled. [Pg 10]

III TRICKING TWINKLEHEELS

Clutching in one hand the four-quart measure with a taste of oats in it, and holding the halter carefully behind his back, Johnnie Green walked slowly towards Twinkleheels. He called with short, sharp whistles—all on one note. And Twinkleheels soon came cantering up from the other side of the brook, where he had been feeding. As he neared Johnnie Green he slowed down to a walk.

Johnnie stood still and shook the oats about inside the measure, holding it up so that Twinkleheels could see it.

Twinkleheels whinnied. He knew that sound. He thought it one of the pleasantest on the farm. He, too, stopped. Then he moved forward a few steps, stopped again, sniffed, and at last came straight up to Johnnie and thrust his nose into the grain measure. [Pg 11]

While he was munching the oats Johnnie Green passed the end of the halter rope about his neck.

"There!" Johnnie cried. "There, young fellow! Now I've got you. And you'll never lead me such a merry chase again."

Twinkleheels acted as mild as the Muley Cow. He stood perfectly still while Johnnie slipped the halter on his head and buckled it. Then he followed Johnnie to the pasture bars, down the lane, and into the barn.

"I got him!" Johnnie called to his father. [Pg 12]

"I thought you would," said Farmer Green. "That pony likes oats too well to resist a taste of them."

After that Johnnie had little trouble catching Twinkleheels in the pasture. Somehow the sound of the shaking oats, and the sight of the grain measure, seemed to put all thought of the halter out of his head.

To be sure, once Johnnie forgot what he was doing and hid the oats behind his back, while he held the halter up in front of him and shook that at Twinkleheels. And it was an hour, that time, before Twinkleheels would let Johnnie come near him.

But that was a mistake.

One day Johnnie Green was in a great hurry. He was going to ride over the hill, to play with some friends. Running to the barn, he caught up Twinkleheels' halter and snatched the four-quart measure off the top of a barrel. [Pg 13]

"I won't stop to take any oats to-day," Johnnie said to himself. "I'll fool Twinkleheels. It will be a good joke on him when he puts his nose into the measure and finds it empty."

Johnnie Green hurried to the pasture. At his first whistle Twinkleheels pricked up his ears. He had come to think only of one thing when that whistle sounded in the pasture. That one thing was *oats*. And now Twinkleheels squealed and kicked and tore down the hillside to the bars, where Johnnie Green stood and waved the grain measure in the air.

Twinkleheels had long since given up stopping to listen for the swish of the oats inside the measure. He came trotting up to Johnnie and reached his head out for the treat that he had always found waiting for him. [Pg 14]

He thrust his nose into the measure. There was something wrong. He blew into the measure. Then he snorted and drew back. And if Johnnie Green hadn't been spry Twinkleheels would have

given him the slip.

But Johnnie grabbed him and had the halter on him in a twinkling.

"I fooled you this time," said Johnnie as he turned to let down the pasture bars.

Twinkleheels hung his head.

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IV THE CHEATER CHEATED

Johnnie Green thought he had done something quite clever. He had coaxed Twinkleheels up to him in the pasture with an empty grain measure.

Twinkleheels, however, had his own ideas about the matter.

"This boy," he said to old dog Spot, "has cheated me."

Spot lay on the barn floor, looking on while Johnnie Green harnessed Twinkleheels.

"This boy," Twinkleheels explained, "made me think he had some oats for me. He caught me unfairly."

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Old dog Spot grinned. "Can't you take a joke?" he asked.

"This is no joke," Twinkleheels grumbled. "Johnnie is going to drive me over the hill. They're going to have a ball game over there. And you know folks are always in a hurry when they're going to a ball game—especially boys. And they're in the most terrible hurry of all when somebody else has to get them there. If Johnny Green had to walk, maybe he'd think there was time to stop and rest now and then."

Old Spot recalled the day when he followed Twinkleheels to the village and back.

"I don't see what you're grumbling about," he remarked. "I've run behind your little buggy and you kept snapping the miles off as if it was the easiest thing you did."

[Pg 17]

"*You'd* grumble yourself if you were cheated of a taste of oats that you were expecting," said Twinkleheels.

"I never eat oats," Spot retorted.

"Then you don't know what's good," Twinkleheels declared. "After getting your mouth all made up for oats, it's pretty disappointing to chew on nothing more appetizing than an iron bit."

Old dog Spot snickered.

Twinkleheels stamped one of his tiny feet upon the barn floor.

"It will never happen again!" he cried.

Old Spot gave him a sharp look.

"I hope," he said, "you don't intend to hurt Johnnie Green. I hope you aren't planning to run away with him."

"No!" Twinkleheels assured him. "I'm too well trained to run away, though I must say Johnnie Green deserves a spill. But of course I wouldn't do such a thing as to tip the buggy over. What I have in mind is something quite different. It's harmless." And that was all he would say.

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He took Johnnie Green to the ball game. And he brought him home again. He was so well-behaved that when Johnnie turned him into the pasture, afterward, Johnnie never dreamed that Twinkleheels could be planning any mischief.

The next morning Johnnie took Twinkleheels' halter and the four-quart measure with three big handfuls of oats in it. Then he walked up the lane to the pasture, leaned over the bars and whistled.

Though there was no pony in sight, Twinkleheels soon came strolling out from behind a clump of bushes. He took his own time in picking his way down the hillside, as though he might be glad to keep Johnnie Green waiting.

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"Come on! Come on!" Johnnie called. "Come and get your oats!" And he shook the measure before him.

To his great surprise, Twinkleheels didn't come running up and reach out to get the oats. Instead, he stopped short, with his feet planted squarely under him, as if he didn't intend to budge. Johnnie Green took one step towards him. And then Twinkleheels whisked around and ran. He shook his head and kicked up his heels. And something very like a laugh came floating back to

Johnnie Green's ears.

Johnnie followed him all over the pasture. And when the dinner horn sounded at the farmhouse Johnnie had to go home without Twinkleheels.

The afternoon was half gone before Twinkleheels let his young master put the halter on him. By that time Johnnie Green had learned something that he never forgot.

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Never again did he cheat Twinkleheels with an empty measure. He knew that Twinkleheels expected fair play, just as much as the boys with whom Johnnie played ball, over the hill.

[Pg 21]

V FLYING FEET

When July brought hot, dry weather and the grass became short in the pasture Johnnie Green no longer turned Twinkleheels out to graze. He kept him in a stall in the barn and fed him oats and hay three times a day.

It was at that time that Johnnie Green made an interesting discovery. A row of currant bushes grew behind the barn. And one day when Johnnie stripped off a few stems of the red fruit and stood in the back door of the barn, eating it, he happened to snap a currant at Twinkleheels.

The result both pleased and surprised him. When the currant struck Twinkleheels he laid back his ears, dropped his head, and let fly with both hind feet.

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Johnnie Green promptly forgot that he had intended to eat those currants. One by one he threw them at Twinkleheels. It made no difference where they hit the pony. Whenever he felt one, he kicked. Sometimes he kicked only the air; sometimes his feet crashed against the side of his stall.

Throwing currants at Twinkleheels became one of Johnnie Green's favorite sports. Whenever boys from neighboring farms came to play with him, Johnnie was sure to entertain them by taking them out behind the barn to show them how high he could make Twinkleheels kick.

As a mark of special favor, Johnnie would sometimes let his friends flick a few currants at his pet. And sometimes they would even pelt the old horse Ebenezer, who stood in the stall next to Twinkleheels. There was little fun in that, however. Ebenezer refused to kick. The first currant generally brought him out of a doze, with a start. But after that he wouldn't budge, except perhaps to turn his head and look with a bored expression at the boys in the doorway.

[Pg 23]

Johnnie Green and his friends were not alone in enjoying this sport. Old dog Spot joined them when he could. Unfortunately, when Twinkleheels kicked, old Spot always wanted to bark. And Johnnie didn't like noise at such times. He and his friends were always amazingly quiet when they were engaged in currant throwing behind the barn. And they were always peering about as if they didn't want to be caught there.

