

giving you the use of your own head. And you tell me if Dick hadn't eased you, that you were on the point of running away!"

"That I was, indeed," replied Petrel. "Your master, Dick Niven, has told our stupid groom over and over again, that the *bearing-rein lessens* the horse's *strength*, and forces him to work with *cramped muscles* instead of by his own weight—does not prevent the horse from falling, as ignorant people say; but actually makes us fall much more badly when we do trip on those wretched icy or muddy asphalt pavements. If men knew as much as Dick Niven, I tell you what it is, Spot, we would have paper shoes, after the new German patent. Dick Niven says we horses would never slip if we wore paper shoes. Yes, Nobby, your kind young master often tells our groom all this, but he pretends he is deaf, or else abuses the boy."

"Yes, indeed, I often hear him through the stable wall," said Nobby, "and I often wonder you don't kick him. Why, don't you?"

"Well, it's just this way, Nobby," answered Petrel, angrily, "I don't kick him because my comrade, Spot, is always and eternally preaching patience!"

"Well, Spot!" said Nobby, wonderingly. "That's a queer text for a horse to preach on. Why, even men, who know so little about horses, confess that we are the most patient of animals!"

"Yes, Nobby," returned Spot, "I know they do, and knowing how patient we are, is the very reason they take a mean advantage of us. All the same, dear Nobby, I must preach patience to my comrade, Petrel; because if we horses cease to set men a good example, I don't know how it will all end."

"Well, yes, good Spot, perhaps you are in the right," remarked Nobby, thoughtfully; "but all the same, it was a gross piece of impertinence on the part of your cruel groom to summon my dear young master to court. Poor boy, without a father, too."

"Yes, indeed, it is an abominable shame!" cried Spot and Petrel indignantly, as they stamped their feet in anger.

In the court-room, cleared of all loafers, Dick Niven had been accused by groom Nettle of interfering with his horses.

"The beasts is owned by Mr. Highflyer," said the groom; "but they are more like my own beast, as I have the care of them, an' as I likes to see 'em hold their heads up—the lazy brutes. I told the master an' the missus as they must wear the tight check; an' here comes this saucy young rascal, with his confounded Band of Mercy nonsense, an' unfastens the check, an' drags about the sleigh robes to dress the horses up, as if they was human beings. But I have no fear, your Worship, but that you will severely punish this errant beggar, as interferes with the property of