

## CHAPTER 2

SQUIRE GORDON AND HIS FAMILY LIVED AT BIRTWICK PARK. His groom led me past a large iron gate and we went down a long road with tall trees on both sides. The house was surrounded by lovely gardens filled with pretty flowers. We went past the apple trees and the pens until we arrived at the stables.

Once we were there, the groom jumped off my back, took off my saddle and bridle and led me inside the stables. Squire Gordon kept many horses and carriages in beautiful stalls that were large and clean.

The groom led me to the first stall; it was very large and there was lots of room for me to move around freely. He did not tie me up and I liked it very much. He brushed my coat and then gave me some fresh water to drink and nice oats. He patted me and said kind words before he went away to continue his work.

I ate my nice oats and then I looked around. In the stall next to mine there was a fat, grey pony with a thick mane and tail and a pretty head.

'How do you do?' I said. 'What's your name?'

'My name is Merrylegs,' he said. 'I am very handsome as you can see! The children ride me, and Miss Jessie and Miss Flora love me very much. I'm their favourite! Are you going to live next door to me?'

'Yes; I think so,' I said.

'I hope you have good manners,' he said. 'I don't like horses that bite!'

Just then, I heard a neigh. It came from a tall reddish-brown mare near Merrylegs. She was very pretty but seemed angry. 'It isn't good manners to take the stall of another horse,' she said as she looked at me over the stall.

'I'm sorry,' I said. 'Is this your stall?'

'Yes, it is,' she said. 'They moved me so that you could take it!'

'I'm sorry, but I didn't ask anyone to do that; the groom put me here,' I said.

In the afternoon, when she went out, Merrylegs told me about

