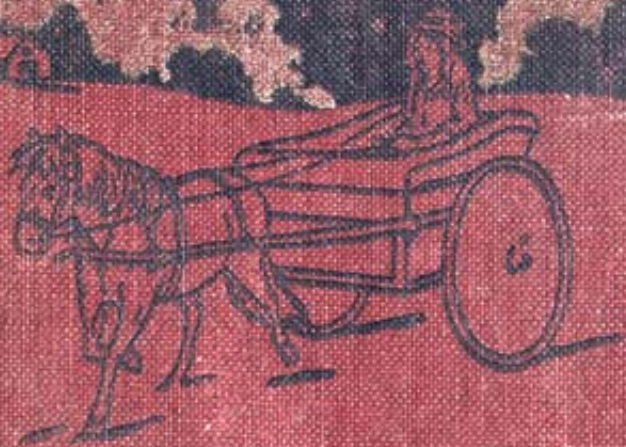


# MARIGOLD'S PONY



A BEDTIME STORY

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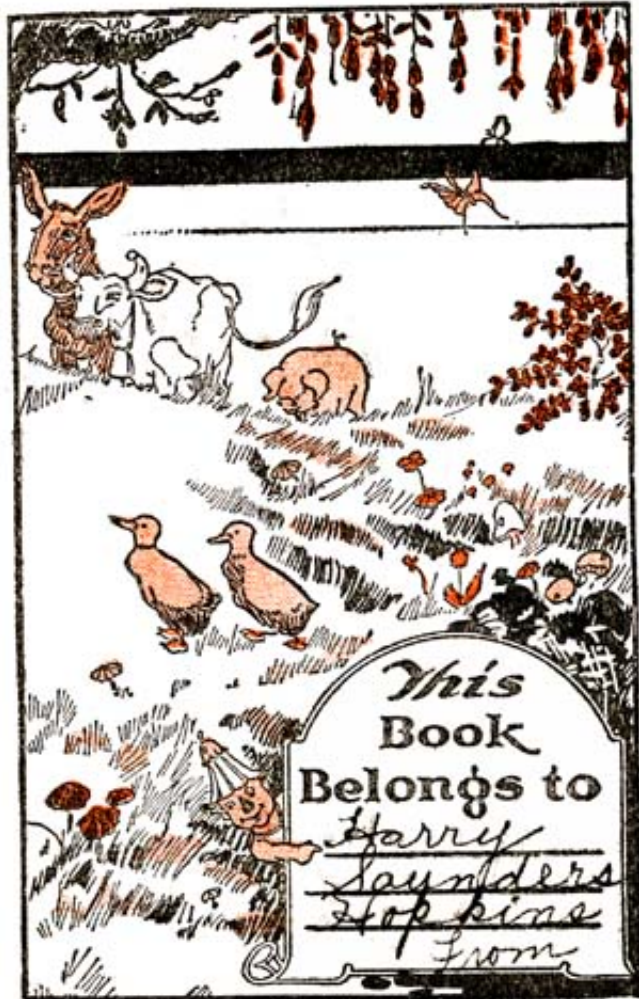
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BEDTIME STORIES

# Marigold's Pony

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Now, Molly had been standing around the bend of the house all this time. As soon as she heard her name mentioned she pricked up her long ears and listened.

"That means his wife has a little sense if he hasn't," she murmured to herself. "Of course, if he were kind to me I would work for him cheerfully. But he's a mean man, he never gives me a kind word.

"Yes," she went on, with a snap of her jaw, "I was pulling his wagon up the hill as hard as I could and he hit me with a strong stick because I wasn't going fast enough. I tried to kick back good and hard, but he got out of my way too soon. Of course, I was angry. Anybody would be.

"He didn't care if the load was too heavy even for two mules to draw—and all the thanks I ever get is a growl and a beating." Then, wheeling around, Molly said, "I believe I'll go and have a little

visit with Baby Pony. It always makes me feel better to talk over my troubles with her. She is such a wise little thing."

Baby Pony was a dapple grey pony who lived on the next farm to Molly. Molly trotted briskly to the fence that separated the two farms. Raising her head high in the air, she gave three loud "Hee-haws."

Baby Pony had been grazing at the other end of the pasture, but as soon as she heard Molly's call she came running up to their usual meeting place.

"Hello, Molly! Why, what is the matter? You look as if you had lost your last turnip."