"Run out to the barn and tell your father that dinner's almost ready," Mrs. Green said to Johnnie one day.

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"He's not in the barn," Johnnie answered.

"Are you sure?" Mrs. Green asked. "I thought I heard him hammering out there a few minutes ago."

"No!" Johnnie murmured. "Father's in the hayfield."

"That's queer," said his mother. "I was sure I heard hammering.... Well, blow the horn, then! I don't want dinner to spoil."

So Johnnie Green blew several loud blasts on the horn. And he was glad to do it, for it gave him an excuse for having a red face.

He threw no more currants at Twinkleheels that day. Somehow it didn't seem just the wisest thing to do. But the next morning he made Twinkleheels kick a few times. "It's really good for him," Johnnie tried to make himself believe. "He needs the exercise."

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[Pg 26]

VI PICKING CURRANTS

If there was one sort of work that Johnnie Green had always disliked more than another, it was

picking currants. Of course he didn't object to strolling up to a currant bush and taking a few currants for his own use, on the spot. What he hated was having to fill pail after pail full of currants for his mother to make jelly and jam.

It was queer. He certainly liked jelly. And he liked jam. But he had never found currant picking anything but dull. He always groaned aloud when his mother told him that the currants were ripe enough to be picked. And he always had a dozen reasons why he couldn't pick them just then. [Pg 27]

Now, however, currant picking didn't seem such a bore to Johnnie. When his mother announced at the supper table one evening that Johnnie would have to begin picking currants right after breakfast the next morning he didn't make a single objection. And he had intended to go swimming the next day!

"I think—" Johnnie remarked—"I think some of the boys would like to help. After supper I'll ride Twinkleheels over the hill and ask the boys to pick currants with me in the morning."

Farmer Green and his wife listened to this speech with amazement.

"I never heard of a boy that liked to pick currants," said Johnnie's father. "Still, you can try if you want to." [Pg 28]

"Come home before it gets dark!" said his mother.

"Look out for that pony!" Farmer Green exclaimed. "I don't know what's come over him. I stepped into his stall to-day and he kicked at me. I've never known him to do that before."

Johnnie Green promised to be careful, and to come home early. Having important business on his hands, he hurried away without a second piece of cake. And that was a most unusual oversight on his part.

In the morning three boys appeared before Johnnie had finished his breakfast. Though they had already eaten theirs, they accepted Mrs. Green's invitation to sit at the table and have some griddlecakes and maple syrup. "If you boys are going to pick currants you'll want a good, big breakfast," she told them. [Pg 29]

There was no doubt that they agreed with her.

"If they're as lively at picking as they are at eating you'll have all the currants in the kitchen by noon," Farmer Green remarked to his wife with a laugh as the boys trooped off toward the barn with their tin pails.

A few minutes later a noise as of terrific pounding reached the ears of Farmer Green as he stood talking with his wife.

"What's that?" he muttered. "It sounds as if the barn was falling down."

He ran out of doors. The racket came from the barn. There was no doubt of that. And he could hear Spot barking.

Farmer Green hurried across the yard. Somehow he guessed that Johnnie and his helpers had a hand in whatever was going on. Farmer Green did not run toward the broad front door of the barn. Instead he circled to the back of the barn and peeped around the corner. What he saw caused him no great surprise. [Pg 30]

VII CAUGHT!

There was a good deal of giggling and loud whispering at the back door of the barn. It ceased instantly when Farmer Green cried "Stop that!" in a loud voice.

Johnnie Green and his friends looked startled—and sheepish, too. They had been throwing currants through the doorway, to make Twinkleheels kick.

The boys fell back a few steps as Farmer Green joined them.

"Was Twinkleheels doing all that kicking?" Farmer Green asked Johnnie. "It was so loud that I thought the barn would fall down any minute." [Pg 31]

"We threw a few currants at old Ebenezer," Johnnie Green explained somewhat faintly.

His father gave him a sharp look.

"Huh!" Farmer Green grunted. "*He* didn't kick—did he?"

"N-no! N-no, sir!"

"Did you throw at the bays?" Johnnie's father demanded.

"Only once or twice!" Johnnie confessed.

"Once or twice is too much," his father said sternly. "Don't meddle with the bays. And don't tease the pony, either. You've chosen the surest way to make a kicker of him."

"How long," Farmer Green demanded, "has this business been going on?"

"Only a short time!" Johnnie assured him. "I never threw any currants until they began to ripen."



[Pg 33]

Twinkleheels Tells Spot About Kicking. (Page 34)

"I suppose," said his father, "you never threw any until there were some to throw."

Johnnie Green appeared much more cheerful when he heard that remark of his father's. Although Farmer Green's face wore a frown, and his voice sounded most severe, Johnnie could tell that he was laughing, *inside*.

"Come on!" Johnnie cried to his friends. "Let's get to work. If we hustle we can get the currants all picked by noon."

So long as Farmer Green stood there they all picked as busily as squirrels. But after he left them the boys found so much to talk about that they made little progress. It was a temptation, too, to flick a currant into the face of another picker and see him jump.

Finally the neighbors' boys announced that they were going swimming. "Come along over to the swimming hole!" they urged Johnnie. "You can finish picking these currants later." [Pg 34]

But Johnnie Green said that he couldn't leave his work. Though his helpers left him, he stayed behind the barn and picked currants. Somehow he felt that he ought to be on his best behavior—at least for a day or two.

"It was a pity that Johnnie Green's father caught him," old dog Spot remarked to Twinkleheels after Farmer Green put an end to the boys' fun. "I enjoyed the sport," said Spot.

"If you're so fond of kicking, just step up behind me!" Twinkleheels urged him.

"No, thank you!" said Spot. "I don't want one of my ribs cracked."

"Ho!" cried Twinkleheels. "Who said anything about *one* rib? I'll crack all of them for you if you'll come where I can reach you." [Pg 35]

Spot moved further away.

"Do you mean that?" he asked in a somewhat frightened voice.

"Certainly not!" said Twinkleheels.

"You kicked at Farmer Green yesterday," Spot reminded him.

"Yes! But I never touched him," Twinkleheels answered. "I only wanted to see him jump." [Pg 36]

VIII A GOOD SLEEPER

Twinkleheels' stall was an end one. Next to him stood the old horse Ebenezer; and beyond Ebenezer were the two bays. Twinkleheels often wished that he might have someone for his nearest neighbor that was a bit livelier than Ebenezer. When the old horse stayed in the barn he spent a great deal of his time with his eyes half shut, dozing. If Twinkleheels spoke to him, Ebenezer seldom heard him the first time. And often Ebenezer even fell asleep while Twinkleheels was talking to him.

Twinkleheels always moved smartly. Ebenezer took his time about everything. When anybody backed him between the thills of a wagon he was as slow as Timothy Turtle and no more graceful. And while people harnessed him he usually sighed heavily now and then, because he dreaded being hurried along the road. [Pg 37]

Before Twinkleheels came to the farm to live, Johnnie Green had thought it quite a lark to drive or ride Ebenezer. Now, however, Johnnie paid little heed to the old horse. And, to tell the truth, Ebenezer was content to be let alone.

"This boy must have found it a bit poky, riding you," Twinkleheels remarked to Ebenezer one day when he noticed that the old horse was actually wide-awake.

"He found me safe," Ebenezer replied. "That's why Farmer Green let Johnnie ride me."

"It's a wonder you didn't fall asleep and tumble down and throw Johnnie," Twinkleheels said. [Pg 38]

"I'm very sure-footed," Ebenezer told him proudly. "Of course, a person will step on a loose stone now and then. But I've never really stumbled in my whole life."

"How old are you?" Twinkleheels inquired.

"I'm twenty," Ebenezer told him.

"And you've never stumbled in all that time!" Twinkleheels cried. "How did you manage to stay on your feet like that?"

"By minding my business," Ebenezer explained with a shrewd glance at his young companion. The answer—and the look—were both lost on Twinkleheels.

"I heard Farmer Green tell Johnnie to turn me and you into the pasture to-morrow," he told Ebenezer. [Pg 39]

"Don't you mean 'you and me'?" Ebenezer suggested mildly.

