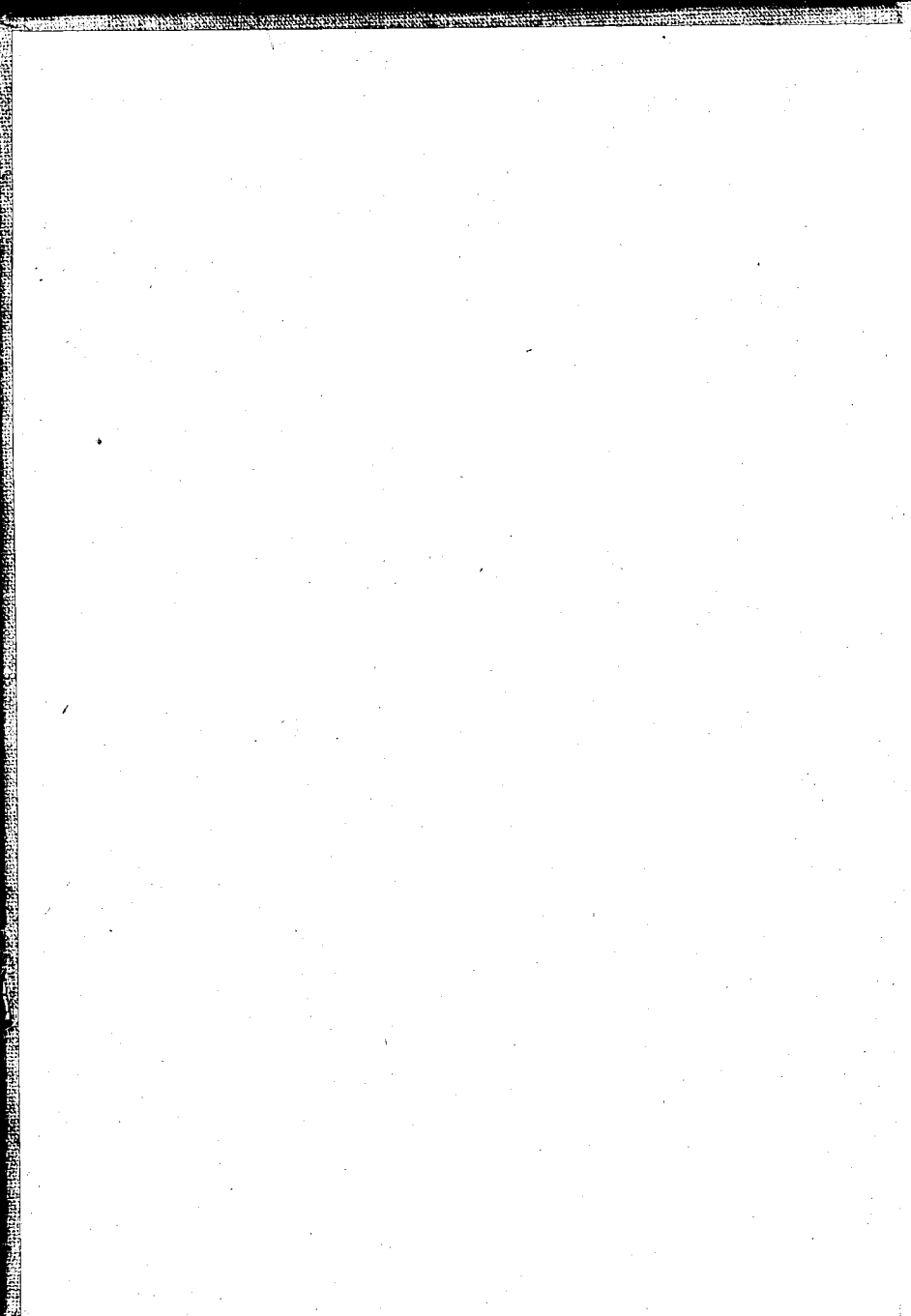


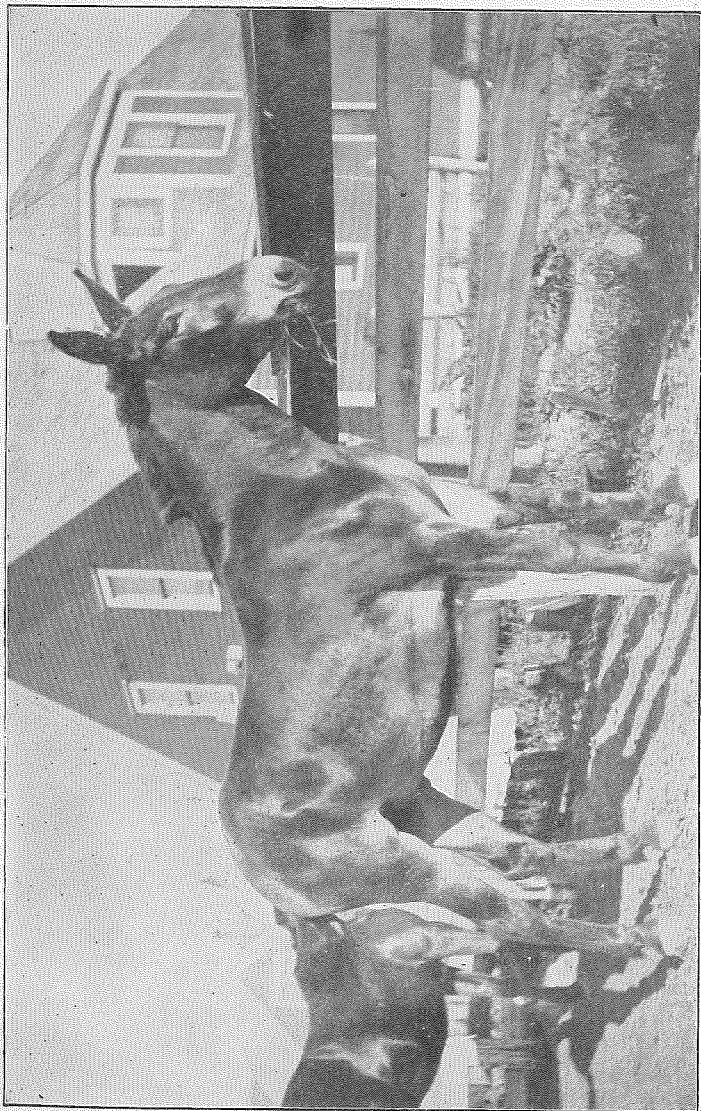
# COLLIERY JIM



BY FINCH



Xmas 1891. Jean Webster  
from  
Miss M. Lehman.



COLLIERY JIM

# COLLIERY JIM

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY  
OF A MINE MULE

BY

NORA J. FINCH

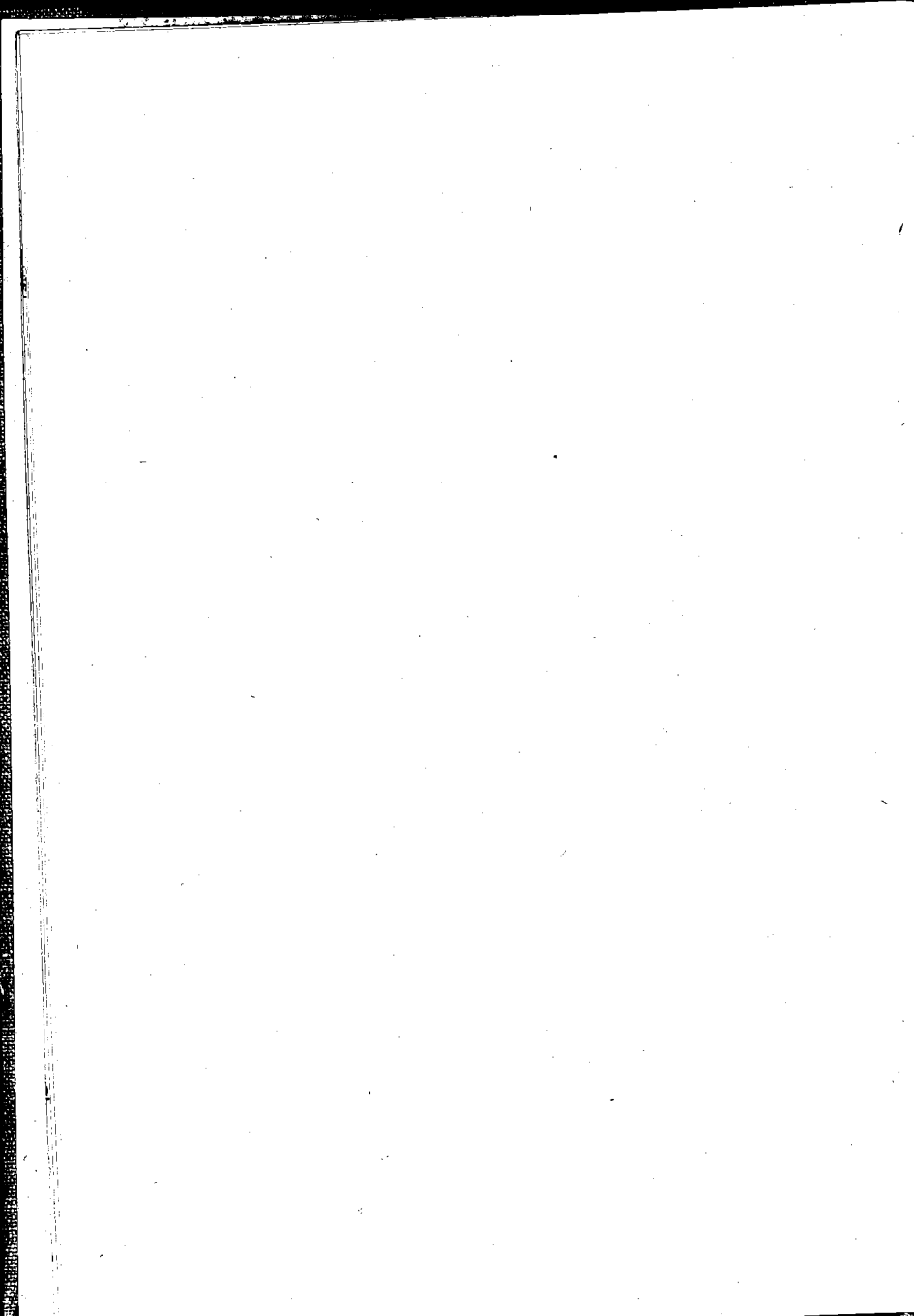
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## PREFACE