Then Molly told her friend what Farmer Cobb had just said about her and how unhappy she was.

"Maybe if you didn't act quite so stubborn and balky he might be kinder to you," said Baby Pony.

for a few minutes. Then, tossing her long mane and throwing her hind legs in the air, she gave a loud neigh that could be heard all over the place.

"I have an idea!" she cried. "A wonderful idea!"

"What is it?" eagerly asked the mule.

"Listen—" began the pony.

"I'm all ears," answered Molly.

"That's the truth," laughed Baby Pony, "and those long ears of yours will stand up when you hear my idea."

"Please, hurry," begged the impatient mule.

"Well, yesterday," said the pony, coming close up to Molly and almost whispering in her ears, "I drew my Marigold in the new pony cart to buy vegetables from 'The Little White Lady'."

"Who is 'The Little White Lady'?" asked Molly, opening her eyes.

"She is a beautiful little white-haired lady who lives in a little white house. People call her 'The Little White Lady.' She looks so much like a lily of the valley. Her real name is Mrs. Lily. So I like to call her 'Lily of the Valley.'"

"How interesting!" said Molly, with a whisk of her short tail. "But what has that to do with me?"

"Now, this little lady raises her own vegetables to sell and I heard her say to Marigold, 'Yes, I have an old white cart in my barn, but I can't afford a horse to draw it. I'm sorry, because I could sell so many more vegetables if I had some way of delivering them.'"

"'O, Little White Lady,' cried Marigold jumping up and down and clapping her hands, 'you must buy a little white horse! If you sat in your own little white cart, drawn by a little white horse, you would look so sweet every one would want to buy



her vegetables from you! And she gave The Little White Lady a tight hug."

"But what has that to do with me?" Molly jerked her head.

"Don't you see? I just happened to think that Mrs. Lily might use a mule instead of a horse and as I know a white mule, why——"

"Whew! How I would love—love to draw that dear little lady's cart. I would be as gentle as Marigold's wee lamb and work as hard as a beaver. But, how silly even to talk of such a thing! How could I ever get away from this place?"

"Let's think it over," said the dapple pony cheerfully. "Maybe we can arrange some way. Come again tomorrow at this time and we will see what we can do."

"You always cheer me up, Baby Pony," said Molly, rubbing her face against the pony's neck. "I'll be back tomorrow. I

feel as if something good is going to happen to me at last."

All the next day Molly worked hard for Farmer Cobb. Although he was as ill-natured as ever, somehow Molly didn't seem to mind it so much. She kept repeating to herself, "White Lady—white house—white cart—white mule," until she began to feel as if she were hitched to the cart already.

Farmer Cobb remarked, "How strange! That mule is rolling her eyes and talking to herself all the livelong day!"

Next day Molly trotted over to the fence to meet Baby Pony. This time she did not need to give her three "Hee-haws!" for her friend, the pony, was already there waiting for her.

With sparkling eyes Baby Pony exclaimed "Molly, I have the most wonderful plan. My own mother couldn't have thought of a better one. I thought and

thought and all of a sudden it came to me." Baby Pony pranced up and down like a pony in the circus.

"Tell me, quick," begged Molly, swinging her tail.

"Next time," began the wise dapple pony, "that Farmer Cobb drives you past the Little White Lady's house, you must fall down and pretend you are very ill. I know the kind hearted lady will come running out to see what she can do for you. She is never so happy as when she is helping those in trouble. Bless her heart!

"Farmer Cobb will scold you harshly for falling down and maybe strike you. Then, rub your head against Mrs. Lily and try—try with all your might, in your mule language, to tell her how much you want to stay with her. It might work."

"It might," repeated Molly, with a shake of her head. "I'll try it, at any rate.

Maybe, I'll only get an extra beating from my master for my trouble, but I'll see what I can do. I'll let you know what happens. Good-bye, dear, kind, smart Baby Pony. There never was another pony like you."

Now, Molly had always been friendly with the farm animals, and when she was grazing about they all flocked about her as if she were their protector. But today, when they saw her wildly kicking her legs in the air, they were so surprised and frightened that they scattered in every direction. Little Fido was the only one that didn't seem afraid. He thought Molly was performing a trick by standing on her fore legs, so he immediately stood up on his hind feet to show he could do tricks, too.