"Well, it's the same thing, isn't it?" Twinkleheels retorted.

"There's a slight difference," said Ebenezer. "I see there are some things you've never been taught. Colts were different when I was a yearling."

Twinkleheels looked almost angry.

"I hope," he snapped, "you don't take me for a yearling. Just because I'm a pony—and small—you needn't think I'm an infant. Why, I'm five years old!"

Old Ebenezer yawned. It seemed as if he was always sleepy.

"You've a good deal to learn," he said. "When I was five I thought I knew everything.... I still find that I can learn something almost every day."

Twinkleheels sniffed. "I don't believe you've picked up much that was new to-day," he said. [Pg 40] "You've been dozing every moment, except when you ate your meals."

To his great disgust, Ebenezer gave a sort of snort. He no longer heard anything that his youthful neighbor said.

"I'll see that he learns something in the pasture to-morrow," Twinkleheels promised himself. "I'll get him to race with me—if he can stay awake long enough. And I'll show him such a burst of speed as he's never seen in all his twenty years." [Pg 41]

IX THE RACE

When Johnnie Green turned Twinkleheels and the old horse Ebenezer into the pasture, the first thing they did was to drop down on the grass and enjoy a good roll.

There was a vast difference in their actions. Twinkleheels was as spry as a squirrel. He rolled from one side to the other and back again, jumped up and shook himself like old dog Spot, almost before Ebenezer had picked out a nice, smooth place to roll on.

Ebenezer bent his legs beneath him in a gingerly fashion and sank with something like a sigh upon the green, grassy carpet. It was only with a great effort that he managed at last to roll all the way over; and then he couldn't roll back again. Clumsily he flung his fore feet in front of himself and by a mighty heave pulled himself off the ground. [Pg 42]

"Slow, isn't he?" Twinkleheels remarked to the Muley Cow, who was chewing her cud and looking on.

"He doesn't get up the right way," said the Muley Cow. "When rising from the ground one should stand on his hind feet first."

"I don't agree with you," Twinkleheels told her. "Ebenezer uses the right method. But he's terribly poky about it. You can almost hear his joints creak."

The Muley Cow was somewhat offended.

"I've known Ebenezer a great many years," she snapped. "I don't care to hear a young upstart—a mere pony—make fun of him." [Pg 43]

Twinkleheels moved away. He felt the least bit uncomfortable.

"I don't like your young friend," said the Muley Cow to the old horse Ebenezer. "He hasn't a proper respect for old people like you and me."

"Oh, he's not a bad sort," Ebenezer replied. "He has a good many things to learn. Perhaps he'll be wiser by night. I shouldn't worry about him, if I were you."

The Muley Cow told Ebenezer that he was entirely too good-natured. And they went their own ways, grazing and rambling aimlessly about the pasture.

Now and then, during the day, they chanced to meet. And always the Muley Cow asked Ebenezer if Twinkleheels had learned anything more. [Pg 44]

"Not yet!" Ebenezer said, each time. "The day's not done till sunset."

Well, late in the afternoon Johnnie Green came slowly up the lane and stood by the pasture bars and whistled. Twinkleheels and Ebenezer happened to be together when they heard that cheerful chirp.

"I'll race you to the bars!" Twinkleheels exclaimed.

"Agreed!" cried Ebenezer. The word was no sooner out of his mouth than he started with a rush. He was three jumps ahead of Twinkleheels before that surprised pony began to run.

"I'll soon catch the old horse," Twinkleheels thought. "He can't last long. I'll pass him before we reach the brook."

Before Twinkleheels came to the brook Ebenezer had crossed it in one mighty leap. He was pounding along with a powerful stride over the firm turf of the pasture. And behind him Twinkleheels' pattering feet struggled to shorten the distance between them. [Pg 45]

To Twinkleheels' dismay he saw that Ebenezer was steadily drawing away from him. Although Twinkleheels ran his fastest, Ebenezer reached the bars six good lengths ahead of him. [Pg 46]

X EBENEZER'S RECORD

The old horse Ebenezer had beaten Twinkleheels in the race to the bars. While Johnnie Green slipped their halters on them, and they munched the oats that he gave them, neither of them spoke. Johnnie mounted Ebenezer bareback; and leading Twinkleheels, he turned down the lane.

"You're not as slow as I thought you were," Twinkleheels said to Ebenezer as they drew near the barn. "And somehow I couldn't seem to get to running smoothly. I'd like to race you again. I think I could beat you next time." [Pg 47]

"Perhaps you could," said Ebenezer. "I don't often run nowadays. But I did running enough when I was younger. I used to race at the county fair, every fall."

"Did you ever win a race at the fair?" Twinkleheels inquired.

"Yes!" Ebenezer answered. "Yes! I can remember winning a race now and then."

"He never lost a race in his whole life!" cried the Muley Cow, who was walking just ahead of

them. Ebenezer used to be known as the fastest horse in these parts. He had a record."

Twinkleheels gasped. "A record!" he exclaimed. "What's that?"

"I don't know, exactly," said the Muley Cow. "I never saw Ebenezer's. But it must have been a fine one, for Farmer Green was always talking about it." [Pg 48]

"A horse's record," Ebenezer explained, "is the fastest time he ever makes in a race." Then he added, to Twinkleheels: "You and I will have another race the next time we're in the pasture together."

Twinkleheels gave him an odd look. Somehow Ebenezer did not seem just a poky old farm horse, as Twinkleheels had always regarded him. For the first time Twinkleheels noticed that Ebenezer had many good points. There wasn't a single bunch on his legs. And his muscles showed plainly as they rippled on his lean frame beneath a coat that was both short and fine.

"I don't believe I could beat you if we raced a hundred times," Twinkleheels blurted.

"Of course you couldn't!" the Muley Cow interrupted again. [Pg 49]

"Oh, you might," Ebenezer said. "There'd be no harm in trying, anyhow. Racing with me would be good practice for you, even if I did win. If you're going to have a race, don't look for an easy one! Choose a hard one. That's the kind that will make you do your best."

Twinkleheels thanked him.

"It's very kind of Ebenezer to race with you," the Muley Cow bellowed. "You ought to feel honored."

"I do," said Twinkleheels. "But please don't talk so loud! I don't want everybody on the farm laughing at me because I lost a race."

The Muley Cow went into the barn grumbling.

"That pony is a young upstart," she muttered. "The idea of his telling me not to talk so loud! Ebenezer is altogether too pleasant to him." [Pg 50]

Old Ebenezer continued to be agreeable to Twinkleheels. They often raced in the pasture, later. And though Twinkleheels never won once, he enjoyed the sport.

And he never called Ebenezer "poky" again. [Pg 51]

XI BRIGHT AND BROAD

Farmer Green had a yoke of oxen called Bright and Broad. They were huge, slow-moving fellows, as different from Johnnie Green's pony, Twinkleheels, as any pair could be. They never frisked about in the pasture. They never ran, nor jumped, nor kicked. They seldom even trotted. And when they did move faster than a walk they lurched into a queer, shambling swing.

The first time Twinkleheels saw them travelling at that gait he couldn't help giggling.

"They look as if their legs were going to knock down all the fence posts on the farm," he exclaimed. [Pg 52]

Despite their clumsiness, Bright and Broad did many a day's hard work in an honest fashion for Farmer Green. Of course he never drove them to the village when he was in a hurry. But whenever there was a heavy load to pull he depended on Bright and Broad to help him. If the pair of bays couldn't haul a wagon out of a mud hole Farmer Green would call on Bright and Broad. And when they lunged forward the wagon just had to move—or something broke.

Though Twinkleheels admired their strength, he didn't care much for Bright and Broad's company. They were too sober to suit him. They were more than likely to stand and chew their cud and look out upon the world with vacant stares and say nothing. [Pg 53]

"I used to think Ebenezer was a slow old horse," Twinkleheels remarked to the bays on a winter's day as they stood in the barn. "I thought I could beat him easily until he showed me that I was mistaken. But I can certainly beat Bright and Broad. They're the slowest pair I ever saw."

