

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

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The Story of a Donkey by Madame La Comtesse De Segur

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MADAME LA COMTESSE DE SEGUR

**THE STORY
OF A DONKEY**

THE STORY OF A DONKEY

This One



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DEDICATION

TO MY PRESENT LITTLE MASTER, HARRY

MY DEAR LITTLE MASTER:

You have been kind to *me*, but you have spoken contemptuously of donkeys in general. I want you to know better what sort of animals donkeys really are, and so I have written for you this story of my life. You will see, my dear little Master, that we donkeys have been, and still are, often badly treated by human beings. We are often very nice, indeed; but I must also confess that in my youth I sometimes behaved very badly, and you will see how I was punished for it, and how unhappy I was, and how at last I repented, and my friends and masters forgave me and were kind to me again. So, when you have read my history, you won't say any more "as stupid as a donkey," or "as obstinate as a donkey," but "as sensible as a donkey," "as clever as a donkey," or "as gentle as a donkey."

Hee-haw! my dear little Master, hee-haw! I hope you will never be like what *I* was when I was young.

I remain,

Your obedient servant,

NEDDY.

(vii)

INTRODUCTION

IN this book a donkey tells the story of his life and adventures, because, as he says: "I want you to treat all of us donkeys kindly, and to remember that we are often much more sensible than some human beings."

In the preface to the original edition—*Mémoires D'un Âne*, published in France in 1860—the donkey speaks very highly of his own wit and intelligence, claiming those qualities in a larger degree than most donkeys possess; and throughout the book he is quite proud of his successes in outwitting some of his masters and mistresses—in fact, his story begins with an account of a trick he played in his youth.

The author of *The Story of a Donkey* was the daughter of Count Rostopchine, Governor of

Moscow in 1812, when Napoleon Bonaparte made his disastrous retreat from that city. She became the wife of Count de Ségur, one of the proudest nobles of France, some ten years later, but not until she was nearly sixty years of age did she begin to write books for children, of which she has some twenty to her credit. This book is probably the most popular and entertaining of her works, but because much that appears in the original would interest only French boys and girls, in this version the scene has been taken to England, where donkeys are much more common than with us, and the interesting and amusing adventures of Neddy are told as happening in that country.

J. H. W.

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