Early next morning they set off. The tricky little mule limped all along the way. Farmer Cobb was so angry that by the time they came to Mrs Lily's cottage he was ready to sell his mule for a capful of beans.

And then—and then, right in front of "The Little White Lady's" gate, Molly's legs gave way under her and down she went in a heap. Mr. Cobb sprang off his wagon. He waved his arms wildly in the air and

stormed. "I thought mules were supposed to have strong legs and were sure-footed. Pooh! The lazy thing!" he said, as he kicked Molly with his heels.

Then it was just as Baby Pony, Molly's friend, said it would be. Mrs. Lily saw Molly fall and came running out from the front yard, where she had been planting some flowers.

"Oh!" she cried in her sweet voice. "The poor thing!"

"Humph!" growled the man. "Poor thing, indeed!"

"The Little White Lady" knelt right down beside the mule. She patted and stroked its head. She wanted to find out what was the trouble. Molly placed her head fondly in Mrs. Lily's lap. She licked her soft white hand. She whinnied. She pleaded in her most coaxing manner:

"Please, dear 'Little White Lady,' please

—please keep me with you always. I'll work hard—I'll draw your white cart—I'll help you sell more vegetables than any one for miles around. Please, please, Lily of the Valley Lady!" With this she raised her head and gazed lovingly into Mrs. Lily's eyes.

But, as soon as the farmer saw her look up, he cried, jumping back into his wagon, "She's better, all right. Just had one of her balky streaks—that's all. Gid-dap, there! Thank you, ma'am!"

He gave such a jerk to poor Molly's bit that she sprang up in a hurry. With a long, sad look that meant good-bye to her new friend, she jogged sadly along. But she heard Mrs. Lily murmur, as they drove away:

"A white mule! And my cart is white, too—wouldn't it be splendid?"

Molly was eager to tell Baby Pony what had happened, but she had no chance that evening. Although Baby Pony's plan had

not yet worked, Molly was still hopeful that some time it would.

Now, as luck would have it, the very next day Farmer Cobb decided to drive Molly to the village again. When she heard this glad news she frisked about and brayed so loudly that an old black hen called out:

"Cut-cut-dah-cut! That mule must be losing her senses for sure. She makes more noise than all the turkeys, ducks, hens, chickens, geese and roosters in the poultry yard put together."

As they started for the village Farmer Cobb grunted, with a crack of his whip:

"See that you behave yourself today—you hard-headed, hard-skinned animal. No more actions like those of yesterday! I have almost lost patience with you."

In spite of her master's warning, just as on the day before, the sly mule began to limp. She limped all the way until she came to the little white cottage. And ther.

—right in front of the gate, Molly's legs gave way under her and down she went all in a heap.

Farmer Cobb jumped from his wagon. He was furious. Whack—down came the whip on her back, but she did not move.

“A nice how-do-you-do!” he stormed. “What's the matter with you, anyway? You lazy, stubborn beast!”

And now, just as on the day before, “The Little White Lady” came running out. Her big eyes opened wide as she exclaimed: “Why, it's the white mule again! How strange—how very strange!”

“Yes,” snapped Mr. Cobb, pulling Molly's ear. “It's a little too strange. It's all balkiness and I'm about through with her moods and tantrums.”

“Oh, don't hurt her,” begged Molly's new friend, with tears in her eyes. Then,

suddenly her face lit up. “Don't you want her any more?”

“No, I don't want her any more,” he replied, sourly. “I'd sell her mighty cheap.”

“Then sell her to me,” gasped the lady, clasping her hands. “I really want a mule.”

“How much will you give?”

“I can spare only twenty dollars.”

The white mule lay perfectly still, almost afraid to breathe.

“Take her then. She's yours. I'm glad to get rid of her.”

“Thank you, Mr. Cobb.”

“Don't thank me. You'll soon be sorry that you bought this lazy, clumsy, stupid balky mule. I'll send her over tomorrow morning. You can pay for her then.”

It didn't take Molly long to get better after hearing these words. The minute her

master took the reins she sprang to her feet. As they drove away she turned her head around and gave Mrs. Lily a broad wink that in donkey language said, "Don't worry—you'll soon find out that you have the best of the bargain, after all."

The glad mule galloped toward the village at so brisk a pace that the farmer scratched his head and muttered:

"I don't understand it. She never let her heels fly like this before. She is a queer one."

