

Black Beauty

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BLACK BEAUTY



ANNA SEWELL

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Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,
In thy most need to go by thy side.

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FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

BLACK BEAUTY
BY ANNA SEWELL · ILLUS-
TRATED BY LUCY KEMP-WELCH

ANNA SEWELL, daughter of an authoress,
was born at Great Yarmouth in March 1820.
Lived a life of poverty as a child. When
young had an accident which left her
crippled for life. Died at Old Catton in
April 1878.

MEMOIR OF ANNA SEWELL

ANNA SEWELL, the author of *Black Beauty*, was born at Yarmouth, in England, March 30, 1820, the first child of Isaac and Mary (Wright) Sewell, and died April 25, 1878, at Old Catton, near Norwich. The centenary of her birth passed unmarked, for, curiously, there seems not to have been much interest in Miss Sewell as a person, in spite of the popularity of her book. It is certain that more than any other single agency this humane classic has improved the lot of the horse. The book has lived; the author has been forgotten.

Anna Sewell died in pain within a year of the success of her first and only volume. The story of her life explains the deep humanity of *Black Beauty*. Few lives, perhaps, have been less eventful in their worldly aspects than that of the crippled Quaker girl; yet it was a life freighted with great emotional crises, spiritual distresses and physical pain.

She was born in a troublous moment for her parents. Her father's business was in danger, and within a few days of her birth, Isaac Sewell was looking for another place. An unhappy chance led him thereupon to attempt shop-keeping in London, which also proved disastrous. He was equally unfortunate in other affairs, which left him penniless; and in this black hour was born Anna's brother, Philip. Mrs. Sewell was ordered by a physician to leave London, the furniture was sold at auction to pay the family's debts, and after an

agony of weeks the Sewells, aided by friends, moved to a small house at Dalston, where, in straitened circumstances, they lived for the next nine or ten years.

At Dalston, the children's morning years were passed. All in all, it was a happy childhood, for Mrs. Sewell was a remarkable mother and Isaac Sewell a kind, if unfortunate, father. But strict economy had to be practised at Dalston, and to earn money for the purchase of books for her children's education, Mrs. Sewell herself wrote a book, the first of a long line; called *Walks with Mamma*. By means of it the children's books were purchased and their studies went forward, aided by little local journeys through which they added to their knowledge of natural history, a subject in which they delighted. Occasionally they visited the British Museum, and once on a journey to Folkestone they met Gerard Edward Smith, a noted botanist, who told the children much about the flowers. Entomology was fascinating to both mother and children, but they never compassed death to make a collection—after one tearful trial. They painted the moths and butterflies captured, while they lay under glass; and what with one thing and another, the Sewell children, as time went on, found the world an increasingly interesting and beautiful place.

Whilst living at Dalston, Anna dislocated her elbow, which was some time in recovering its strength; speaking to her aunt of this painful incident the small sufferer said, "I bored it well!" So she might have spoken of the painful circumstances of her later life, for she had a cheerful, patient courage. But more troubled waters were ahead. The family removed to a larger house in the neighbourhood, calling it Palatine Cottage, and undertook to keep cows and sell milk

in the surrounding country; but a man and his wife who had been engaged to look after the stock decamped with a large sum of money gathered from the Sewells' customers, leaving the family in dreary circumstances; and on the heels of this blow came the greatest that was to fall.

Anna now was going to school, and, returning one day, was overtaken by a heavy fall of rain. She had no umbrella, and so started to run. The carriage-road sloped rather steeply down to the garden gate, and just as the small runner reached the gate she fell. A badly sprained ankle was the result, and later a life of frustration and renunciation. Her mother heard her cry out and helped her indoors, little thinking that the bright and active girl was thenceforth to be a cripple; but Anna Sewell never again walked upright like other girls. Mistakes were made. In those days doctors were less wise than to-day. Everything was tried, as far as the family's circumstances allowed, and some of the treatments seriously aggravated the girl's trouble. She never was cured. Years of life were ahead of her, no one of which was to be entirely free of pain. After her death, her mother wrote: "All who knew her loved her; . . . Her sufferings never made gloom or a cloud in the house. . . . She was my sunshine always; there never came the slightest cloud between us. Thank God!"