The bays glanced at each other.

"You can't always tell by a person's looks what he can do," one of them remarked. "Let Bright and Broad choose the race course and they'd leave you behind."

"Nonsense!" Twinkleheels cried. "They couldn't beat anybody unless it's Timothy Turtle, who lives over in Black Creek."

The bays winked at each other over the low partition that separated their stalls.

"Maybe you'll find out that you're wrong," they told Twinkleheels. "Maybe you'll learn that Bright and Broad are faster than you think they are. We've known Farmer Green to take them and leave us here in the barn—when he was in a hurry to go somewhere, too." [Pg 54]

"Ha! ha!" Twinkleheels laughed. "You're joking. You're trying to fool me."

"Oh, no!" the bays cried. "Ask Bright and Broad themselves."

So Twinkleheels spoke to Bright and Broad the very next day, when he met them in the barnyard. While he told them what the bays had said to him they chewed their cud and listened with a dreamy look in their great, mild eyes.

Twinkleheels paused and waited for them to speak. But they said nothing. Their jaws moved steadily as they chewed; but they said never a word. [Pg 55]

"Can't you answer when you're spoken to?" Twinkleheels cried at last.

"Yes!" they said, speaking as one—for they always did everything together. "Yes! But you haven't asked us a question."

"Is this true—what the bays told me about you?" he snapped.

"We can't deny it," they chanted.

Twinkleheels was never more surprised. [Pg 56]

XII NO SCHOOL TO-DAY

And that night it snowed. In the morning, when Johnnie Green crawled from his bed and looked out of the window he could scarcely see the barn. A driving white veil flickered across the farmyard. The wind howled. The blinds rattled. Even the whole house shook now and then as a mighty blast rocked it.

It was just the sort of weather to suit Johnnie Green.

"There won't be any school to-day!" he cried. And he hurried into his clothes much faster than he usually did.



Twinkleheels Talks to the Oxen. (Page 54)

Though Johnnie Green was eager to get out of doors, most of those that lived in the barn were quite content to stay there during such a storm. The old horse Ebenezer especially looked pleased.

"This will be a fine day to doze," he remarked to the pony, Twinkleheels. "Farmer Green won't

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make me do any work in this weather. The roads must be blocked with drifts already."

Twinkleheels moved restlessly in his stall.

"I don't want to stand here with nothing to do," he grumbled. "If I could sleep in the daytime, as you do, perhaps I wouldn't mind. And if I were like the Muley Cow maybe I could pass the hours away by chewing a cud. Bright and Broad can do that, too," said Twinkleheels.

"Oh! Farmer Green will have the oxen out as soon as the storm slackens," old Ebenezer told him. "And no doubt you'll get outside as soon as they do, for Johnnie Green will want you to play with him in the snow or I don't know anything about boys." [Pg 58]

"Good!" Twinkleheels exclaimed. "I hope he'll take me out. It would be great fun to toss him into a snowdrift.... But I don't see what Farmer Green wants of Bright and Broad on a day like this. They'll be slower than ever if the roads are choked with snow."

The old horse Ebenezer smiled to himself as he shut his eyes for another cat nap before breakfast. He thought that Twinkleheels would learn a thing or two, a little later.

Johnnie Green was the first one to plough his way out to the barn that morning. He burst into the barn and stamped the snow off his feet. And Twinkleheels stamped, too, because he wanted something to eat. [Pg 59]

Johnnie fed Twinkleheels and Ebenezer and the bays. He was shaking some hay; in front of the Muley Cow (who belonged to him) when his father arrived.

"The worst storm of the winter!" Farmer Green observed. "We'll have work enough after this, breaking the roads out."

"I'll help," Johnnie said. "I'll take Twinkleheels and work hard."

"I suppose," said his father, "we ought to get the road to the schoolhouse cleared first."

"Oh, no!" cried Johnnie. "Let's leave that till the last."

"If we left it for you and Twinkleheels to clear, you wouldn't get back to school before spring," Farmer Green declared. [Pg 60]

Twinkleheels had been listening eagerly to all this.

"Now, I wonder what Farmer Green means by that," he muttered. "I hope he doesn't think I can't get through the drifts as well as anybody. I can certainly make my way through the snow better than those clumsy old oxen, Bright and Broad." [Pg 61]

XIII FUN AND GRUMBLES

It stopped snowing at last and the weather turned clear and crisp. The sun came out. And so did Johnnie Green, riding on Twinkleheels. He did not get far from the barn, however. Where the snow wasn't piled in drifts high above Twinkleheels' head it reached up on his fat sides. He floundered about the farmyard for a time. And, falling once, he dumped Johnnie Green neatly into a drift, head first.

The spill didn't hurt Johnnie in the least. But snow went up the inside of his sleeves, and down his neck, and into his eyes and ears and even his mouth. [Pg 62]

He jumped up spluttering. And Twinkleheels jumped at the same time. He tried to run. But he could make little headway in the snow, and Johnnie caught his bridle rein and stopped him.

"You'd better put that pony back in the barn," Farmer Green called from the woodshed door. "After I yoke up Bright and Broad and break out the drive to the road you can ride Twinkleheels again. He might cut himself in this heavy going."

Twinkleheels sniffed as he heard what Farmer Green said.

"This is all nonsense," he grumbled to the old horse Ebenezer as Johnnie led him into his stall. "Farmer Green doesn't know what he's talking about. I'm a hundred times sprier than Bright. And I'm a hundred times sprier than Broad. That makes me two hundred times sprier than both of them. It's silly to put me in my stall and take them out. They won't be able to move. They'll get stuck fast in a drift, and goodness knows how we'll ever haul them out." [Pg 63]

"I shouldn't worry about the oxen if I were you," Ebenezer replied. "It seems to me Bright and Broad are old enough and big enough to look out for themselves."

"That's just the trouble!" cried Twinkleheels. "They're too old and they're too big. They're terribly heavy. If they were stuck in a drift I don't believe you and the bays could pull them out—not even

if I helped you."

Ebenezer sighed deeply.

"I'm going to sleep now," he told Twinkleheels.

Soon Twinkleheels could hear Farmer Green shouting "Gee!" and "Haw!"

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"There!" Twinkleheels called to the two bays. "There's Farmer Green talking to Bright and Broad. I hope they're not helpless already."

The bays snickered.

"Don't laugh!" Twinkleheels begged them. "It's not funny. It would be awful for them to spend the rest of the winter in a snow bank."

"We weren't laughing at Bright and Broad," the bays explained.

Twinkleheels tried to look at them; but old Ebenezer's bony back was in the way.

"I don't know what amuses you, then," he snapped.

"Maybe you'll find out later," the bays told him.

And he did. When Johnnie Green next led him out of the barn Twinkleheels discovered that a broad path had been opened from the barn to the highway. And a little distance up the road Farmer Green and Bright and Broad were battling with the drifts.

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XIV STUCK IN A DRIFT

Outside the barn, in the snow-covered farmyard, Johnnie Green mounted Twinkleheels and rode him beyond the gate, where he could watch the fun up the road.

Yoked to a sort of plough, Bright and Broad, the oxen, tore through the piled-up snow and threw it to either side in great ridges.

"I'm going ahead to the crossroads," Johnnie Green told his father.

That plan pleased Twinkleheels. Before Farmer Green could speak he plunged out of the broken road and wallowed in snow up to his neck. He was going to show Bright and Broad that he could get to the crossroads before they did.

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"Don't do that!" Farmer Green shouted to Johnnie.

He was too late. The words were scarcely out of his mouth before Twinkleheels was reaching desperately for a footing. His toes found nothing firm beneath them—nothing but yielding snow. And his frantic struggles only made him sink the deeper.

Johnnie Green slid off Twinkleheels' back and tried to help him.

He could do nothing. And he turned a somewhat frightened face to his father.

"We're stuck!" he faltered. "I can get out; but Twinkleheels can't. Do you suppose Bright and Broad could pull him out?"

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"They could yank twenty of him back on the road," Farmer Green declared. "But we don't need them. I'll dig the pony out."