IN PRESENTING to the public this little volume I wish to state that the principal motive which led to its production was a sincere sympathy for that most abused and downtrodden of all animals, the mine mule. While man furnishes the brain power which directs the workings of the great coal industry, the mule constitutes its bone and sinew. Without this patient, homely drudge the industry could hardly be carried on; yet few persons realize his worth or take into account his sufferings.

Lest the reader think the characters unreal and the pictures overdrawn, I will say that nearly all the incidents given are founded on fact, and the counterparts of the characters are to be seen at any time about the coal mines. Many a time have I seen the "Homely Old Mule" cropping the scanty grass by the roadside, or seeking, in some fence corner, protection from the wintry blast. Jennie was a real mule, and met her death just as is here re-

lated, and the stories of Black Billy and poor Tray are true to the letter. The terrible punishment meted out to the rebellious Wildfire was an actual occurrence, and the facts were given me by an eye witness. Victor is a real dog — a pure St. Bernard — and I know him well.

In short, the story is not a product of the imagination, but a living, moving drama, the scenes of which are being enacted every day around the coal mines of our land.

THE AUTHOR.

# COLLIERY JIM

## CHAPTER I

### A HOMELY OLD MULE

I AM a homely old mule, broken in spirit and infirm of body. My legs are stiff and swollen, my eyes are almost sightless, and I am no longer able to do any hard work. My master says I am nearly used up, and that he is going to sell or give me to some one who will finish me. I am sure I wish somebody would "finish me"; I would much rather die than live as I do.

Now that I am not able to work, my owner often turns me out in the most severe weather, to get my living as best I can, or starve. I am left to wander here and there, in search of food, and am often teased most cruelly by wicked boys and vicious dogs. I sleep night after night on the frozen ground, with no covering but the sky. It matters little to my heartless master how cold and hungry

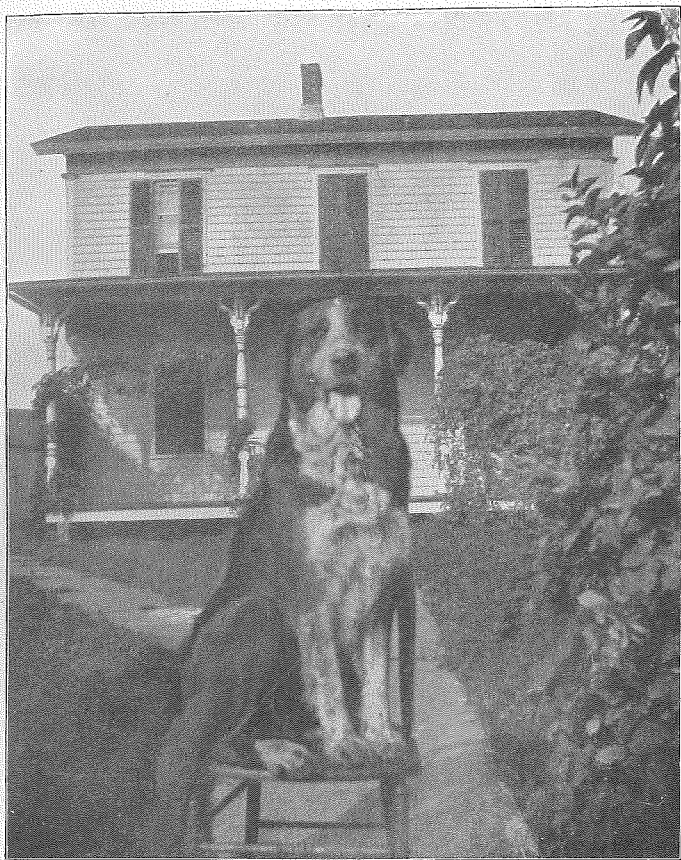
I may be, now that I can no longer add to his gains. My life has been full of adventure and suffering, and, after thinking over the matter for some time, I have resolved to give my story to the world. But first let me tell you how I came to this decision:

One day as I was cropping the scanty herbage by the roadside, two gentlemen came riding along, and noticed my forlorn condition. They stopped and spoke kindly to me; then they felt my lean sides and swollen legs and looked at the sores on my bruised and worn shoulders. They seemed to feel very sorry for me, and they talked together for some time, when I heard one of them say:

“We will find out to whom the poor animal belongs, notify the society, and have the owner arrested.”

Their talk puzzled me greatly, for I could not in the least understand why anyone should be interested in so homely an old mule. Long after the kind gentlemen had left me I pondered over what I had heard, but could make nothing of it. So the next time I met my friend Victor I asked him to tell me what it all meant.

Victor is a large St. Bernard dog, and lives on a



MY FRIEND VICTOR

fine farm near which I sometimes wander in search of food. He often comes out to see me, and does not bark at me, as is the fashion of some dogs, but is always kind, and comforts me greatly with his cheerful presence. He is very noble and wise, for a dog, because he has a kind master who teaches him many things and makes a real friend of him.

Victor told me that the men were talking of the Humane Society. Then, as I did not understand his meaning, he explained that this society is one which was organized by good people for the prevention of cruelty to animals; and that in connection with it there are others called Bands of Mercy in which the children are taught to be kind to their dumb friends, and merciful to all of God's creatures. He says that these societies are being organized all over the land. He tells me, also, that books are being written in which horses and dogs tell the stories of their own lives, and that these books are doing much good in the world. Victor knows all this to be true, for his master, Mr. Earl, is a prominent member of one of these societies, and has told him all about it.

After talking with Victor, I thought long on

what he had told me, and at last have decided to publish the story of my life. I know it can never benefit me, for the days of my sufferings are nearly ended; yet there are thousands of other mules that must travel the road I have traveled, and perhaps my story will touch some chord of compassion or sympathy in the hearts of their masters and make the way a little easier for them. Victor has encouraged me to do this, and Mr. Earl has consented to write down my story as I tell it. If the little book I shall thus send into the world succeeds in making life easier and sweeter for one of those most oppressed and downtrodden of all God's creatures, the mule, it will have accomplished its mission, and I shall die content.

## CHAPTER II

### MY EARLY DAYS

I WAS born on a stock farm in the famous Bluegrass Region of Kentucky. My earliest recollections are of wide stretches of luxuriant pasture land surrounded on three sides by fields of waving grain and tall Indian corn. On the fourth side this pasture sloped to the public highway, which ran past my master's farm and on to the nearest city, some fifteen miles away. Across the pasture ran a ravine or gully, through which flowed a small stream of water, bordered on each side by clumps of small trees and bushes.

Here we lived very happily. I say we, for there were many other horses and mules on our farm besides my mother and me. We fed on the sweet grass, drank from the little brook, and found cool retreats under the trees, where we were protected from the scorching heat of the sun.

My mother was a beautiful iron-gray mare, very



affectionate in disposition, and ever faithful to the interests of her master. Of my sire I know little save that he was of a renowned family, some of whose members were, in ancient times, most worthy servants to prophets and kings. My mother often used to tell me a story that she had heard—of how, on a time in the long, long ago, one of my ancestors had been more highly honored than all other animals, being ridden by One who “spake as never man spake.” I always listened with interest to all my mother could tell of the worthy deeds of my ancestors, and I resolved that I, too, would be faithful and true, doing as well as possible every duty assigned me.

I was perfectly happy in my home and never longed for change. Indeed, I had no reason to wish for anything different, for Mr. Weston, my master, was a very kind man and never allowed his animals to be ill-treated. In summer we lived in our pleasant pasture fields, and during the cold weather we were safely sheltered and kindly cared for till spring came again.

One looking at me now would hardly be able to guess what my color used to be, for my coat is faded

and roughened, but in my young days I was a pretty, light gray. In disposition I was much like my mother, and early in life I became a great favorite with my master's young son, Harry Weston. In winter he gave us food and drink, and in summer he came every day to look after our comfort. He always had a kind word for me, and often brought me dainties, such as fresh vegetables and fruit; and he never seemed to mind my being an ungainly, awkward mule instead of a pretty little colt.

Master Harry fondled and petted me, and I grew to love him dearly. He gave me the pretty name of Lightfoot, which I soon learned to know, and when I heard his call I used to run to meet him as fast as my legs would carry me. It seemed as though love almost gave wings to my feet, and I used to prance about for very joy. Sometimes, in my supreme happiness, I would throw my heels high in the air—for that is one way mules have of showing their pleasure—but I was always careful not to harm my dear young master.

