

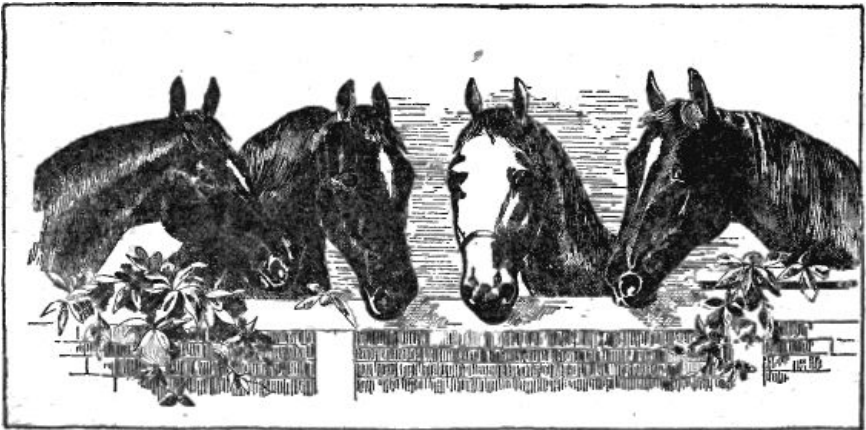
# Black Beauty

## Young Readers' Edition

by  
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Adapted by  
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Digital Screen Reader  
(For use on Smart Board and other projection systems)



This electronic publication version of *Black Beauty* was adapted and edited from *Black Beauty: Young Folks' Edition*, M.A. Donahue and Co., 1902

by Al M. Rocca, PhD

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## **Table of Contents**

### **Chapter**

<b>I</b>	<b>Growing Up</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>II</b>	<b>My New Home in Birtwick Park</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>III</b>	<b>Merrylegs and Ginger</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>IV</b>	<b>Tragedy Strikes Our Home</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>V</b>	<b>A Not So Happy New Life At Earlshall</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>VI</b>	<b>Rescued From The Horse Fair</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>VII</b>	<b>My Life as a London Cab Horse</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>VIII</b>	<b>Happy At Last!</b>	<b>56</b>
	<b>Glossary</b>	<b>63</b>

## CHAPTER I

### Growing Up

The first place that I can remember was a pleasant meadow with a large pond of clear water. Over the hedge on one side I looked into a plowed field, and on the other I looked over a gate at my master's house, which stood by the roadside. 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 stood by the pond in the shade of the trees, and when it was cold we had a warm shed near the grove.

There were six young colts in the meadow beside me; they were older than I was. I used to run with them, and had great fun. We would gallop all together around the field, as fast as we could go. Sometimes we played rough, for we would 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 want you to pay attention to what I am going to say. The colts who live here are very good colts, but they are cart-horse colts, and 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 at the 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 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. 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 town on market-day in a light gig.

We had 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 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, 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, 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 again. Old Daniel, the man who looked after the horses, was just as gentle as our master. He took good care of us.

Before I was two years old a event 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 woods and meadows. I and the other colts were feeding at the lower part of the field when we heard 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 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.”

Soon the dogs were all tearing down the field of young wheat next to us. I never heard such a noise as they made, barking at the top of their voices. After them came a number of men on horseback, all galloping as fast as they could. The old horses snorted and looked eagerly after them. We young colts wanted to be galloping with them, but they were soon away into the lower fields. Here it seemed as if they had come to a standstill, the dogs left off barking and ran about with their noses to the ground.

“They have lost the scent,” said the old horse; “perhaps the hare will get away.”

“What hare?” I said.

“Oh, I don’t know what hare. It may be one of our own hares out of the woods. Any hare they can find will do for the dogs and men to run after”. Before long the dogs began barking again. They came all together at full speed making straight for our meadow at the part where the high bank and hedge overhang the brook.

“Now we shall see the hare,” said my mother. Just then a hare, wild with fright, rushed by and made for the woods. On came the dogs, they burst over the bank, leaped the stream and came dashing across the field, followed by the huntsmen. Several men leaped their horses clean over, close upon the dogs. The hare tried to get through the fence. She was too big so she turned sharp around to make for the road, but it was too late. The dogs were upon her with their wild cries. We heard one shriek, and that was the end of her. One of the huntsmen

rode up and whipped off the dogs. He held her up by the leg, torn and bleeding and all the gentlemen seemed well pleased.

As for me, I was so astonished that I did not at first see what was going on by the brook. When I did look, there was a sad sight. Two fine horses were down, one was struggling in the stream, and the other was groaning on the grass. One of the riders was getting out of the water covered with mud, the other lay quite still.

“His neck is broken,” said my mother.

“And serves him right, too,” said one of the colts.

I thought the same, but my mother did not join with us.

“Well, no,” she said, “you must not say that. Though I am an old horse, and have seen and heard a great deal, I never yet could make out why men are so fond of this sport. They often hurt themselves, often spoil good horses, and tear up the fields, and all for a hare, or a fox, or a stag (deer), that they could get more easily some other way. But, we are only horses, and don’t know.”

While my mother was saying this, we stood and looked on. Many of the riders had gone to the young man. My master was the first to raise him. His head fell back and his arms hung down, and everyone looked very serious. There was no noise now. Even the dogs were quiet, and seemed to know that something was wrong. They carried him to our master’s house. I heard afterward that it was the squire’s only son, a fine, tall young man,

and the pride of his family.

They were now riding in all directions—to the doctor's, and to Squire Gordon's, to let him know about his son. When Bond, the farrier, came to look at the black horse that lay groaning on the grass, he felt him all over, and shook his head. One of his legs was broken. Then someone ran to our master's house and came back with a gun. Presently there was a loud bang and a dreadful shriek, and then all was still.

My mother seemed upset. She said she had known that horse for years, and that his name was Rob Roy. He was a good, kind horse. She never would go to that part of the field afterward.

Not many days after, we heard the church-bell tolling for a long time. Looking over the gate, we saw a long strange black coach that was covered with black cloth and was drawn by black horses. After that came another and another and another, and all were black, while the bell kept tolling, tolling. They were carrying young Gordon to the church-yard to bury him. He would never ride again. What they did with Rob Roy I never knew, but 'twas all for one little hare.