Seizing a shovel, Johnnie's father slowly dug his way to Twinkleheels, who had stopped struggling and was waiting glumly for help. In a few minutes more he had scrambled out of the ditch and gained the road again, through the path that Farmer Green made for him.

"Now," said Farmer Green, "don't leave the broken road. This pony's too small to handle himself in these drifts. I wouldn't try to put even a full-sized horse through them. It takes oxen in such going. They're slow; but they're strong and sure-footed, too. And they can go where horses couldn't do anything but flounder and probably cut themselves with their own feet. That's why we always use Bright and Broad to gather sap in the sugar-bush."

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"I'll put Twinkleheels in the barn again," said Johnnie. "Then I'll come back on foot and help you."

So he rode Twinkleheels back and hitched him in his stall once more.

Old Ebenezer woke up as Twinkleheels pattered over the barn floor.

"What!" cried the old horse. "Back again so soon? Did you race with Bright and Broad?"

"The snow's too deep for a good race," Twinkleheels told him.

"Bright and Broad don't mind the snow much, do they?" Ebenezer asked.

"Oh, no!" Twinkleheels answered. "They're getting on slowly, up the road. They take their time, of course."

"Couldn't they beat you to the crossroads if you raced with them to-day?"

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"Well—yes!" Twinkleheels admitted. And he gave Ebenezer a sharp look. "Who's been talking with you?" he demanded.

"Nobody!" said Ebenezer. "I've been dozing here all the morning."

"Not even a sparrow?" Twinkleheels asked.

"No! Nobody has said a word to me."

"That's strange," Twinkleheels mused. "I was almost sure a little bird had told you something."

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XV STEPPING HIGH

Twinkleheels was feeling quite important. Something that Farmer Green had said to Johnnie in his hearing made him hold his head higher than he usually did—and step higher, too.

"You seem very proud to-day," the old horse Ebenezer said to him. "When Johnnie Green led you back from the watering trough I noticed that you were strutting in quite a lordly fashion. You made me think of Turkey Proudfoot."

"Ah!" Twinkleheels exclaimed. "I've just heard some news. I'm going to the blacksmith's to-day to be shod. You know I've never worn any shoes. And I've always wanted some."

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Old Ebenezer smiled down at Twinkleheels.

"Well, well!" he said. "I don't blame you for feeling a bit proud. I remember the day I got my first set of shoes. You see, I was young once myself."

The old horse seemed to feel like talking. Twinkleheels was glad of that, for he felt that he *must* chatter about the new shoes he was going to have—or burst.

"Of course," said Twinkleheels, "most folks are shod before they're as old as I am. But I've spent a good deal of my time in the pasture and I don't often travel over hard roads.... How old were you when you first visited the blacksmith's shop?"

Ebenezer shut his eyes for a moment or two. And Twinkleheels feared he was going to sleep. But he was only thinking hard.

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"I must have been about two months old," Ebenezer declared.

"Goodness!" cried Twinkleheels. "I didn't suppose colts of that age ever wore shoes."

"They don't," Ebenezer replied. "You didn't ask me when I had my first shoes. You asked me when I first visited a smithy. At the age of two months I jogged alongside my mother when she went to be shod. I must have been about three years old when the blacksmith nailed my first shoes to my feet."

Twinkleheels gave Ebenezer an uneasy glance.

"Does it hurt," he asked, "when they drive the nails into your hoofs?"

"Oh, no!" Ebenezer assured him. "To be sure, a careless blacksmith could prick you. But Farmer Green always takes us to the best one he can find."

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"To tell the truth," Twinkleheels confessed, "I'm a bit timid about going to the smithy. I don't know what to do when I get there. I don't know which foot to hold up first."

"Don't worry about that!" said old Ebenezer. "They'll tell you everything. Just pay attention and obey orders and you won't have any trouble."

Twinkleheels thanked Ebenezer.

"It's pleasant," he said, "to have a kind, wise horse like you in the next stall. There are some matters that I shouldn't care to mention to the bays. They're almost sure to laugh at me if I ask them a question."

The old horse Ebenezer nodded his head.

"They're young and somewhat flighty," he admitted. "You know, they even ran away last summer. You'll be better off! if you don't seek their advice about things."

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"I wish you were going to the blacksmith's shop with me," Twinkleheels told Ebenezer wistfully. "Somehow I'd feel better about being shod if you were there."

"I shouldn't be surprised if I went along with you," Ebenezer told him. "I cast a shoe yesterday. And the three that I have left are well worn."

And sure enough! Inside a half hour Farmer Green harnessed Ebenezer to an open buggy. Johnnie Green brought Twinkleheels out of the barn by his halter, led him up behind the buggy, and jumped in and sat beside his father.

Then they started off.

"We're going to the village to get some new shoes," Twinkleheels called to old dog Spot. "Why don't you come, too?" [Pg 76]

"I would," Spot barked, "but I always follow right behind the buggy; and you've gone and taken my place." [Pg 77]

XVI THE BLACKSMITH'S SHOP

Twinkleheels trotted proudly behind the buggy in which the old horse Ebenezer was pulling Johnnie Green and his father towards the village. Once Twinkleheels would have chafed at having to suit his pace to Ebenezer's. He would have thought Ebenezer's gait too slow. But ever since Ebenezer won a race with him in the pasture Twinkleheels had thought more highly of his elderly friend. He knew that if Ebenezer chose to take his time it wasn't because he couldn't have hurried had he cared to.

They reached the blacksmith shop at last, where Ebenezer and Twinkleheels were to get new shoes. Having been there many a time before, Ebenezer was quite calm. Twinkleheels, however, was somewhat uneasy. He had never visited a smithy. And he looked with wide, staring eyes at the low, dingy building. On the threshold he drew back, as he sniffed odors that were strange to him. [Pg 78]

Johnnie Green spoke to him and urged him forward.

"I'll wait for Ebenezer," Twinkleheels decided. And he wouldn't budge until Farmer Green led the old horse into the smithy. Then Twinkleheels followed.

"Goodness!" he cried to Ebenezer a moment later. "This place is afire. Let's get outside at once!" He had caught sight of a sort of flaming table against one of the walls.

"Don't be alarmed!" Ebenezer said. "That's only the forge. That's where the blacksmith heats the shoes red hot, so he can pound them into the proper shape to fit the feet." [Pg 79]

Twinkleheels had trembled with fear. And now he had scarcely recovered from his fright when a terrible clanging clatter startled him. He snorted and pulled back. He would have run out of the smithy had not Johnnie Green tied his halter rope to a ring in the wall.

"Don't do that!" the old horse Ebenezer called to him. "There's no danger. That noise is nothing to be afraid of. It's only the smith pounding a horseshoe on his anvil."

Twinkleheels looked relieved—and just a bit sheepish.

"I'm glad you came with me," he said, "I'd have been frightened if you—." A queer hiss made Twinkleheels forget what he was saying. "What's that?" he cried. "Is there a goose hidden somewhere in the smithy?" [Pg 80]

"No! The smith put the hot shoe into a tub of water, to cool," Ebenezer explained. He couldn't help smiling a bit.

A scrubby looking white mare who was being shod turned her head and stared at Ebenezer and his small companion.

"It's easy to see," she exclaimed, "that that colt has never been in a smithy before. In my opinion he ought to be at home with his mother. This is no place for children."

Before Ebenezer could answer her, Twinkleheels himself spoke up sharply.

"I don't know who you are, madam," he snapped. "But I'd like you to understand that I'm no colt. I'm a pony. And I must say that I think you owe me an apology." [Pg 81]

XVII A WHITE VIXEN

The white mare that the blacksmith was shoeing looked much surprised when Twinkleheels told her he was not a colt.

"Well, well!" she cried. "A pony, eh? Who'd have thought it? Anyhow, you've never been shod in your life. I can tell that by the way you act." And she cackled in a most unpleasant fashion.

"What shall I say to her?" Twinkleheels asked Ebenezer. "She hasn't apologized to me."

