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ANNA SEWELL

Black Beauty

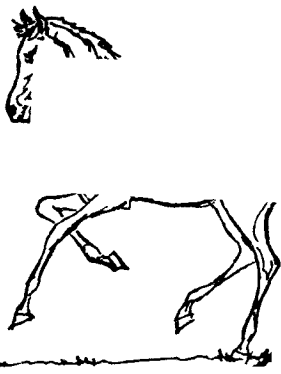
Complete and Unabridged



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with an introduction by FRANCES H. PUTMAN

Black Beauty



ANNA SEWELL

INTRODUCTION

"I am writing the life of a horse and getting dolls and boxes ready for Christmas." This was the notation Anna Sewell made in her journal on November 6, 1871. Six years later, *Black Beauty*, her first and only book, was published. Today it is still acclaimed as the most successful animal story ever written. Yet the crippled Quaker girl who wrote it has been almost completely forgotten.

Anna Sewell was born in Yarmouth, England, in 1820. Fortunately she was possessed of a cheerful spirit, for she seemed destined for tribulation. Her father lived always on the verge of bankruptcy, and his family was forced to follow him all about southern England while he tried out shopkeeping, dairy farming, and various clerical posts.

In 1845, Mr. Sewell began commuting from his home to a new job in Brighton, and Anna drove him back and forth from the railway station each day in a little pony chaise. It was then, perhaps, that she began to

think of the life^e which a horse experienced, and the thoughts he might be having about it all, for the neighbors observed that she guided the family horse by talking to it as a human being.

Anna had more time to contemplate such things than most people. A serious fall in her teens and poor medical treatment afterwards had injured one ankle so seriously that she was unable to walk upright, and had to endure much pain and confinement. This injury eventually prevented her even from driving her pony and cart about the village. Then it was, as she lay on an invalid sofa, that her great sympathy for horses began to take concrete shape in a book. But it was a slow business. The early chapters of *Black Beauty* were written laboriously in pencil. Later she had to dictate the chapters to her mother.

Great enthusiasm greeted the book when it was published in 1877, but within a few months its author was dead. Ironically, when the horse arrived to carry her body to the cemetery, her mother saw with horror that it bore the painful bearing-reins that Anna had denounced in the pages of *Black Beauty*. They were promptly removed, so that the horse could perform a final service for Anna Sewell unfettered.

In a letter to a friend just before she died, Anna had explained that she hoped *Black Beauty* "would induce kindness, sympathy, and an understanding treatment of horses." To us, in a world from which, with the exception of race tracks and ranches, horses in large numbers have almost disappeared, the plight of most horses a century ago may seem very remote. No longer do they have to do yeoman service drawing family carriages, lugging heavy delivery vans, yoked to cabs, bruised by whips and spurs, left often to sicken in damp, foul stables. For most, like poor Ginger, life was nothing but a grim endurance test. As *Black Beauty's* mother re-

marked, "I hope you will fall into good hands, but a horse never knows . . ."

But this book is more than a story about a horse. Through Beauty's eyes we see a continually shifting panorama of life in nineteenth-century England: midnight gallops through cobbled streets to fetch the doctor—proud gentry in their phaetons—the sordid bargaining at horse fairs—harried cabdrivers in Cheapside, and the clatter and tumult of election day on London Bridge.

By writing the narrative in the first person, the author makes us feel that a horse is actually telling us his life story. From the very beginning, when Beauty learns that he has been "well-bred and well-born" (did his grandfather not win the cup twice at the Newmarket races?), through the tedious business of "breaking-in," with its accompanying man-made devices—the blinkers, the bit, the saddle—we suffer and rejoice along with Beauty. And we share his haunting fears about the future as each new master looms up: will he be a kindly Jerry Barker, or a fool like Alfred Smirk? Above all, we feel the sense of utter helplessness that Beauty knew, in the face of human ignorance and cruelty.

Anna Sewell accomplished her aim. Through her book, generations of readers have learned to think about all animals who cannot speak for themselves.

—Frances H. Putman, M.A.