Late that afternoon Molly rushed over to tell Baby Pony the glad news. The dapple pony was waiting for her at the fence.

"How happy you look," cried Baby Pony. "You came flying over here like an air-ship. You have something good to tell me. What is it?"

For answer Molly jumped up in the air, rolled around on the grass and almost

stood on her head. Baby Pony laughed outright at the funny sight. Then Molly quieted down and told her the whole story of what had happened, and ended by saying:

"I have you to thank for it all, my friend. If it were not for you I would have spent the rest of my days with that mean man."

The following morning Christopher Columbus led Molly to her new home. She would have liked to have bade Mrs. Cobb good-bye, but she didn't have a chance. As Molly left the place she turned around for a last look.

"Yes," she mused, "I've had good food and shelter here, but an animal needs more than that—he needs a little kindness, too. I'd rather have less corn and fewer kicks."

"No wonder Baby Pony is so happy and content with her lot," said Molly to herself,

was delighted. She patted the mule on the back, saying:

"I surely thought we had enough vegetables to last all day. Tomorrow we'll take a bigger load. Who says a mule doesn't know how to sell vegetables?"

They did such a good business that before many weeks had passed Mrs. Lily remarked: "Now I have enough money to buy a horse, but I wouldn't give up my Molly for any horse."

"I wouldn't give you up, either," Molly answered, tucking her head under her mistress' arm.

One day, as they were merrily jogging along, whom should they meet but Farmer Cobb. When he saw them he threw back his head and roared:

"Ho, ho! When did the circus come to town?"

"This isn't a circus," pleasantly replied

The Little White Lady, with a toss of her head. "This is a vegetable business."

Molly stood stock still. She began to tremble from head to foot. Her hair bristled and stood on end. For the first time in many a day she felt balky and stubborn.

"Steady, Molly, steady! Nobody is going to hurt you. You belong to me now," Mrs. Lily whispered into Molly's ear.

"It must be a nice vegetable business!" the man jeered, "with that mule to draw you from farm to farm. I suppose you cover about a mile a day?"

"No, indeed. We trot along briskly. The only time we lose is when the children stop Molly to give her an apple or turnip. They all know her now and wait for her every day."

"You must have a better whip than I had to make that slow-poke go."

"The only whip I use is soft words.

Molly more than repays anything I do for her by her hard work. Really, Mr. Cobb, I can't ever thank you enough for selling her to me."

"It's certainly queer," puzzled the farmer, chewing a wisp of hay. "I can't make it out. I couldn't get a lick of work out of her without beating her first. She did nothing but snarl and bite, and snap and kick at me. My wife used to say, 'Cobb, maybe Molly would work better if she liked you more.' But animals never like me."

"It's easy to make animals care for you," put in The Little White Lady. "All you have to do is to be fond of them. If you are good to them no work is too much for them. They more than pay for their board and shelter."

"Maybe you're right, woman," Farmer Cobb said, shaking his head. "Molly certainly looks and acts like a different animal."

By this time Molly felt that she had nothing to fear from Farmer Cobb and she began to feel sorry for the man whom no animal loved.

But think of her fright when she heard him say:

"Do you want to sell her back to me? I'd like to see what I can do with her now."

"No—no—no!" cried The Little White Lady, throwing her arms around Molly's neck. "I wouldn't sell her for anything. She is my friend. But, Mr. Cobb, if you try my way with animals I promise you, you won't be sorry."

"I'll think it over," stated Mr. Cobb, and he gave Molly a playful pull of the tail that seemed to say, "I guess it was my fault after all, old girl. Let's make up."

Molly licked his hands and in her softest voice replied:

"Hee-haw!"



"Strange things happen," Molly mused. "Who would have believed that I ever would have licked Farmer Cobb's hand? This is a good old world, after all. Hee-haw!"

The summer went by and The Little White Lady and the little white mule were as happy as could be until one day Molly got into trouble. She forgot her manners. She forgot all she owed her mistress. She forgot everything she should have remembered. I'll tell you about it. ✓

One afternoon they drove up to a farm, quite a distance from their cottage. When Mrs. Dodkins, the farmer's wife, heard the tinkling of their bell she came running out to meet them.

"Dear Mrs. Lily," she cried, "I'm so glad to see you. Come right in this minute. Don't say 'no.' I'm home all alone; my family went to the county fair. You are going to spend the afternoon with me."