"Pay no attention to her," the old horse advised him in an undertone. "She's a low bred person. I've often met her on the road and she always wants to stop and talk. But I hurry past her."

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"What are you saying?" the white mare asked in a sour tone. "Are you gossiping about me?" She laid her ears back and showed her yellow teeth.

"You see why I don't care to have anything to do with her," Ebenezer muttered to Twinkleheels.

"I'd kick you if I could reach you—and that pony too," the white mare squealed. "I'm a lady—I am. And you'd better be careful what you say about me."

Because she was angry and couldn't kick either Twinkleheels or Ebenezer she felt that she must kick somebody. So she let fly at the blacksmith, who had just stepped up beside her.

Strangely enough, instead of jumping away from her, the blacksmith crowded as close to her as he could get. He knew what he was about. He hadn't shod horses for twenty years without learning something about them. He stood so near the white mare that her kick hadn't room to get going well. And the blacksmith wasn't hurt. He was merely disgusted.

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"I declare," he said to Farmer Green, "this mare is the meanest critter that comes into my shop. She doesn't know anything except how to kick and bite. That old horse of yours is worth a dozen like her. I'd give more for his tail than I would for her."

Ebenezer tried to look unconcerned. The blacksmith had a hearty voice. Nobody in the shop could help hearing what he said. And Twinkleheels made up his mind that the blacksmith shouldn't have any reason to speak of him as he had of the silly white mare.

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Twinkleheels watched sharply as the blacksmith captured a hind foot of the white mare's and held it between his knees. Then he began to nail on the shoe.

One thing puzzled Twinkleheels. Every time the blacksmith struck a blow with his hammer he gave a funny grunt. Twinkleheels nudged Ebenezer with his nose.

"Do you hear that?" he asked. "Is he related to Grunty Pig—a sort of cousin, perhaps?"

The old horse Ebenezer gasped.

"Bless you, no!" he exclaimed.

"Then why does he grunt?"

"Oh, that's just a way he has," said Ebenezer. "Some blacksmiths think it's stylish to grunt like that."

By this time the white mare seemed to be in a pleasanter frame of mind. At least, she let the blacksmith nail a shoe on each of her feet without making any objection—except to switch her tail now and then. And just as the blacksmith finished with her a man came and led her away.

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"Now," said the blacksmith, "I'm ready to shoe the pony. And if he's as clever as he looks I shan't have a bit of trouble with him."

When he heard that, Twinkleheels made up his mind that he would behave his best, no matter what happened.

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XVIII NEW SHOES

The blacksmith patted Twinkleheels and picked up one of his forefeet. Then the blacksmith took a chisel and began to pare away at the horny hoof. Twinkleheels looked over the blacksmith's shoulder. And what he saw gave him a start.

"Great green grass!" he cried to Ebenezer. "Is he going to cut my foot off?"

"No, indeed!" Ebenezer answered. "The blacksmith always pares my feet a bit when he fits new shoes. He may have to trim yours a good deal, because you've never worn shoes and your feet have never been pared."

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In spite of his resolve to be on his best behavior, Twinkleheels had been tempted to pull his foot from between the blacksmith's knees. And if Ebenezer hadn't explained that he was in no danger of losing a foot there's no knowing what might have happened. Twinkleheels breathed a sigh of relief; and he made not the slightest trouble for the blacksmith, but waited patiently while his little shoes were being hammered into shape.

When the blacksmith took the first one that he made and held it by a pair of pincers against Twinkleheels' hoof there was a quick sizzling. And a horrid smoke arose. Twinkleheels snorted with fear.

"Easy! Easy, boy!" the blacksmith said to him. And old Ebenezer made haste to explain that there was no danger.

"Won't my foot be burned?" Twinkleheels faltered.

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"Not enough to do any harm," said Ebenezer. "You don't feel any pain, do you?"

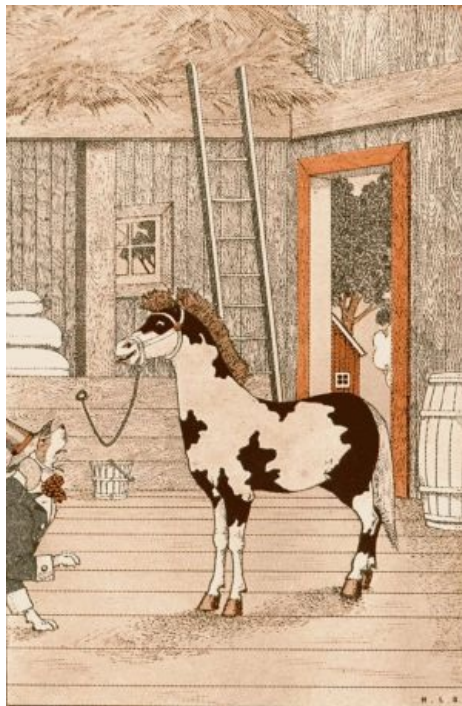
"No!"

"The shoe's not very hot; and the blacksmith wouldn't hold it against your hoof long enough to harm you," Ebenezer assured him.

Twinkleheels wriggled his nose.

"I must say I don't care for this smoke," he remarked.

"It's no pleasanter for the blacksmith than for you," Ebenezer reminded him. "If I were you I shouldn't complain. Just see what pretty shoes the blacksmith has made for you!"



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Spot Tells Twinkleheels He is Slow. (Page 90)

"They're the nicest I've ever seen," Twinkleheels said. "After I wear them a while and they get shiny on the bottoms, how they will twinkle in the sunlight when I'm trotting along the road!"

In a few minutes more the blacksmith had nailed all of Twinkleheels' four shoes to his feet. It seemed to Twinkleheels that he could never wait until Ebenezer was shod. He was in a great hurry to get out on the street and show his new shoes to the people in the village.

At last Ebenezer too was fitted out with new shoes. As Farmer Green led him out of the shop, and Johnnie Green led Twinkleheels, a queer look came over Twinkleheels' face.

"My goodness!" he cried. "My feet feel very strange."

"What's the matter?" Ebenezer asked him. "Surely your new shoes don't hurt you!"

"No! They don't hurt, exactly," Twinkleheels replied. "But my feet feel terribly heavy. These iron shoes aren't as comfortable to wear as I had expected."

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"You'll soon get used to them," said Ebenezer. "In a short time you won't know you're wearing shoes—unless you happen to lose one."

Twinkleheels had supposed that when they reached Farmer Green's place everybody that he met would speak about his new shoes. But nobody paid any attention to them. Everybody seemed to stare at Johnnie Green as soon as he jumped out of the buggy.

"Why are folks looking at Johnnie?" Twinkleheels asked old dog Spot, who had come running up to meet him.

"Haven't you noticed?" Spot cried. "Didn't you *hear* anything when Johnnie began to walk on the barn floor?"

"No!"

"Well, you're slow to-day," said Spot. "Johnnie Green's wearing some new shoes that his father bought for him in the village. It's queer that you didn't notice them.... Aren't they nice and squeaky?"

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XIX THRASHING TIME

The pair of bays were feeling grumpy. Thrashing time had come. And they knew that they would have to spend long hours in the tread mill out in the field, where the oats were stacked. They grumbled a good deal, as they stood in their stalls.

"I don't see why you object to turning the tread mill for Farmer Green," Twinkleheels said to them. "I'd like to try my hand at it—or my feet, I should say. I should think it would be great fun. Yesterday I saw Johnnie Green and some other boys walking on the tread mill and making it go. They seemed to find it a lark."

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"Huh!" said one of the bays. "They'd *hate* it if they had to walk up hill hour after hour and never get anywhere. The noise of the tread mill and the thrashing machine is most unpleasant."

"It wouldn't be so bad," said his mate, "if Farmer Green would let us eat all we wanted of the oats that we help thrash. But he doesn't give us even an extra measure."

"We'd run away," remarked the bay that had spoken first, "except that running away wouldn't do us any good. All our running would only make the mill turn faster."

"We can't even stand still if we want to," his mate muttered. "There's a bar that crosses the top of the tread mill, right in front of us. Farmer Green ties us to it. There we are! When he unlocks the tread mill we have to start walking or we'd slide down backwards; and unless our halters broke, our necks would get a terrible stretching."