Many times I have heard men say that mules are not capable of loving, that they are stupid and

vicious, fit only for the most degrading labor, and that it does not matter how they are treated. It makes me indignant to hear my race so foully slandered. We are not all the stubborn, stupid, vicious creatures we are represented to be; and if man would only treat us more kindly he would soon learn that we are capable of loving deeply and serving faithfully. I am sure no animal ever gave love more true and lasting than that I gave my little master. Even now I sometimes seem to see his handsome face and to hear his dear voice calling me by the pet name that I knew and loved so well in that happy long ago.

Ah! those were indeed joyous years—full of all that made life worth living. But those years, so free from care, sped by all too soon, and the time came when I was compelled to go out and grapple with the stern realities of life; and since then I have learned, by bitter experience, what it means to be a mule.

## CHAPTER III

### SHADOWS GATHERING

MY MASTER was very wealthy, and his immense farm was mostly devoted to stock-raising; and it was owing to this fact that there were so many horses and mules in our pastures. Some of the mules were very unruly and discontented, never seeming to care anything for their home and pleasant surroundings. They spent a large part of their time in running about the fields trying to find some place where they might get through upon forbidden ground, or in standing idly, looking over the fence that skirted the road, longing to be out and away, to see what the great world was like. Others, like me, were contented to be at home, and never longed for change.

Among these last were two handsome young mules which my master had named May and Whitefoot. May was a small bay mule, very plump and well built. Whitefoot was much larger and more

strongly built, and had been given his name because of his four white feet, which distinguished him from all the other mules on the farm. These two were my especial friends, and the three of us spent much time together, feeding on the sweet grass or hiding away from the sun in the cool retreats along the little stream. We did not associate very much with the unruly, dissatisfied portion of our community, for my mother had always told me that it was best to be contented with my lot, and to enjoy life while I might. She said the world was very unkind to mules, and that I should taste its cruelties all too soon. I did not then understand her meaning, but I always took her advice, for I knew she was wiser than I and that I could trust her.

We had lived thus quietly for a number of years, and I had grown to be a large, strong mule, when something happened which for a time caused much excitement among us. One fine morning in early spring my master came into our pasture, carrying, as he often did, a dish of salt with which to treat us, and accompanied by two strangers. One of these was a tall, middle-aged gentleman, very

pleasing in looks and manner; the other was a younger and smaller man, with a dark, sinister face, and a wicked gleam in his black eyes that meant ill to any creature that might offend him. I feared and disliked him from the first, and I soon found that others of our number had the same feeling for him.

While we felt no fear of our master, and wished very much to get a lick of the salt he was bringing us, yet the coming of these strangers made us uneasy. My mother said they were there for the purpose of buying mules. She told us she had seen many such strangers before, and that their presence was sure to mean harm to some of us. My first thought was to run away and hide, but my friends May and Whitefoot were watching the men from a distance; so I decided to stand my ground, too, and see what would happen.

My master scattered the salt over the ground, and soon, regardless of all danger, most of the herd began crowding around and licking it eagerly. I was shy, and stood on the outer edge of the crowd, but from where I was standing I could see the strangers looking over the animals and could hear

my master's voice praising them as each in turn passed by.

The men stayed for a long time, walking about the field, looking at the different mules and talking with Mr. Weston, but finally seemed to agree on the terms of purchase. They then selected ten or twelve of the strongest, best-looking ones among us, and began making preparations to take them away. It so happened that most of those chosen belonged to the discontented portion of our number, and I knew they would not mind going away.

One mule in particular, a large bay, had always been restless, and had caused much trouble among us. He was always running and jumping about and using his heels on everything that did not happen to please him. Because of this violent temper and wilful disposition he had been named, by the farm hands, Wildfire. Wildfire had often told me how tired he was of that "dull old place," as he called our home, and how he longed to get away; so when I saw him chosen I knew that he would be delighted at the prospect of a change.

In a short time the strangers were ready to go, and with the assistance of my master and two of

his men they drove their purchases through the gate that opened into the public highway I have mentioned. They went very willingly, for mules, and soon they were headed toward the distant town. The rest of us followed as far as the gate, intent on seeing the last of our companions, and I mistrust that more than one of the number left behind were sorry that they were not among those chosen.

As for Wildfire, he seemed much pleased by the new turn affairs had taken, and trotted briskly away, happy to be out in the great world at last. I gave him a friendly bray as a good-by, but he answered me only with a toss of his heels and a contemptuous flirt of his tail. I gazed after him till a bend in the road hid the drove from view. Then I went back to where my mother was quietly grazing, thankful that I, with the ones I loved best, had been left in the enjoyment of peace and plenty.



## CHAPTER IV

### SOLD INTO BONDAGE

FOR some time after the departure of our friends, we mules thought of little else. Some of the more daring ones among us even proposed trying to break down the fence, get out and follow after them; but my mother told them it would be of no use. She said we should never see our mates again, for she had seen many mules go in like manner, and none had ever come back to tell how they had fared or what had happened to them.

My two friends and I were very glad that we had not been taken, and decided that in the future we would keep as far as possible from all strangers. After this we chose the most lonely, secluded parts of the pasture for grazing grounds, or hid away in the groves along the little brook. I was more shy than my friends, and for a long time felt distrustful of everybody—even of the kind master who had always treated me so well.

Master Harry had broken me to wear a halter when I was very young, and now he taught me to wear a bridle and light harness and would sometimes hitch me to a little cart and drive me short distances out into the country. In this way a long time passed by, and as nothing more happened to disturb our peace, I gradually lost my fear and became gentle and trusting again.

At first I did not like the breaking-in process: The bridle felt heavy, the bit made my mouth uncomfortable, and I did not in the least fancy having my head turned this way and that by the reins. But Master Harry was very gentle and patient with me, and the result was that I soon learned to wear my bridle and harness with ease, and to enjoy the canters around the field with my master on my back, and the short drives he often took with me hitched to the little cart.

A long time had passed since Wildfire and the others had gone away, and I was about seven years old (so I heard my master say), when, late one afternoon in early summer, I again saw the two strangers coming into our pasture. As before, they were accompanied by Mr. Weston, and this time

they came directly to the spot where my two chums and I were feeding.

I knew at once that we were the mules they were after. The strangers looked us over very closely and appeared much pleased with us, but I could not quite understand their conversation, till my master called me to him and slipping a halter over my head, said to the elder man, whom he addressed as Mr. Gray:

“This is one of the finest animals of his kind that I have ever owned. He comes of hardy stock, is very gentle, and perfectly trustworthy in every respect. Besides all that, he is well broken to harness, which of course makes him all the more valuable. My son has made a pet of him, and hates to let him go, but I raised him to sell and if you agree to my terms he is your property. The other two you see are very fine animals, but they have not been broken as Lightfoot has, and for that reason I have placed their valuation a little lower. We will say one hundred and twenty-five dollars for Lightfoot and one hundred each for the other two. Three hundred and twenty-five dollars for the three animals, and you have a bargain that cannot be

beaten in the state of Kentucky. What do you say?"

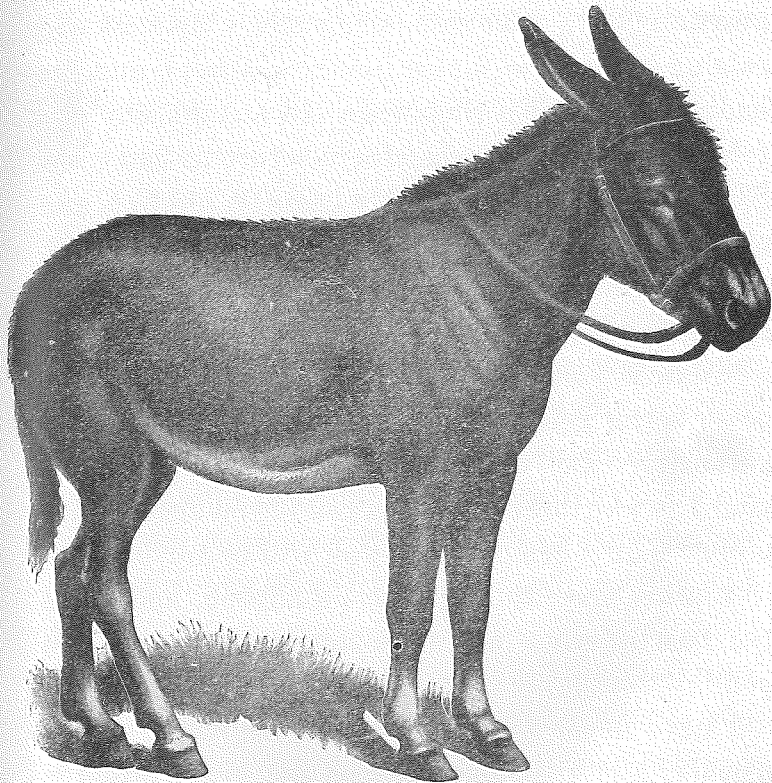
The two men stepped a little to one side and talked for a few moments. Then I heard the younger man say:

"Let's give him his price. They certainly are very fine animals, and we'll get a good sum for them in the eastern markets. I feel sure we can nearly double our money on them."