"I believe I shall," laughed Mrs. Lily. "I have sold all my vegetables and just feel like having a nice, quiet visit with you—but what shall I do with Molly?"

"We'll unhitch her and let her browse in the pasture to her heart's content. She won't get into mischief, will she?"

"Oh, no, Molly isn't that kind of a mule. She is a well behaved lady." Then, patting Molly's head, she asked: "You will stay right here, won't you, dear?"

And for answer Molly shook her head, "Yes."

"Then let's wander up to the house. I'll show you something," said the goat.

"All right," agreed Molly. ✓

Now, Robert's mother was going to have a tea-party that afternoon. The tea-table in the dining-room was filled with good things to eat. Billie, the rascal, led Molly up to the open dining-room window and said:

"Take a look."

"Isn't it chuckful of goodies?" remarked Molly, smacking her lips.

"Let's climb through the window so we can have a better look," said Billie.

All the folks were busy getting ready for the party, so no one saw Molly and Billie creep through the window and into the dining-room. They both stood and stared, and their mouths began to water.

"It looks good," said the goat.

"Looks good," repeated the mule.

"I suppose it tastes good, too," said the goat.

"I'm sure it does," agreed the mule.

"I would like to take a taste," said the goat.

"So would I," replied the mule.

"I will if you will," remarked the goat.

"I will if you will," repeated the mule.

"Baa-baa! You're afraid," sniffed the goat.

"Hee-haw! You're afraid yourself," brayed the mule.

"Who's a coward?" demanded Billie.

"You are," promptly answered Molly.

Then, no one knows who started the fight, but before you could say "Parallelo-pipedon" there was a flying of legs, a kicking, a biting, a bellowing and a bleating as was never heard before on that or any other farm. And, alas, in the midst of the terrible fray one end of the snowy

the path. When she espied Molly she cried:

"Oh, there you are. I've been looking all over for you. You bad girl, where have you been?"

"Where has she been? Look and see," answered Robert's mother.

When The Little White Lady saw the mischief that had been done she sadly shook her head.

"This is terrible. I'm sorry. But, come, let us see what we can do to mend matters."

Then they all pitched in and before very long the mess was cleared up and another tea-party was ready.

"Are you angry at me?" Billie said to Molly as the hired man led them from the house.

"Are you angry at me?" Molly asked in return.

"I asked you first," retorted the goat. "Do you want to make up?"

"I do if you do," answered the mule.

Then the two mischievous animals rubbed their heads together as a sign of peace.

"We didn't have so much fun after all," stated Billie.

"No. Next time I'll know better. I'll stay where I belong."

"I hope you will," said Billie.

Then John tied Billie in a dark corner in the stable as a punishment and The Little White Lady hitched Molly to her cart and drove home.

Mrs. Lily was very much disappointed in Molly. All that evening and all the next day she treated her as if she were a stranger. Of course she gave Molly the same care as usual, but not a single cheery word, nor a single love pat.

"Maybe she'll sell me back to Farmer Cobb," mused Molly, as she pawed the ground and walked restlessly about, "and it would serve me right. How I wish I could do something to show her how sorry I am. If the cottage would only catch fire that I might save her! I would gladly risk my life for her, but I'm afraid nothing like that is going to happen."

Just then who should come trotting up the road but Baby Pony. She was drawing Marigold in her pony cart. They were coming to buy some vegetables from the Lily of the Valley.

Marigold climbed out of the pony cart and hitched Baby Pony to the post next to where Molly was standing. The mule began at once to tell Baby Pony all that had happened since they last met and she finished with:

"Now, tell me, dear Baby Pony, what can I do to make up for my behavior of yesterday?"

Baby Pony was lost in thought.

Now, Mrs. Lily was not at home when Marigold called, but the little girl decided to wait for her and amused herself by picking wild flowers along the roadside. She was so busy that she did not hear a large automobile that was coming along the path.

The man at the wheel did not see Marigold either—but Molly, the mule, did.

The machine was almost upon the child when, with a jump, Molly bolted over the fence, seized Marigold's dress in her mouth, and dragged her out of the way.

In the car were The Little White Lady and some of her friends. They quickly stopped the machine and jumped out. When they saw Marigold was not hurt they turned to Molly.

How they hugged and patted her.

How Mrs. Lily cried over her.

Baby Pony wagged her tail and said:

The End.