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The old horse Ebenezer, who stood between Twinkleheels and the bays and couldn't miss hearing what was said, looked scornfully at the two grumblers.

"Think of the oats Farmer Green gives you every day!" he exclaimed. "I should suppose you'd be glad to earn some of them."

"The trouble is—" said the bay nearest him—"the trouble is, we have to earn not only the oats that we eat, but those that Farmer Green feeds to you and that pony."

"I've helped thrash many a time," Ebenezer declared.

"Well—I dare say you have," the bay admitted. "But what about that pony? I never saw him do any work. I venture to say that he's never done a day's work in his life."

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Twinkleheels couldn't help feeling uncomfortable.

"I'd be glad to help with the thrashing," he said. "But what can I do if Farmer Green won't *let* me?"

The bays talked to each other in an undertone. Then one of them said: "You might refuse to eat any more oats."

Somehow Twinkleheels did not care for that suggestion; and he said as much.

"What's the matter with hay?" the other bay asked him. "If you have plenty of hay you ought to be satisfied."

"No!" Twinkleheels told him. "I can't get along on hay alone. Johnnie Green expects me to be spry and playful. And you know very well that a horse or a pony can't be spirited without plenty of oats."

Once more the bays muttered to each other in a low tone. And at last they told Twinkleheels that he was greedy.

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"You don't need any oats," they said. "You have more to eat than we do, all the time."

Twinkleheels was astonished.

"I don't know what you mean," he cried. "Johnnie Green feeds me only oats and hay; and that's no more than you have."

"We don't agree with you," the bays retorted. "You have meal. And you must eat a lot of it, too."

"Never!" Twinkleheels declared. "Why do you say that?"

"You have a mealy nose," they explained. "It always looks as if you'd just eaten out of the meal bin."

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XX A MEALY NOSE

It was true, as the bays had said, that Twinkleheels had a mealy nose. So perhaps it was only natural that they should think he had meal to eat when they didn't. And he hastened to explain matters to them.

"My mealy nose," he said, "doesn't mean that I've been eating meal. My nose happens to be the color of meal. All the brushing in the world wouldn't change it."

The bay pair snorted. It was plain that they didn't believe what Twinkleheels told them.

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"You can ask Ebenezer," Twinkleheels advised them. "He'll tell you that what I say is true."

"We don't want to ask him," said the bays. "Ask him yourself."

"Don't be rude to this pony!" the old horse Ebenezer chided them. "If you had spent more of your time off the farm, and seen more horses, you'd know that mealy noses like his are not uncommon. In my younger days, when I went to the county fair every fall, I used to meet a great many horses. And I learned then that mealy noses are by no means rare."

The bays stamped impatiently.

"We don't care to argue about this pony's nose," said the one whose stall was next to Ebenezer's. "His nose is a small matter. We do insist, however, that he help with the thrashing. Maybe you've done your share of the thrashing in times past. But this pony's a loafer. We want to see him work."

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Poor Twinkleheels felt most unhappy. "Haven't I said I'd like to walk on the tread mill?" Twinkleheels cried. "But Farmer Green would never allow me to."

"We don't care to argue with you," said the bay who stood beside Ebenezer. "You are altogether too small for us to bother with any longer."

"If I'm so small, then I shouldn't think what few oats I eat would annoy you," said Twinkleheels.

"Oh, your appetite's big enough!" cried the other bay. "You're always eating something. Yesterday we saw Johnnie Green ride you up to the kitchen window where Mrs. Green was peeling potatoes. And she gave you a potato. And you ate it."

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"People are always feeding you," echoed the bay's bay mate.

"How can I help that?" Twinkleheels asked them.

"You could decline with thanks," they explained.

Twinkleheels shook his head.

"It wouldn't be polite," he said. "Besides, I like potatoes and apples and carrots even more than oats and hay."

Just then Farmer Green came into the barn and backed the bays out of their stalls. They both sighed.

"We're in for it now," they told Ebenezer. "He's going to take us out and make us walk on the tread mill."

A little later Johnnie Green saddled Twinkleheels and followed his father and the bays to the field where the thrashing machine stood beside several stacks of oats.

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Before Johnnie and Twinkleheels arrived on the scene a great clatter warned them that thrashing had already begun. Hurrying up, they found the bays toiling up the endless path that slid always downward beneath them.

The bays were a glum appearing pair. Twinkleheels tried to speak to them, but the thrashing machine made such a racket that they couldn't hear him whinny; and he couldn't catch their

eyes. They wouldn't look at him.

A stream of oats was pouring out of the grain spout. Johnnie Green dismounted. Picking up a handful of the newly thrashed oats, he fed Twinkleheels.

The bays looked at Twinkleheels then. They looked at him with envy.

"That pony has begun to eat up the new oats already," said one of the bays to his mate. "I hoped he'd have the decency to decline them when Johnnie Green offered him a taste." [Pg 102]

"Not he!" groaned his mate. "That pony even hinted to Johnnie Green that he'd like some oats. I saw him hint, out of the corner of my eye."

"Ah!" cried the other bay. "Twinkleheels not only has a mealy nose. He's mealy-mouthed as well!" [Pg 103]

XXI JUMPING MUD PUDDLES

Johnnie Green had often ridden bareback. Lacking a pony, before Twinkleheels came to the farm to live, he had ridden the old horse Ebenezer back and forth between the barn and the pasture, guiding him by his halter rope.

Ebenezer was a steady old fellow. He never jumped nor shied. He preferred walking to any other gait. Without a whip Johnnie Green had hard work to make him trot. It took a great deal of drumming against his ribs by Johnnie Green's heels to induce him to hurry his steps. [Pg 104]

Twinkleheels was different from Ebenezer. He was frisky. Yet Johnnie sometimes put a bridle on him and rode him without a saddle. Especially after the circus men came along and pasted posters on the barn Johnnie Green liked to ride bareback. He had a notion that some day he would learn to ride standing on Twinkleheels' back.

Farmer Green, however, did not approve of that plan. When Johnnie mentioned it to him he said "No!" in a most decided fashion. "That pony would be sure to throw you," he told Johnnie.

"I could try standing on Ebenezer first," Johnnie suggested. "His back is broader. And he certainly wouldn't object."

Somehow his father didn't care for that scheme either. "We don't want any broken legs around here," he declared, "nor necks, either. Broken necks are very slow to mend." [Pg 105]

So Johnnie Green had to give up his plan, for the time being. He made up his mind, however, that when he was grown up he would learn to ride standing up—and turn somersaults in the air off a horse's back. But now he knew that he must content himself with less risky sports.

Something happened one day that caused Johnnie to admit to himself the wisdom of his father's advice. He was riding Twinkleheels along the road, bareback, after a heavy rain. And the first thing that Johnnie knew he was sitting almost on Twinkleheels' tail. Instead of splashing through a big mud puddle, Twinkleheels had taken it into his head to jump it.

His leap took his rider unawares. Johnnie had slipped to the rear as if Twinkleheels' back had been greased. And if he hadn't clutched the bridle reins he would have dropped off into the very middle of the puddle. [Pg 106]

After that Johnnie kept a sharp eye out for mud puddles. When he knew that Twinkleheels was going to jump one he had no trouble in sticking to his seat.

Soon Johnnie decided once more that it would be easy to learn to be a circus rider. Certainly it was no trick at all to sit on Twinkleheels' bare back so long as he knew what the pony was going to do. It was as easy as walking a tight rope. And that was a feat that Johnnie Green had already mastered.

He only broke a collar bone learning that. [Pg 107]

XXII THE CIRCUS RIDER

The next afternoon, when Johnnie went to the pasture with old dog Spot to drive the cows home, he climbed a tree—not that climbing a tree helped in any way to get the cows into the lane!

Just for the moment Johnnie was a sailor—in his mind's eye. He went up aloft to watch for a desert island, where pirate gold was hidden. And circus riding would never have entered his head had not Twinkleheels, who had been grazing in the pasture, come and stood under the tree into which his young master had climbed.

