

Boys and Girls.

LITTLE MR. THIMBLEFINGER.

By Joel Chandler Harris.
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XII.

THE TERRIBLE HORSE.

When Tickle-My-Toes had told about how pleased the baker and his wife were with Sparkle Spry he paused and looked at Chickamy Crany Crow, as if he expected she would beckon him away. But, instead of that, she said:

"Why, that isn't all."

"Well, it's enough, I hope," replied Tickles-

My-Toes.

"No," said Mrs. Meadows. "It's not enough if there's any more. Why, so far it's the best of all the horses in the country."

I can find that I had heard all the stories, but this one is a pole over my master, as we used to say in the country next door."

"I don't like to tell stories," protested Tickles-

My-Toes, puckering his face in a com-

fort way: "it's too confusing."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr. Rabbit. "It's time you were getting married. What will you look like a year or two from now if you keep on cutting up your capers?"

Tickle-My-Toes caught hold of the corners of Chickamy Crany Crow's apron, and, thus fortified, related his story:

"Well, the baker and his wife promised Sparkle Spry to give him a big wooden horse made, and they were as good as their word. They sent right off that very day for a carpenter and joiner, and when he came Sparkle Spry showed the man what he wanted. He said the horse must be as much like a real horse as could be made out of wood, and added that he wanted it to stand."

"The man declared he meant no harm and said he was glad to get the work. So he got the lumber, and in a few days, being a very clever workman, had built a wooden horse. He made it just as Sparkle Spry wanted him to. He put big hinges at the joints of the legs, cut a window in each side of the body, made the ears and the nos-

tril, and see if the carpenter has done his work well."

"Thereupon he pulled a cord that seemed to be tied to a bell, and, in a little while, Sparkle Spry felt that the horse was in motion. He hardly knew what to make of it. He went to the window and peeped out, and the light in the hall seemed to be all going to the rear. Occasionally a croaking sound was heard, and sometimes he could feel a jar or jolt in the horse's frame.

"Are we flying?" he asked, turning to the King of the Clinkers.

"Flying! Nothing of the sort. Don't you see that our poor horse lifts up a foot and puts it down again? I'm mighty glad it is a pacing horse. If it was a trotting horse it would shake us all to pieces."

"Where are we going?" inquired Sparkle Spry.

"Following the army—following the army," replied the King of the Clinkers. "There's going to be a big battle not far from here, and we may take a hand in it. The King of this country is a fat old rascal, who isn't very well thought of by the rest of the kings, and he has been a pest to us here, and he has ever bothered me. Consequently I don't mind helping him out in a pinch."

"How far do we have to go?" asked Sparkle Spry, who had no great relish for war if it was as hard as he had heard it was.

"Oh, a good many miles," replied the King of the Clinkers, "and we are not getting on at all. We are very much mired in the mud."

"So saying, he struck the bell twice, and instantly Sparkle Spry could feel that the wooden horse was going faster.

"Does the horse go by the road or through the fields?" asked Sparkle Spry.

"Oh, we take short cuts when necessary, and follow the King of the Clinkers. We have time to go round by the road. I hope you are not scared."

"Not scared," replied Sparkle Spry, somewhat doubtfully, "but it makes me feel queer to be traveling through the country in a wooden horse."

Nothing more was said for some time, and Sparkle Spry must have dropped off to sleep, for suddenly he was aroused by the voice of the King of the Clinkers, who called out:

"Here we are! Get up! Stir about!"

Sparkle Spry jumped to his feet and looked from the window. Day was just dawning, and on the plain before him he saw hundreds of twinkling lights, as if a shower of small stars had fallen to the ground during



LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW.

the night. Being somewhat dazed by his experience, he asked what they were.

"The carpenter seemed to enjoy his work, too, for every time he went off a little distance to see how his work looked he laughed as hard as he could. When he was nearly done, he asked Sparkle Spry if he wanted the roof shingled.

"Why, no," replied the boy. "There's no roof there. Besides, horses don't have shingles on them."

"That's so," the carpenter assented, "but this is a roof, and so many things about him that other horses hasn't got."

"Yes," said Sparkle Spry, "but after you get through with him, he is to be polished off."

"So when the carpenter was through with the horse, a leather finisher was sent for, and he covered the roof with fine leather of cows, stained with the hair, and fixed his tail where the horse's tail should have been."

"The baker grumbled a little at this extra expense, and said he was afraid Sparkle Spry had strained his head the night he had so much bread. But the baker's wife said she would like to have a whole house full of crazy children if Sparkle Spry was crazy.

"When the wooden horse was finished Sparkle Spry waited until the baker and his wife were gone, and then he tapped on the door and whistled. Presently the King of the Clinkers peeped out to see what the matter was. He came out from behind the oven cautiously until he found that Sparkle Spry was alone, and then he came forth."

"The horse is ready," said Sparkle Spry.

"Ready!" exclaimed the King of the Clinkers. "Well, I think it is high time. My workmen could have built it in a night—and here I've been waiting and waiting for I don't know how long."

"I hope you'll like it," Sparkle Spry suggested.

"Like it!" cried the King of the Clinkers. "Why, of course I'll like it. I haven't enjoyed a ride in so long that I'm not likely to quarrel with you."

"But this is a wooden horse," remarked Sparkle Spry.

"I should hope so—yes, indeed!" grunted the King of the Clinkers. "I have been riding wooden horses as long as I can remember."

"They may be a little clumsy, but they suit me."

"But this horse has no rockers," persisted Sparkle Spry.

"It is as solid as a house,"

"Much you know about wooden horses,"

said the King of the Clinkers. "Wait—I'll call in the carpenter."

He tapped on the oven with his tiny poker, and immediately a company of little men fled out from behind it. As they passed the furnace door they lit their torches at a live coal and marched out to the wooden horse, and Sparkle Spry.

The latter was so anxious to be very much astonished at what he saw then and afterwards. The torch bearers led the way to the left foreleg of the wooden horse, opened a door and lit up a spiral stairway, the steps of which were to be seen the tots and furniture of a bakery, and there were places where the little men had been working away when they were not on duty, and there was a special apartment for the King of the Clinkers.

A little while the whole interior of the horse was filled with the followers of the King of the Clinkers, who stood counting them as they came in.

"Ah-ho," he said, waving his little poker. "Now get to bed and rest yourselves."

"They complied so promptly that they seemed to disappear as if by magic. The torch bearers had thrown their torches in the furnace, and as wood had already been placed there a fire was soon kindled."

"Now," said the King of the Clinkers, closing the draught, "we'll let it warm up a

little, and see if the carpenter has done his work well."

"Thereupon he pulled a cord that seemed to be tied to a bell, and, in a little while, Sparkle Spry felt that the horse was in motion. He hardly knew what to make of it. He went to the window and peeped out, and the light in the hall seemed to be all going to the rear. Occasionally a croaking sound was heard, and sometimes he could feel a jar or jolt in the horse's frame.

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"Where are we going?" inquired Sparkle Spry.

"Following the army—following the army," replied the King of the Clinkers. "There's going to be a big battle not far from here, and we may take a hand in it. The King of this country is a fat old rascal, who isn't very well thought of by the rest of the kings, and he has been a pest to us here, and he has ever bothered me. Consequently I don't mind helping him out in a pinch."

"How far do we have to go?" asked Sparkle Spry, who had no great relish for war if it was as hard as he had heard it was.

"Oh, a good many miles," replied the King of the Clinkers, "and we are not getting on at all. We are very much mired in the mud."

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"Not scared," replied Sparkle Spry, somewhat doubtfully, "but it makes me feel queer to be traveling through the country in a wooden horse."

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