

I didn't think of Gayle as quite so grown-up after that.

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The Dickinsons lived on a plantation in the South. When Mr. Dickinson died, his wife, whom I always called Aunt Phoebe, although she was no actual relation, came back with her daughter Edna and son Hal to live in Vermontville, the old family home. They brought with them a riding horse, "Gypsy." Gypsy was a pretty horse, mild and gentle, a family pet, who would come like a dog on call. She was easy to ride and some of my happiest moments were on Gypsy's back galloping through the orchards or around the block. Time passed, and Gypsy grew lame and a little blind. She no longer was ridden, but even though well fed and cared for, seemed to be suffering. After many sad conferences the family decided that Gypsy would have to be disposed of; a local man was engaged to do the sad deed, and was paid a large sum of money to shoot Gypsy quickly and safely and then bury her body in the family pasture. It was all they could do at the last for this lifetime faithful friend. The man accepted the money and agreed to the terms.

Two weeks later the Dickonsons found out that the Traitor had shot Gypsy--yes--but had skinned off her glossy hide; cut her up and sold the hide and meat to any who would buy. It was a cruel hurt, the scar of which the Dickinsons carried till they died.

Hal was the apple of his mother's eye because he needed her. Hal never did very well in school. He could not hold a professional or business position. But he loved horses and had a natural knack in caring for or training them; consequently he was more often than not employed in livery stables.