To this the other agreed; then they came back and said to my master:

"We like these mules, and will take them at your figures. We are buying up a carload of the finest we can get, and expect to pay good prices for them. We have been buying from other stock farms in this and adjoining sections, till now our number is nearly complete. To-morrow we expect to load them for transportation, and will come for these three in the morning, as it is too late to take them away to-night."

This arrangement being satisfactory to my master, the bargain was considered closed, and the three men went away, leaving us to enjoy one more night in our old home before we departed forever.



MASTER HARRY HAD BROKEN ME TO WEAR A HALTER

When we were once more alone, my mother and I had a long talk. She told me that for some time she had been expecting us to be sold and taken

away any day. She said our master's business was raising horses and mules for the markets, and she had always known that when old enough, my two friends and I must go as others before us had gone. She talked cheerfully to May and Whitefoot and me, and gave us much good advice, telling us to be ever faithful to duty and to make the best of our lot wherever it should be cast.

“Man is your master,” she said, “and you will never better your condition by rebelling against his authority. Do your best, and perhaps it will make your life a little easier; but even if you should fare no better in a general way, you will be far happier if you are cheerful and uncomplaining, and do to the best of your ability whatever task is given you.”

I have never forgotten those wise words of my mother, and they have helped me greatly in the trying ordeals through which I have since passed.

## CHAPTER V

### TAKEN FROM HOME

EARLY the next morning our new owners came for us, and with them came Mr. Weston and Master Harry. I had hoped to see my young master before I went away, and when I saw him coming into the field I ran to meet him, as was my custom. He put a halter over my head and, after giving me many kind words and loving good-by caresses, he led me to where Mr. Gray was standing, and said to him:

“Please be kind to Lightfoot and take good care of him, for he has always been well treated, and would not know what to make of unkindness. I shall feel better about his going if I have your promise that he will not be abused in his new home.”

Mr. Gray smiled pleasantly and replied:

“Oh, he will be all right; I promise you he shall have as good care as it is possible to give him. He

shall trot by my side as we go to town, and I will look after him myself as far as I can." With this rather indefinite promise, my master was obliged to be content.

I now saw that each of the strangers rode a fine horse, and had brought with them a number of mules which they had purchased at stock farms near by; so when Mr. Weston had brought out May and Whitefoot, and we had joined them, we formed rather a large drove.

I was very glad of my new owner's promise to lead me by his side, for I did not like the looks of some of the strange mules, nor of the man who was driving them, and much preferred traveling by the side of Mr. Gray's fine horse to being herded in with the strangers. The mules were fastened together in groups of two and three. When Mr. Gray had taken my halter and led me to the head of the drove, we were ready for a start. I turned my head for a last look at my dear old home, and saw that my mother and some of our friends had followed us to the road, to bid us good-by, just as we had done when Wildfire and his companions went away. My mother whinnied good-by to us,



and Master Harry stood by her side and watched us till we had passed around the bend in the road and out of his sight forever.

Mr. Gray rode a little in advance of the drove, while the other man, whom he called Jones, brought up the rear, and in this way we started on our journey into the great world of which we had so often thought and talked, and whose injustice we were soon to realize.

I felt very sad at leaving my home, but as we traveled along I comforted myself with the thought that I still had May and Whitefoot for company. True, I could not speak with them just at present, but I knew they were with the drove and would be likely to go wherever I went, and that thought cheered me greatly. Our journey to town was a pleasant one, and I almost forgot everything else in watching the varied scenes that met my eyes.

Our road led us past farms, where we saw men and boys at work in the fields, and large herds of cattle, mules and horses enjoying the rich pasturage and cool shade, just as we had done at home on our own farm. Sometimes our way lay through patches of timber land, and we traveled some dis-

tance protected from the hot sun by the shade of the trees.

I should have liked to stop by the way and crop some of the herbage, but this we were not allowed to do. Our destination was the nearest city, and our owners lost no time in hurrying us thither. Mr. Gray was very gentle with me and often spoke kindly as he led me along, but I knew that my companions were not faring so well, for I could hear the harsh voice of Mr. Jones urging them on, and often the crack of his whip sounded through the air as his well-directed blows brought back into the ranks those who were so unwise as to swerve from the path.

On we traveled, around the base of green hills, and through woods where the sunlight hardly penetrated; through fertile valleys and over rising hills; past prosperous looking farms and wayside cabins—onward, ever onward, till houses became more numerous, and then I knew we were nearing the city.

By this time I had grown very tired, for I was unaccustomed to traveling long distances, and, besides, the air had grown sultry; so I was glad when

we were driven into a yard on the outer edge of the town and allowed to rest. Here we were given food and fresh water to drink, and here I had a chance to speak to May and Whitefoot once more. They told me they had minded the journey less than some of the others, for they had kept well to the road, and thus had escaped Jones's whip, and the vile names he had heaped upon the ones that had dared, for a moment, to step out of the way.

After I had satisfied my hunger and thirst I began to look around the yard. I saw that it was large and was divided up into pens, each of which was entered by a gate different from any gate I had ever seen. Some of these pens were empty, while others contained mules or horses and a few were filled with cattle. The yard was much longer than it was wide, and near it ran a strange looking road made of two strips of iron joined together with short logs. From the main road a number of other roads branched off, and ran the whole length of the yards.

As I stood looking at this queer road and wondering what it was for, I saw moving toward us a number of covered wagons drawn by a huge mon-

ster that did not look like either a horse or a mule. This horrible thing did not trot or walk along, but went sliding by, making a terrific noise and shaking the ground as it went, while great clouds of smoke and steam came from its mouth.

I was terribly afraid of this awful looking thing, but an old mule who appeared to be wiser than any of the others told me not to fear. He said the road was a railroad, the covered wagons were cars, and the fearful looking monster was what men call a locomotive or iron horse. I told him that I did not like the looks of such a horse, but he gave me a knowing glance and replied:

“Oh, well! you will have a chance to become better acquainted with it before long.”

## CHAPTER VI

### A LONG JOURNEY BEGUN

WE REMAINED in this yard an hour or so, and were somewhat rested after our long trip; but we were not very comfortable, for the sun was intensely hot, and there was no shade to protect us from its scorching rays. I was thinking sadly of my lost home and the cool shade of its trees, when I heard a roar, and on looking up saw a long train of cars approaching, drawn by one of those iron horses.

The train stopped on a side track near the entrance to our part of the yard. As the cars came to a standstill I noticed that some of them were empty, while the others were filled, some with mules, some with horses, and some with cattle. All of these poor creatures looked very forlorn and miserable, but I did not have much time to think of them, for just then Mr. Gray, with Jones and a number of other men, came into the yard,

and then I knew that we were to go away on this train.

Mr. Gray spoke to me, and I left the others and went to him, for he had treated me kindly thus far, and I trusted him much as I had trusted Master Harry.

Now all was bustle and confusion, so I determined to keep as near Mr. Gray as possible. The gate of our pen was thrown open and I saw that the opening led directly into one of the cars, through a door in the side. Leading up to the door was a walk of strong planks, and over this walk we were driven into the car. I was very much afraid to go in, but I heard Mr. Gray's voice urging me on, so I walked bravely over the planks and was the first to enter the car. May and Whitefoot followed me readily, but many of the others did not drive so easily, and were severely punished for their disobedience by being prodded with sharp irons which were fastened to the ends of long poles.

Each man was armed with one of these poles, and used it unsparingly on any animal that did not fall into line readily. Some of the poor beasts were so badly punished that I saw blood trickling from the

wounds made by the cruel irons. I now began fully to realize that man was indeed my master, and I was glad that I had learned obedience from my wise mother.

There was just room enough for me to stand crosswise of the car, and as the others came crowding in, I was pushed farther and farther toward the end, so that when the car was filled I found myself crowded so closely against it as to make it impossible for me to move in any direction. May stood next me, but Whitefoot had become separated from us and gotten packed in toward the other end of the car.

I had thought our condition uncomfortable enough in the yard, but I soon found that it had not been bettered, for, although in our present quarters we were sheltered from the direct rays of the sun, the car was packed so closely that the heat from our bodies soon made the air almost suffocating.

We were wedged in so tightly that we could not lie down nor move in any way, but must stand in one position, no matter how tiresome that position became.

In a short time our car was filled; then the door was shut and fastened, and we were obliged to wait while other cars were being loaded. The tramping of the animals as they were driven into the cars, the shouts of the men and the puffing of the iron horse mingled together and made so unusual a noise that I grew sick with fear.

After a time that, to me, seemed endless, the noise ceased, and I judged the loading was over, and that we should soon be going. In this I was not mistaken. Suddenly the iron horse gave a puff and a scream, the cars started and came together with a bump that would have thrown us off our feet had we not been so tightly packed; then the train began to move slowly from the yards, and soon we were flying over the country at a rate of speed of which I had never dreamed.

The air of the car was much better now, for the swift movement of the train caused a brisk wind which refreshed us greatly.

At first the motion of the train made me feel sick and miserable, but after a time I became accustomed to it and did not mind it so much. I now saw the wisdom of our being so crowded, for had



we not been packed in closely we must have been badly bruised by the swaying and jolting of the cars. Then, too, had there been room for the vicious mules to kick off their ill temper, we peaceful ones should have been in danger of getting hurt.

