

groom Nettle, not being well up in *his duty to horses*, it is *my duty* as a Band of Mercy boy, to endeavor, as my pledge tells me: 'To try to be kind to all harmless living creatures, and try to protect them from cruel usage.' This is all I have to say to groom Nettle's charge, sir. This is my defence, your Honor, that in giving Spot and Petrel the temporary use of *their own necks*, I was merely carrying out my Band of Mercy Pledge. Further, sir, I firmly believe that had I not given this temporary relief to those dark bay beauties, they would have made a dash for freedom; and perhaps, quite unintentionally, sir, ran over the little children who were coming from the mission church near by. This, your Honor, closes my defence, excepting that, in reply to groom Nettle's complaint in that I had meddled with his sleigh robes, I would say, sir, that here, too, I merely carried out my Band of Mercy Pledge in throwing a rug over the poor, closely clipped horses. Ah, your Honor, the shame of it, that a coachman will wrap himself in furs to the eyes, and leave his noble friend and co-worker clipped and shivering in his harness. Ah, sir, my heart aches for the poor animals, horses, and dogs alike, sir. And now, your Honor, this closes my defence."

That Dick's boyish manner and words, given with so much earnestness, had made a good impression his mother noted with thankfulness, and groom Nettle, starting to his feet with ill-concealed rage, said excitedly:

"Your Honor, may I have the last word?"

"Well, no," replied the magistrate, coldly. "The last word is for the Court. But you may speak if you will be brief."

"I will, your Honor," quickly responded Nettle in cringing tones. "Your Honor is too great and wise not to see that this meddling boy is a little off on the subject of animals. Why, sir, only think, this crazy Band of Mercy boy, actually has the impudence to tell me, as has been about horses all my life, an' he with only a poor worn-out nag, as is only fit for the bone-yard—this impudent feller, I say, has the cheek to come to my stable an' tell me as I had oughter to clean out the feet of my horses every night! Just think of it, your Honor, clean 'em out every night! Sure your Honor knows, being a gentleman, as it would make them as tender as a chicken, so it would, not to speak of the waste of time of it. Me as doesn't waste time a-washin' my own feet but once in six months!"

At this unsolicited confession on the part of groom Nettle, a roar of laughter filled the court-room, in which Dick and his mother with relieved feelings took part.

The verdict was given in Dick's favor, with the advice to ring up the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, or call a policeman. The costs of the Court were to be paid by groom Nettle, which were to be