

**BY BIRTH A LADY.
A TALE. VOL. I**

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By birth a lady. A tale. Vol. I by George Manville Fenn

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GEORGE MANVILLE FENN

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GEORGE MANVILLE FENN,

AUTHOR OF 'MAD,' 'WEBS IN THE WAY,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BY BIRTH A LADY.



CHAPTER I.

SOMETHING ABOUT A LETTER.

‘HE mustn’t have so much corn, Joseph,’ said Mr. Tiddson, parish doctor of Croppley Magna, addressing a grinning boy of sixteen, who, with his smock-frock rolled up and twisted round his waist, was holding the bridle of a very thin, dejected-looking pony, whose mane and tail seemed to have gone to the cushion-maker’s, leaving in their places a few strands that had missed the shears. The pony’s eyes were half shut, and his nose hung low; but, as if attending to his master’s words, one ear

was twitched back, while the other pointed forward; and no sooner had his owner finished speaking than the poor little beast whinnied softly and shook its evidently remonstrating head. 'He mustn't have so much corn, Joseph,' said Mr. Tiddson importantly. 'He's growing wild and vicious, and it was as much as I could do this morning to hold him.'

'What did he do, zir?' said the boy, grinning a wider grin.

'Do, Joseph? He wanted to go after the hounds, and took the bit in his teeth, and kicked when they crossed the road. I shall have to diet him. Give him some water, Joseph, but no corn.'

The poor pony might well shake his head, for it was a standing joke in Croppley that the doctor tried experiments on that pony: feeding him with chaff kept in an oaty bag, and keeping him low and grey-

hound-like of rib, for the sake of speed when a union patient was ill.

But the pony had to be fetched out again before Joseph had removed his saddle; for just as Mr. Tiddson was taking off his gloves and overcoat, a man came running up to the door, and tore at the bell, panting the while with his exertions.

‘Well, what now? Is Betty Starger worse?’

‘No,’—puff—‘no, sir;’—puff—‘it’s—
it’s—’

‘Well? Why don’t you speak, man?’

‘Breath, sir!’—puff. ‘Run—all way!’—
puff.

‘Yes, yes,’ said Mr. Tiddson. ‘And now what is it?’

‘Hax—haxiden, sir,’ puffed the messenger.

‘Bless my soul, my good man! Where?’ exclaimed the doctor, rubbing his hands.

‘Down by Crossroads, sir; and they war takin’ a gate off the hinges to lay him on, and carry him to the Seven Bells, when I run for you, sir.’

‘And how was it?—and who is it?’ said the doctor.

‘Gent, sir; along o’ the hounds.’

‘Here, stop a minute,’ exclaimed the doctor, ringing furiously till a servant came. ‘Jane, tell Joseph to bring Peter round directly; I’m wanted.—Now go on, my good man,’ he continued.

‘See him comin’ myself, sir. Dogs had gone over the fallows, givin’ mouth bea-u-u-tiful, when he comes—this gent, you know—full tear, lifts his horse, clears the hedge, and drops into the lane—Rugley-lane, you know, sir, where the cutting is, with the sand-martins’ nestes in the bank. Well, sir, he comes down nice as could be, and then put his horse at t’other