After I had become used to the motion of the train I tried to forget my discomfort in watching the changing scenery. We were running through a country broken by hills and valleys and dotted here and there with villages and towns. Occasionally we stopped at one of these larger places, and there waited on a side track while long trains of cars passed by us. Some of these cars were entirely closed, so I could not see what they contained, while others had rows of windows along the side and were filled with happy people, who looked at us curiously as they went by.

Whenever we stopped for a minute, I could hear the voices of the men who had charge of the train, and could see them walking along outside, but I had not seen Mr. Gray or Jones since we had been shut in the car.

As night came on I began to get very hungry and thirsty, but no one came to give us food or

drink. On and on we sped, through all the long hours of darkness, and when the day dawned again, I saw that we had left the hills and valleys behind us and were traveling over a level country, where vast fields of wheat and corn shone in the sunlight and the pleasant homes of men were to be seen all along our way. Everything in nature looked very beautiful that morning, but I had little thought for anything but my own sufferings. I was hungry and thirsty, and so tired, from standing so long in one position, that I think I must surely have fallen down had there been room. In short, I was thoroughly wretched, and I know that all in the car felt equally bad.

All day long we traveled over this level country, and the sun was well down in the west, when we ran into what appeared to be the suburbs of a large city. Here were railroad tracks without end, and many trains of cars—some standing still, others moving in different directions. Here, too, were yards for animals much like those we had left when we started on our journey, only many, many times larger. As I looked out from the side of the car, I saw that the pens were arranged in rows, with

streets running between the rows and crossing one another at right angles, so that the yard was divided up into sections or wards, each ward devoted to its own kind of animals.

I was not able to see all the wards, but I could see that there were many cattle, sheep and hogs in them, and that long trains of cars were being loaded with animals from the pens, while other trains were bringing in new arrivals and putting them in the places of those taken away. While I was watching this strange scene, our train ran in on one of the streets that crossed the yards and stopped before an empty pen; then the door of the car was thrown open and we were driven from the car into this pen.

I was glad to be released from my prison and to get my feet on solid ground once more. In the pen we found a long trough containing water, and another trough into which some men put food for us. We drank eagerly of the cool water and ate our supper. Then I joined May and Whitefoot, and together we found a comparatively quiet corner and lay down to rest.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE JOURNEY'S END

AFTER a night's rest I felt much refreshed, and as day began to dawn I tried to learn something more of my surroundings. I could not see over the board partitions that separated the different pens, but I looked through the cracks between the boards and saw that the pens near us were filled with cattle. They looked very sleek and handsome, and I afterward learned that they had been sent there to be killed and made into beef, which was to be shipped to all parts of the country, and some of it even to foreign lands. When I heard what was to be the fate of the poor cattle, I felt very thankful that I was a mule, for whatever else might happen to us, we were quite sure we should not be made into beef.

As the day came on and breakfast time drew near, the yards grew very noisy. The lowing of cattle, the bleating of sheep and the grunting of

hogs, added to the screech of locomotives and the shouts of men, made a din that can be better imagined than described. At an early hour some men came and put more food in the trough from which we had eaten our supper, so we had a good breakfast, and after I had eaten, and had had a drink of cool, clear water I felt quite like myself again.

A short time after we had finished our breakfast I saw a train running in alongside our quarters. So I knew we were soon to be taken away, and I was not sorry, for, although I dreaded the journey, I was anxious to get away from this noisy place. When the gate leading into the car was opened, I did not hesitate, but went in without urging. As I was entering, I noticed that nearly all the cars which made up the train were filled with horses, which I suppose had been taken from other parts of the yards.

In a short time we were again safely loaded and ready to start; and as we pulled away from the yards I was enabled to see more of their immense size. They covered so much ground that they looked almost like a city, and around the outside of

this city were many large buildings. I heard the trainmen saying that these buildings were the places where the animals were butchered and their flesh converted into mutton, beef and pork.

Our train soon began to move rapidly, so we were not long in leaving the great yards and their many dumb occupants far behind us. We ran through the outskirts of the city and were soon skimming along over the open country. The land was nearly level, and for a long distance our road ran within sight of a large body of water, larger than any I had ever seen before.

We had traveled all that day and night and a part of the next day, with only an occasional stop and without food or water, when we ran into another large city and were again put into a stockyard to rest. This yard was not nearly so large as the one we had occupied at our last stopping place, and it was not filled with cattle, sheep and hogs; the majority of its occupants were mules and horses. Here we were again given food and drink and then left to rest over night.

The next morning we were given an early breakfast. A short time after we had eaten it I saw a

number of men gathering in groups about the yards, and among them were Mr. Gray and Jones. I was pleased to see Mr. Gray again, and when he came into the yard and called me I went to him gladly.

“I see you have stood the journey finely, my boy,” he said, as he patted my neck and sides, “and now I think we will take a little walk.”

As he spoke he put a halter over my head. Then he led me out through the gate, and as I looked around I saw that Jones and another man were bringing out May and Whitefoot. We were led around to a large building that stood a short distance from the yards; here we halted, and while Jones and his companion held us by the halters, Mr. Gray went into the building. Soon he returned, bringing three beautiful bright-colored blankets and three handsome halters with silver mountings and gay tassels.

The halters and blankets were put on May and Whitefoot and me, and after we were further decorated with some small flags, fastened to our halters, our owners seemed satisfied with our appearance.

“Now, my friends,” said Mr. Gray, “we will

show the people what kind of stock we have for sale to-day!" And we were led away.

To the business part of the city our owners took us, and here we attracted much attention and drew crowds of men and boys about us whenever we stopped for a moment to rest. After parading through the principal streets of the city we were taken back to the yards, our gay trappings were removed, and we were again turned into our pen with the others.

I could not understand why we three mules should have been thus gaily decorated and paraded through the city, till I heard some men saying that the daily auctions of horses and mules were growing a little dull, and the parade had been given as a kind of advertisement to draw greater crowds and in that way enliven the sales.

I wondered what an auction might be, but I was not left to wonder long. The crowds of men about the yard kept increasing every moment, and finally in the middle of the forenoon, a portly, good-looking man stepped up on a high stand, which seemed to have been put there for the purpose, and in a loud voice addressed the crowds, saying it was time



for the auction to begin. Near the stand of the auctioneer was an open space, around which the crowd had gathered, and into this space the animals were led, to be exhibited before being sold.

In a pen near us were many horses and ponies which had been brought from a stock ranch in one of the far western states and had never been broken. Most of them were good-looking animals, and I noticed that each of them had some mark or letter on the flank, which later I learned had been burned in with a red-hot iron. This marking is called branding, and is done so that each ranchman may be able to know and claim his own animals.

These horses and ponies were disposed of first. They were led out into the open space, and after they had been exhibited before the crowd and all their good qualities had been pointed out, they were sold in lots or pairs, as the owners willed. While this was being done I fell to thinking how much the poor creatures must have suffered from the cruel burns, and I was more glad than ever that I had been bred and raised on a bluegrass farm in Kentucky instead of on a great ranch in the far West.

After this lot was disposed of, the sale of mules began, and our carful came first. I had hoped that we should be sold in lots, and that my friends and I might be struck off together, but in this I was disappointed. We were led out separately and nearly all sold singly, the mules bringing much higher prices than those paid for the horses and ponies. The bidding on mules appeared to be confined to a few persons, who bought in, one at a time, as many as they desired, paying various amounts, according to the grade of animal bought. We mules from the Bluegrass Region were considered very fine, and were sold at much higher figures than were those from other parts of the country.

After being shown off before the spectators for some time, I was turned over to a man who looked very much like Jones, and who, I afterward learned was his brother, for \$250. May and Whitefoot went for a little less. So on us three, at least, our masters had done as they had hoped to do—nearly doubled their money. The man who purchased us must have come there for the especial purpose of buying mules, for he kept bidding in

one after another till nearly all those brought by Jones and Mr. Gray had fallen into his hands.

After all the mules in our pen had been sold we were returned to our quarters and given a good dinner of grain, with fresh water to drink. All this time the sales were still going on, for there were many animals to be sold and as fast as one lot was disposed of others took their places in the "ring." Late in the afternoon a train of stock cars came to a stop before our pen, and we were loaded into a car at the rear end of the train.

I had become so used to being put on and off the trains that when the door was opened and we were told to enter, I went in and took my place at the end of the car. My two friends, and such others as had been bought by the same man, were driven in after me, till the car was filled. We were then fastened in, and in a little while had started on what proved to be the last part of our journey.

It was nearly night when we left the yards, but before darkness shut us in, I saw that we had left the level country and were entering a region much broken by hills and valleys, and very thickly settled. We ran through this hilly country the greater

part of the night, passing many towns and villages. Toward morning we stopped near a large station. Here our car was unfastened from the others, and while the rest of the train went whirling away in the darkness, was left standing on the switch to wait the coming of day.