BLACK BEAUTY

The Autobiography of a Horse



ANNA SEWELL

AIRMONT  *BOOKS*

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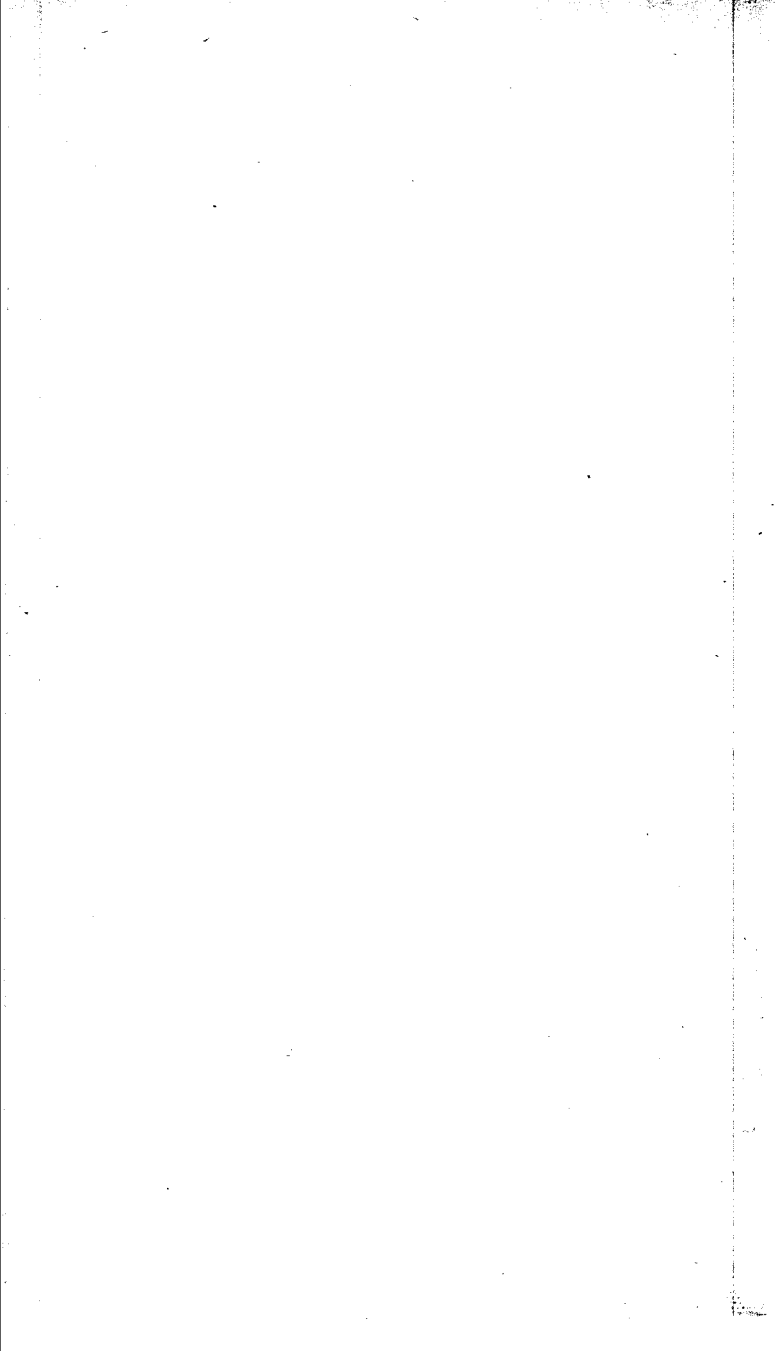
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TO
My Dear and Honored
MOTHER,
Whose life, No Less Than Her Pen,
Has Been Devoted to the Welfare of Others,
This Little Book is Affectionately
Dedicated

BLACK BEAUTY



PART ONE

Chapter 1

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 plowed 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.

While I was young I lived upon my mother's milk, as I could not eat grass. In the daytime 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 daytime, and come 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 New-market 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 favorites. My mother always took him to the town on a market day in a light gig.

There was a plowboy, 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 2

THE HUNT

I WAS two years old when 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 "yol yo, o, ol yol yo, o, ol" at the top of their voices. After them came a number of men on horseback, some of them in green coats, all galloping as fast as they could. The old horse snorted and looked eagerly after them, and we young colts wanted to be galloping with them, but they were soon away into the fields lower down; here it seemed as if they had come to a stand; the dogs left off barking, and ran about every way with their noses to the ground.

"They have lost the scent," said the old horse, "perhaps the hare will get off."

"What hare?" I said.