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When Johnnie came down out of the rigging of his ship—or when he slipped down through the branches of the tree—Twinkleheels stood just beneath the lowest limb. Johnnie Green swung off it, hung by his arms for a moment, and then dropped astride of Twinkleheels' back.

It may have been because old dog Spot let out a delighted yelp at that instant. It may have been that Twinkleheels hadn't expected Johnnie to mount him in that unusual fashion. Anyhow, he gave one jump and then stood up on his hind legs.

Johnnie Green didn't even have time to grab at Twinkleheels' mane. He slid off Twinkleheels' back and struck the ground with a dull thud.

For a few moments he lay there, unable to breathe. Then he struggled to his feet and ran round and round in a circle, doubled up and groaning. There was a strange, strange feeling in the pit of his stomach. He feared he would never be able to get his breath again.

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Twinkleheels paid no heed to him, but nibbled at choice clumps of grass and clover quite as if nothing had happened.

Old dog Spot, however, seemed to think that Johnnie Green was having a good time and enjoying himself thoroughly. Spot capered about him, barking furiously.

"Don't!" Johnnie managed to gasp. "Don't laugh, Spot! I'm terribly hurt. I don't believe I'll ever get well again."

But in a few moments he succeeded in drawing a long, deep breath. He lay down upon the ground then and drew another and another and another. Already he began to feel better. And soon he stood up gingerly and felt of himself all over. To his great surprise, nothing seemed to be broken except his suspenders.

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Old Spot came up and put his paws against Johnnie and barked.

"Let's have a good romp!" he begged. Or at least that was what Johnnie understood him to say.

"No, Spot!" Johnnie answered. "Not now! I don't feel like running. You wouldn't, either, if you had just had the breath knocked out of you."

Then Johnnie went soberly about the business of driving the cows home. At last he got them all started down the lane, put up the bars, and followed them.

As he reached the barn Johnnie looked up curiously at the pictures of circus riders in pink tights gayly disporting themselves on the backs of dappled gray horses.

[Pg 111]

"Humph!" he muttered. "I don't believe that's half the fun I always thought it was."

[Pg 112]

XXIII GOING FISHING

Twinkleheels never had any great liking for whips. Johnnie Green kept a long one in the socket beside the dashboard of his little red-wheeled buggy. And he had a shorter one that he carried in his hand when he rode on Twinkleheels' back.

Whenever Twinkleheels drew the buggy he seemed always to keep at least one eye on the snapper of the whip, for Twinkleheels could see behind him easily.

He rarely needed urging. On the contrary, Johnnie Green often had to pull quite hard upon the reins to keep him from going too fast. And when a lazy mood came over Twinkleheels the merest shake of the whip in its socket was enough to send him forward with a jump.

[Pg 113]

When Johnnie rode him he never had to give Twinkleheels a cut with his riding whip. Just a touch of it was all that was needed—if Twinkleheels happened to be a bit headstrong and didn't quite agree with Johnnie as to where they should go.

Well, on a certain summer's day, after school was out, Johnnie Green decided to go fishing in Black Creek. His mother made him a luncheon to take with him, he dug some anglegorms in the garden for bait, and the hired man consented to let him take a long pole that he used himself when he fished in the river.

Then Johnnie backed Twinkleheels out of his stall and threw the saddle on him. Farmer Green chanced to be in the barn at the time.

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"You don't intend to ride the pony and carry all those things, do you?" he asked Johnnie. "It seems

to me that a basket, a tin can, a fish pole and a boy would ride much better in the buggy than horseback."

Now, Johnnie Green did not always agree with his father. He expected to meet some other boys at the creek. They were going on horseback. And Johnnie wanted to do likewise. Besides, there might be a horseback race. And he didn't want to miss that.

"I don't want to bother with the buggy," he told his father. "This way's easier. I shan't have any trouble carrying these things."

"Suit yourself, then!" said Farmer Green. "I think my way's better. But if you want to try yours, go ahead! You won't be half as comfortable, though, as you would be if you went in the buggy. And you know you may have some fish to carry, too, when you come home."

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"Yes!" said Johnnie. "But I won't have any lunch."

Being determined to ride on Twinkleheels' back, he buckled the saddle girth and slipped on the pony's bridle. Then he led him out of the barn, clutched the basket, the tin pail, and the reins as well in one hand, mounted, and then reached out his other hand for the pole, which he had leaned against the side of the barn.

"I'll show Father that he's mistaken," he said to himself.

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XXIV BOYS WILL BE BOYS

Up to the moment that Johnnie Green reached out a hand for the long fish pole Twinkleheels had behaved like a little gentleman. He saw that something unusual was afoot. And feeling quite sure that it was some kind of fun, he was glad that he was going to have a part in it.

"I hope Johnnie has some oats for me in that basket," he thought.

Just then Johnnie caught up the pole.

"Oats and corn!" Twinkleheels exclaimed. "What's he going to do with that enormous whip?" He was so startled that he jumped sideways, and Johnnie Green all but lost his seat on Twinkleheels' back. As he lurched in the saddle he brought the fish pole smartly against Twinkleheels' head.

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"I won't stand this," Twinkleheels decided. "I don't see what Johnnie is thinking of, to beat me over the head. I've certainly done nothing to deserve such treatment." Thereupon he dashed madly across the farmyard and made for the orchard.

"Whoa!" cried Johnnie Green.

"Whoa!" cried his father. "Stop him! Hang to him! Don't let him run!"

"He'll have to drop that great whip if he expects me to mind," Twinkleheels said with a snort.

Johnnie's hands were so full of a number of things that he could do little more than stick to the saddle.

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"Drop that junk that you're carrying!" Farmer Green shouted.

"Why doesn't he tell Johnnie to drop that long whip?" Twinkleheels muttered to himself.

What Farmer Green said was of no account, anyhow, for Johnnie was so busy that he didn't hear a word of his father's advice.

Twinkleheels had reached the orchard and already was tearing in and out among the trees. The tin pail containing Johnnie's bait slipped from his grasp and clattered upon the ground, causing Twinkleheels to run all the faster. The fish pole struck the tree trunks right and left. One end of it lodged for an instant in a branch, while the other end nearly swept Johnnie off Twinkleheels' back. Still Johnnie Green clung to it and to his lunch basket as well.

[Pg 119]

"Wh-wh-whoa! Wh-wh-whoa!" Jolted as he was, he couldn't get a whole word out of his mouth at a time. He could only jerk a word out piecemeal.

If the fish pole hadn't at last snapped off short, leaving only the butt of it in Johnnie's hand, there's no telling when Twinkleheels would have stopped.

Finding himself with only a bit of the pole left in his hand, Johnnie gave it a fling, slipped an arm through the handle of his lunch basket, and set to pulling mightily on the bridle reins.

"There!" said Twinkleheels. "There goes that whip. I'm glad I broke it. Now I'll let Johnnie pull me down to a walk—but not too quickly."

With Johnnie Green tugging steadily, Twinkleheels changed from a run to a canter, from a canter

Then Johnnie turned him around and rode slowly back to the barn. He jumped down, unbuckled the girth, and drew off Twinkleheels' saddle.

"What's the matter?" his father asked him. "You haven't given up going fishing—have you?"

"No!" Johnnie answered. "I'm going to harness Twinkleheels to the buggy. And I'll cut a pole at the creek."

His father said nothing more. But he smiled a little to himself when Johnnie wasn't looking his way.

"Boys will be boys," Farmer Green remarked after Johnnie had gone.

"Yes!" the hired man agreed. "And ponies will be ponies."

They may have been talking in riddles.

Anyhow, they seemed to understand each other.

THE END

Transcriber's Notes

1. Punctuation has been brought into conformity with contemporary standards.
2. Frontispiece illustration relocated to after title page.
3. Typographic errors corrected in original:
p. 18 Twinkleheels's to Twinkleheels' ("took Twinkleheels' halter")
p. 58 Johnne to Johnnie ("for Johnnie Green")

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE TALE OF PONY TWINKLEHEELS ***

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