## CHAPTER VIII

### IN THE COAL REGIONS

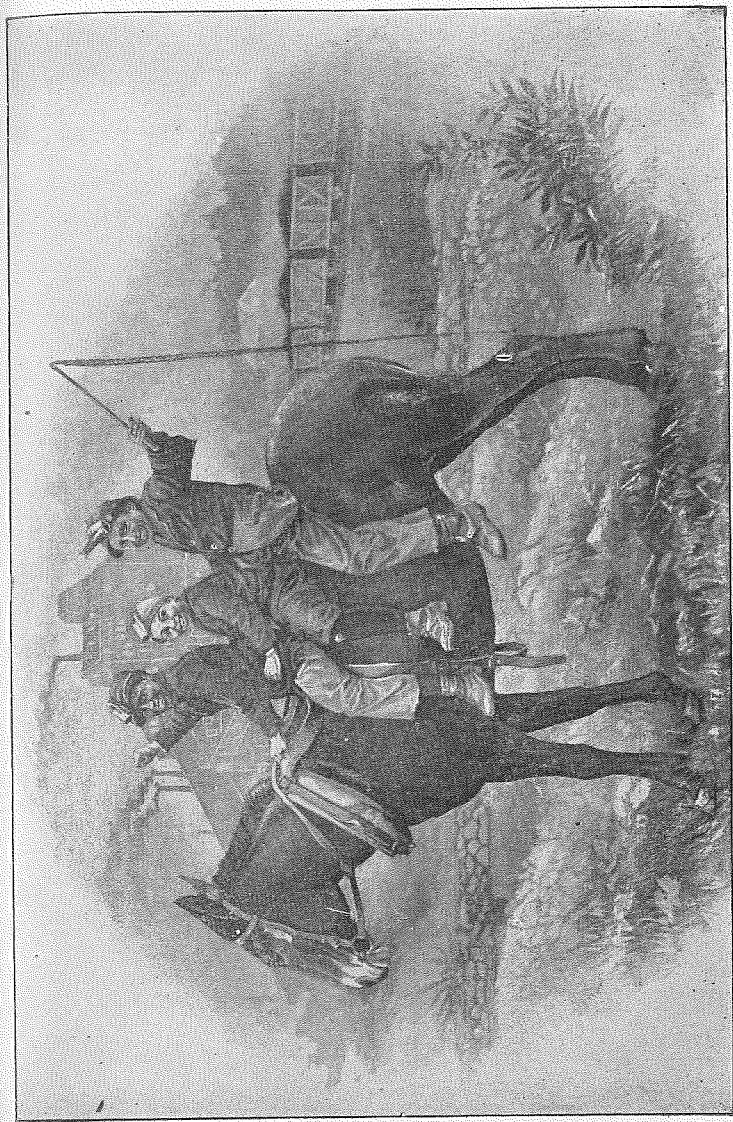
VERY early the next morning we were much startled by hearing a series of whistles like those given by a locomotive, but more prolonged and of much greater volume. The sounds came from various directions, and as each whistle had a different tone, and all were blowing at the same time, they made a din that must have awakened the country for miles around. I had become so accustomed to the shriek of the locomotive that I did not mind it, but I had never before heard such an uproar as this.

While I was wondering what it could mean, a number of men came to take us from the car, and in the leader I recognized the man who had bought us at the auction. They were not long in releasing us from our prison and as I stepped out of the car, stretched my cramped legs and looked around me, I saw that we were again in a large city, but one

unlike those I had seen before. There were no great stockyards, no large body of water near, nor any level expanse of surrounding country. The city lay spread out as far as I could see, along a narrow valley, bordered on each side by low ranges of mountains. At different points outside the main portion of the city I noticed very high black buildings, from which came smoke and steam, accompanied by a loud rumbling noise.

The place seemed a very busy one, for, although it was early morning, the business of the day had already begun. Men and teams were hurrying along, and cars, much like those I had seen on the railroads, were running here and there on iron tracks laid in the middle of the street. I felt very much afraid of these cars, for they had nothing to draw them that I could see, and yet they ran backward and forward just as the man in charge of them willed.

We were driven along these busy streets out to the suburbs of the city, then for some distance over what seemed like a country road, till we came to a level farm through which flowed a small river. This farm was covered with patches of grain, grass



IN THE MINING COUNTRY

and vegetables. At one end, facing the public highway, stood a comfortable looking farmhouse with neat outbuildings, and at some distance from these were several large barns, each surrounded by a roomy yard inclosed with a high board fence. In one of these yards I saw a number of mules that looked as though they had seen hard service somewhere. They were not brisk and light of foot as we were, but seemed stiff in their joints and had a rough, scarred look. I had never before seen beasts so forlorn looking, and made up my mind to inquire into the cause of their used-up appearance.

We new-comers were not put into the yard with these mules, but were driven into an adjoining yard and from there taken into the barn and fastened in separate stalls, where we found a good breakfast of hay and grain awaiting us. We were now given into the care of a man who was working about the premises, and who, I afterward learned, was the person in charge of all the mule barns, called the "barn boss."

Thus far I had been able to pass an occasional word with May and Whitefoot, but now this com-



fort was denied me, as their stalls were so far from mine that I could neither see nor speak to them.

Shortly after we were driven in, and while we were yet enjoying our plentiful feed, our purchaser came into the barn accompanied by several strange gentlemen. They were talking earnestly, and I soon found that the "green" mules were the subject of discussion. They viewed each of us in turn, while Mr. Jones explained our good points.

"All thoroughbreds," he said, "and not a blemish on one of them. A picked carload, bought up by my brother right in the heart of the Bluegrass Region, and brought by him to B—, where I bought them at auction. There were no others like them at the sale, and in getting them I feel sure I have made a good bargain for my employers, for the company that owns this lot of mules can pride itself on owning the best that can be gotten in the markets."

All this talk was a mystery to me. I had thought that the man who bought us at the sale owned us; but his words showed that he had only been acting as an agent for some company. I thought the matter over for some time, but could not make it out,

so I determined that as soon as I had a chance I would ask one of the old mules in the adjoining yard to tell me what it all meant.

The chance came very soon, for in a little while after the men had gone away and we had finished our breakfast, the boss took off our halters and allowed us to go out into the yard again. Here we found troughs of water for our use, and plenty of room to walk about for exercise. I was rejoiced to have the company of May and Whitefoot again. Together we went to the trough to drink and from there to the board fence that separated us from the cripples in the next yard.

A number of these miserable creatures had gathered along the fence, and were watching us with interest. One poor old fellow, whose legs were swollen and covered with sores, limped painfully along to where I was standing and greeted me with a friendly bray; this encouraged me so that I entered into conversation with him at once. I first asked him what had happened to him and his companions to use them up so badly; then I told him of the good home I had left, away in the Bluegrass, and of our long journey to this place, and asked

him to tell me who owned us and what would be likely to happen to us next. He gazed at me a few minutes in silence, while he nibbled the top board of the fence, and then made answer:

“So you want to know who owns you, and what they are going to do with you? Well, I can tell you, poor ‘greenie’! You don’t belong to anybody in particular. You have fallen to the low estate of a company mule, destined to toil and perhaps lay down your life in a coal mine where you will not see the light of day for months at a time. Your future master will be some cruel boy who will make your life a burden to you. You are brisk enough now, but wait till you have seen a few years of service in the pit; you won’t look so fine then, I can tell you! I, too, was young and spry once, but look at me now.

“You wish to know what ails the mules in this yard,” my friend went on. “We have all been hurt in various ways—‘stove up in the mines,’ as they say—and they have brought us here to doctor us up a little; then they will put us to work again and grind a little more service out of us, for you know we cost too much money to be put aside as

long as we are able to go. They will work us as long as we can be used anywhere about the mines, then sell us for what they can get for us. That is as much as I can tell you. I don't know what comes after that.

"Oh," he exclaimed, "you have a happy time before you, I can tell you! I hope you will take to it kindly, however, and do your best, even if your efforts do meet with cruel abuse. Man is your master, and a mule's life is never made any easier by kicking."

With these remarks he limped slowly away to another part of the yard and left me to my own thoughts. As I looked after him, my mother's words came back to me: "Man is indeed your master, and perhaps life will be made a little easier for you if you try to do your best."

## CHAPTER IX

### ENTERING THE MINES

THAT same afternoon we were gotten ready for work by having pieces of iron, called shoes, fitted to our feet and then nailed fast to the hoof. I did not enjoy being shod, neither did I like to wear the shoes, for they felt heavy and clumsy on my feet, but I submitted without resistance, for I had long since found that to be the better way. After being shod we were given our supper and some bedding, and left to rest for the night.

The next morning we were startled by the same steam whistles that had so astonished us on the morning of our arrival. Soon the boss came in and gave us our breakfast, and while we were still eating, a boy about the size of my young master Harry came into the barn, and, after looking us all over for a few minutes, asked the boss which one of the "greenies" he should take out.

I did not understand what this meant at first,

but I soon learned that this boy was one of those who drive mules in the mines, and that he had come to get one of the new mules. He wore dirty black clothes and had a little lamp fastened to the front piece of his cap. His face was very freckled, but good-natured and pleasant to look at, for all that; by his talk with the boss I learned that his name was Patsy.

Patsy seemed to be a favorite with the boss, who gave him the privilege of choosing from among the "greenies" the one he liked best. After looking us all over his choice fell on me. I was not able to speak with May and Whitefoot before leaving the barn, for as soon as Patsy had fitted me with bridle and harness he led me out of the stall, and mounted me; then, accompanied by the boss, we set off for the mines.

Out of the yard and away from the farm we went till we came near one of the tall black buildings I had before noticed, which I afterward learned were called breakers. We stopped beside a deep hole, called a shaft, which had been drilled far down through the rock and earth into the mines. Over this hole was a carriage, hung by wire ropes

which were fastened to pulleys above, and run by steam power. This carriage was going up and down the shaft at a high rate of speed, carrying men and mules into the works below.