Thus, after her accident, did Anna Sewell reach that high standard of perfection that was her mother's dream.

The year that followed Anna's accident was an eventful one for the Sewells. Palatine Cottage was rented, Mrs. Sewell left the Society of Friends and Isaac Sewell determined to accept a position with a bank that was to be opened in Brighton.



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PART I

CHAPTER I

MY EARLY HOME

THE first place that I can well remember was a large pleasant meadow with a pond of clear water in it. Some shady trees leaned over it, and rushes and water-lilies grew at the deep end. Over the hedge on one side we looked into a ploughed field, and on the other we looked over a gate at our master's house, which stood by the roadside; at the top of the meadow was a plantation of fir trees, and at the bottom a running brook overhung by a steep bank.

Whilst I was young I lived upon my mother's milk, as I could not eat grass. In the day time I ran by her side, and at night I lay down close by

her. When it was hot, we used to stand by the pond in the shade of the trees, and when it was cold, we had a nice warm shed near the plantation.

As soon as I was old enough to eat grass, my mother used to go out to work in the day time, and came back in the evening.

There were six young colts in the meadow besides me; they were older than I was; some were nearly as large as grown-up horses. I used to run with them, and had great fun; we used to gallop all together round and round the field, as hard as we could go. Sometimes we had rather rough play, for they would frequently bite and kick as well as gallop.

One day, when there was a good deal of kicking, my mother whinnied to me to come to her, and then she said:

“I wish you to pay attention to what I am going to say to you. The colts who live here are very good colts, but they are cart-horse colts, and, of course, they have not learned manners. You have been well bred and well born; your father has a great name in these parts, and your grandfather won the cup two years at the Newmarket races; your grandmother had the sweetest temper of any horse I ever knew, and I think you have never seen me kick or bite. I hope you will grow up gentle and good, and never learn bad ways; do your work with a good will, lift your feet up well when you trot, and never bite or kick even in play.”

I have never forgotten my mother's advice; I knew she was a wise old horse, and our master thought a great deal of her. Her name was Duchess, but he often called her Pet.

Our master was a good, kind man. He gave us good food, good lodging, and kind words; he spoke

as kindly to us as he did to his little children. We were all fond of him, and my mother loved him very much. When she saw him at the gate, she would neigh with joy, and trot up to him. He would pat and stroke her and say, "Well, old Pet, and how is your little Darkie?" I was a dull black, so he called me Darkie; then he would give me a piece of bread, which was very good, and sometimes he brought a carrot for my mother. All the horses would come to him, but I think we were his favourites. My mother always took him to the town on a market day in a light gig.

There was a ploughboy, Dick, who sometimes came into our field to pluck blackberries from the hedge. When he had eaten all he wanted, he would have, what he called, fun with the colts, throwing stones and sticks at them to make them gallop. We did not much mind him, for we could gallop off; but sometimes a stone would hit and hurt us.

One day he was at this game, and did not know that the master was in the next field; but he was there, watching what was going on: over the hedge he jumped in a snap, and catching Dick by the arm, he gave him such a box on the ear as made him roar with the pain and surprise. As soon as we saw the master, we trotted up nearer to see what went on.

"Bad boy!" he said, "bad boy! to chase the colts. This is not the first time, nor the second, but it shall be the last—there—take your money and go home, I shall not want you on my farm again." So we never saw Dick any more. Old Daniel, the man who looked after the horses, was just as gentle as our master, so we were well off.



CHAPTER II

THE HUNT

BEFORE I was two years old, a circumstance happened which I have never forgotten. It was early in the spring; there had been a little frost in the night, and a light mist still hung over the plantations and meadows. I and the other colts were feeding at the lower part of the field when we heard, quite in the distance, what sounded like the cry of dogs. The oldest of the colts raised his head, pricked his ears, and said, "There are the hounds!" and immediately cantered off followed by the rest of us to the upper part of the field, where we could look over the hedge and see several fields beyond. My mother and an old riding horse of our master's were also standing near, and seemed to know all about it.

"They have found a hare," said my mother, "and if they come this way, we shall see the hunt."

And soon the dogs were all tearing down the field of young wheat next to ours. I never heard such a noise as they made. They did not bark, nor howl, nor whine, but kept on a "yo! yo, o, o! yo! yo, o, o!"