A BREAKER

At first I was very much frightened, but after I had seen a number of mules taken, one at a time, into the carriage, and had watched them disappear down the black throat of the shaft, my fears were

somewhat quieted; and by the time my turn came to go down I had so far overcome them that without hesitating I allowed Patsy to lead me into the carriage. No sooner were we on the carriage than a board was slid in behind me, to prevent me from backing off, and we began our descent into the mines.

I cannot describe my sensations as I felt myself going down, down into the dark earth, but before I had time to think much about it the carriage came to a stop and I was at the bottom of the shaft. Here I was taken from the cage and led away through a dark passageway till we reached the place where work was to begin.

The way was intensely dark, but as we went along and my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, I could see by the glimmer of Patsy's lamp that the roof and sides of the passage were of a shiny black rock unlike any rock I had ever seen before; I now know that it was coal. Water trickled from this rock in many places and formed little streams along the sides of the passageway. This water looked clear and good, but I was not allowed to stop and taste it, and since then I have



learned that it is called sulphur water and is not fit to drink.

As we hastened along we found, at short distances apart, heavy wooden doors barring our way. These doors were opened to let us pass and shut after us by boys employed for that purpose, called door-tenders. When I had been in the works some time I learned that the opening and shutting of these doors changed the currents of the air, and kept it fresh in all parts of the mines.

All along the way I saw many passages running to right and left of the main line, and opening out into larger spaces which I heard the drivers call chambers. All of these passages, as well as the main line, had iron tracks for cars laid in the center, just as I had seen railroad tracks laid in other places; only these were single tracks.

After we had gone some distance from the foot of the shaft we reached a place where the main passage widened out to make room for several side tracks, or switches, and here we found many empty cars standing, and a number of other driver boys with their mules, all busy getting ready to take the empty cars away to the places where they were to

be filled. These boys were all dressed in dirty, black-looking clothes like Patsy's, and each had the same kind of lamp fastened to his cap; but I judged, from what I could see of them in the dim lamplight, that they were not all so pleasant-faced and good-natured as the boy who had chosen me for his mule. The animals they drove appeared to be old hands at the business, so I knew that I was the first of the "greenies" to be brought in.

I was not hitched to the cars and put to work at once, as I had expected to be, but, by the boss's orders, was led several times over the different routes until I had learned where to get out of the way of the cars and other mules, and had gotten some idea of what I was expected to do. It was during this first forenoon that Patsy gave me the name of Jim. The pretty name my young master had given me was mine no more. It died when I entered the mines, and since then I have never known any name but Jim. "Colliery Jim," some call me. I hate the name, for it has no pleasant associations linked with it.

After some time had been spent in training me for duty, I was hitched to an empty car and then

my real work in the mines began. This work of drawing the cars was not so hard for me, because of the previous training Master Harry had given me; so when all was ready and Patsy gave me the word to go, I surprised him by starting off readily, just as any faithful old mule might have done. I pulled the car along the track between walls of coal and across other tracks leading in different directions, till we reached one of those wide places, or chambers; here we stopped and I was unhitched from the car.

This chamber was a wide space that had been dug out of the solid coal, the rock roof being supported by walls of coal several feet in thickness, called pillars, which had been left standing for that purpose. There were also wooden props under the roof where the coal had been taken out. In the chamber where we stopped four men were working — two engaged in drilling holes in the rocky walls and blasting down the coal, while the other two were loading it into the cars. They worked by the light of their mine-lamps and were black with the coal dust, so I could not tell whether their faces were good or bad.

After a short stop, Patsy gave me the word to go, and away we went after more empty cars. These we left in the chambers where they were needed and in this way the day wore on. Occasionally in one of the chambers we would find a car loaded ready to take out; then Patsy would hitch me to it and I would take it out to the place where the loaded cars are brought together and made into "trips." This place is called a collecting branch. As soon as a trip is made up here, it is taken away to a place where loaded cars are left standing, called "the foot."

This work was hard indeed for me, for I had never done any real labor before, and the coal was very heavy. I drew only one car at first, but that required all my strength; in fact, it seemed, at times, as though I could never start it, but my driver was kind and did not beat me for my failures, as I have seen other drivers beat their animals, but waited patiently and urged me gently, till I was able to get the car under way. I was very grateful for Patsy's kindness, and did my best to please, so I got along very well with my first work in the mines.

After a while I began to feel hungry; I judged it must be nearly feeding time, and I was not mistaken, for soon every man and boy near me stopped work and hurried off to where they had left their dinner pails. Then all began to eat the lunches they had brought with them, but not one boy seemed to give a thought to the mule he had driven. I was trembling from over-exertion, and my tongue felt parched for want of water, but no one gave me food to strengthen me or water to quench my thirst. I was tied to an empty car and left to look on while Patsy ate his lunch and chatted with such of his companions as were gathered near. After a short rest all went to work again, the men and boys refreshed by food and drink, the mules tired and hungry as when they quit work.

The afternoon passed in the same way as the morning. Into the chambers with empty cars and out again with the loaded ones, back and forth I traveled, till my whole body ached and my legs would hardly carry me for weariness.

But the work came to an end at last, as all work will. We were unhitched, and, after slaking our thirst at a watering trough near by, were hurried

away through the various passages till we came to a worked-out chamber which had been fitted up for a barn. Here our harness was removed and we were turned over to the care of a man called the "inside barn boss," and thus ended my first day's experience in the coal mines.

## CHAPTER X

### DARK DAYS

FOR a long time, after entering the mines, I never saw the light of day. For us mine mules there was no bright sunshine, no song of birds, no green fields. Everything belonging to the outside world of nature had gone out of our existence, and we lived in one long, black night. We could always tell, however, when it was day outside, for the boss and his men came at a certain hour every morning to give us our breakfast, and in a short time after that the drivers came and took us out to our work. After toiling by the light of the mine lamps till our day's work was finished, back we went to the solitude of the mine barn.

We were always given a plentiful breakfast and supper, and on Sundays and holidays we had a noon meal also, but on working days we were never fed at noon. I was accustomed to a midday meal, and it was a long time before I could get used to this

new way of living. I suffered with hunger every day, and often wondered why all the other mine workers should have a lunch at noon, while the poor mule, that has the heaviest part of the work to do, is obliged to go hungry till his day's work is finished. I suppose the reason lies in the difference of station. The others belong to the human family, and therefore may eat when they feel like it; but we, their servants, being only mules with no power to help ourselves, must wait till our masters see fit to feed us.

The mine in which I worked was an extensive one, and employed a large number of mules, which were stabled with me in the mine, but May and Whitefoot were not among them. Every day while at work I looked carefully at every mule I met, hoping to find my lost friends, and every night, after going in from work, I watched for their coming, but all to no purpose. They were lost to me; and as time passed and I failed to get any trace of them, I gave up all hope of ever seeing them again.

I was very lonely now, and often grew homesick when I thought of the pleasant fields, the good mother, and the kind young master I had left in

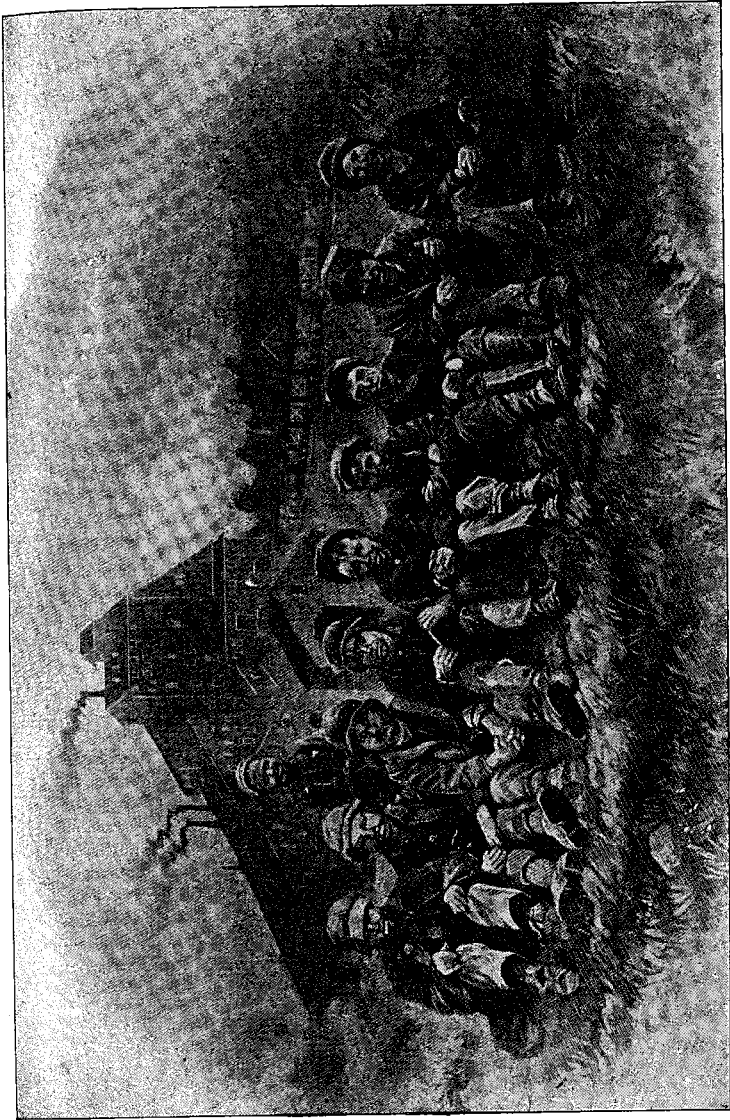


the Bluegrass country. Our work was hard, but after I had learned to do it, and had become used to going without my dinner, I got along very well. My driver was not an unkind boy, for, although he sometimes frightened me with the crack of his terrible whip, yet he seldom struck me. My early training did me good service in those trying days; I thought, at the time, that the reason I fared so much better than did many of the green mules who came into the works with me, was because I remembered my mother's counsel and always did my best. I have learned much since then, and the cruel treatment I have seen good mules receive, even when doing their best, has caused me to change my mind, and I now credit all the kindness shown me to Patsy's goodness of heart, not to anything that I did to merit it.

As I was the first of our carload of mules to enter the mines, I learned the work first, and thus had an opportunity to see how the others fared as they were brought in and broken to the business. Most of the poor creatures had never worn bridle or harness, and of course did not know what was expected of them. The breaking-in process was

something new and terrible to them, and for their failure to understand their duty many of them received cruel treatment. I have seen mules beaten and abused in a shameful manner even when doing their utmost to please their drivers. I have seen them strain every muscle to start the load that was far beyond their strength, while all the time their drivers were showering curses and blows, like rain, upon them. It is no wonder that so many mine mules become vicious, ugly brutes, and balk, or bite and kick their drivers.

I remember that when my old master wanted to put a young horse to work, he would either drive it himself or put the reins into the hands of some man who was capable of judging how much the horse ought to pull and how fast he ought to travel. How different was that training from the training we mine mules receive! We are given at once into the hands of driver boys, whose only qualification is the legal mine entry age, fourteen years; then we are hurried out and put to work without any extra feeding, or any exercise or light work to fit us for the hard labor required of us. We are supposed to know at once what we are to do, and if, through our



SOME OF OUR DRIVERS

ignorance, we fail to follow the track, or to dodge out of the way at the right time and in the right place, we are bumped and bruised by the cars, and the majority of us are cursed and abused by the drivers.

Mules, as a rule, are apt pupils and do not forget easily; therefore it is very important that their early training be of the right kind. When a "greenie" falls into the hands of a kind, judicious driver and is treated in a humane manner, he soon learns the work, and becomes a faithful servant and a valuable beast. But, alas! all the drivers are not kind; neither do they possess good judgment; and under their training many mules become balky and ugly, or tricky. The ignorance of the poor creatures causes them to make mistakes, and for this they are beaten and abused till their tempers are ruined; then, when the animals have been spoiled for life, they are put down as vicious and ill-tempered and must pay the penalty for all that results from their bad training.

I have said that our work was very hard. In all my experience I have never been hitched to anything that requires such exertion as does the start-

ing of a loaded car. The mule must pull with every bit of strength there is in him before he can start it, and even when doing this he is often beaten shamefully by his driver.

On a level road, four cars (which I have heard men say weigh about ten tons gross weight), are considered a trip. When a "greenie" starts to work he is tried first with one car, then with two, as was the case with me, till he becomes a little used to the business. After that he is generally expected to take the whole trip to its destination, wherever that may be.

Each driver carries a whip which consists of a short, thick stock about eighteen inches long and a lash three times that length. The lash is made of two heavy leather thongs twisted together. One thong is longer than the other, so that the end of the lash is a single strip; to this is fastened a twisted hempen snapper, and I have known some boys to use wire for the snapper. This whip is rightly called a "mule skinner," and is, I believe, the most cruel whip that has even been invented.

Should a man use this whip on a horse, he would be called a brute; but for the mule, of course it is

just the thing, and no boy would think of being without one, no matter how trusty an animal he might drive. Such is man's estimate of the character and feeling of the mule.

## CHAPTER XI.

### A STRIKE RUMOR AND AN ACCIDENT

OUR life in the mines was a monotonous one. Each day brought us the same routine of hard work, and each night left us to the same darkness and solitude. From the time we were taken to the barn and cared for, at the close of the day's work, till the next morning brought the glimmer of the boss's lamp, no ray of light pierced the inky blackness, and no sound broke the intense silence save the snorting and stamping of the mules or the squealing of the mine rats as they scurried around our grain boxes in search of food.

I cannot tell how long we had lived thus, but it must have been a long time, when one morning I noticed an unusual excitement among the drivers as they came in to take us out to work. They were all talking about their grievances and the strike that was sure to come off if the company would not agree to their terms. This was the first time

I had ever heard of "grievances" and "strikes," and it all sounded very strange to me; however, by pricking up my long ears and listening attentively, I soon learned that the workers in all the collieries owned by that one company, had become very much dissatisfied with the rules under which they were working, and had decided to quit work—"strike," as they called it—at a certain time unless the representatives of the company should come to a settlement with them before that date.

Of course a strike would be a new experience for me, and I had no idea how it would be managed, but I gathered that it meant no work, and no work for the men meant a rest for the mules. I felt almost happy again as I thought of my possible vacation and restoration to the outer world.

Patsy was less cheerful than was his wont that morning, and I wondered at it; for it seemed to me the prospect of a rest ought to make everybody feel glad, but I soon learned from his talk that his mother was very poor, and a widow, his father having been killed in the mines about a year before, and it was his earnings, combined with his mother's efforts, that enabled them to keep the little family



together and provide them with the necessaries of life. He said he was in sympathy with the men and believed their cause was just; yet he could ill afford to be idle, for idleness meant want and suffering in his home, and he did not doubt that other homes also would suffer if a strike should be declared.

All this I heard my master tell the other drivers as we were getting ready for work, and I felt sorry for him. I had learned to love him for his kind heart and his pleasant ways, and I did not like to see him unhappy.

Now, since I am no longer in the mines, I hear a great deal about labor organization. The principal topic of conversation among men, at present, seems to be the different unions and the benefits that the laboring man is to get from them. We hear about the United Mine Workers' Union, the Railroad Men's Union, the Street Car Men's Union, the Union of Locomotive Engineers, and so many, many others that it makes one dizzy even to think of them. They say that the working man's only hope of bettering his condition lies in united effort. Every laboring man and every boy of working age must belong to a union of his particular craft; then

when one body strikes all the other unions must stand by it, not only in sympathy, but in funds to help the strikers to live while the strike is on.

Well! perhaps this is a good way to manage the companies; I cannot say; but if it is, I wish it were possible for the mine mules to form a union for the betterment of their condition; I am sure they have enough grievances. It is true that some mules do go on a strike now and then, but they always go on alone, and I have never known of one gaining anything by doing so. Perhaps if they had a union and all struck at once, they would get better results. It is possible that they might accomplish something in that way, for when once the mule understood the purposes and benefits of such a union, I am sure there would be no non-union mules in the mines. Let the mule once be properly instructed along the line of strikes, and I believe he would make a success of it, for when he takes a stand, no power of man can move him.

This is all random talk, however; the poor creatures will never have any means of bettering their condition, for man is their master; besides, judging from what I have seen and heard, there is not much

in strikes, any way. As for organized labor, I am sure there was no such thing at the time of my first experience with labor troubles. Patsy did not say anything about a fund from which he could get help, so I think all this union agitation has come up since I left the mines.

That morning I noticed the same excitement among the men that I had seen in the boys. They went to their work as usual, but every face showed dissatisfaction, and all were determined to strike unless their demands were granted. At dinner time they gathered in little groups to discuss the situation, and I heard them talking of a threatened reduction in wages, which were already very low for many of them. They said they could barely live on their earnings now, and to have them cut still lower was simply unbearable. They had decided that they and their families might as well starve one way as another, so they would stop work if the company persisted in its present unreasonable course. For the greater part of the forenoon very little was talked of but the coming strike, but in the afternoon an accident happened which, for a time, drove all other thoughts from our minds.

We had begun our afternoon work, and were taking the empty cars into the chambers and bringing the loaded ones out; the latter we hauled away to the branch, whence they were taken to the foot, then hoisted up through the shaft to the surface above. I had just come out upon the main gangway and was heading for the branch, when I heard the cracking of timber and the crash of falling rock, while a heavy current of air came rushing through the passage.

The noise frightened me and I tried to run, while the sudden draught blew out our lamp and for a moment we were in total darkness. My driver spoke to me in a kind but decided tone, which so quieted my fears that I settled down to my usual gait and soon came to a halt. Patsy struck a match and lighted his lamp, then we hurried along to the first switch, where we pulled out on a side track and stopped. Here I was left, trembling with fright, while Patsy hastened back to see what had happened. I heard men running from various directions and a confused sound of voices shouting to one another, but did not know what was the matter till Patsy with some of the other drivers came

back to where I was standing and I heard one of them say that part of the roof had fallen in one of the chambers and two men were buried under the fallen rock.

I did not hear all the particulars at first, for soon work for the day was suspended and we mules were hurried away to the barn, while the men went to dig for the unfortunate workmen. Of their death there could be no doubt, for no man or beast could live for a moment under that mass of rock. It took some time to remove the rock and when the men were reached, they were found crushed beyond recognition. Death must have come instantaneously, the men said, so they had not suffered.

When a break occurs in the roof of a mine the great pressure causes the affected part to bulge, or crowd downward upon the props. This is called squeezing. It seems that this piece of roof had been squeezing for some time, but as the pillars were unharmed and the affected part had been further strengthened by wooden props, it was considered safe to work the chamber. This had been done till that day, when without further warning the roof had fallen, and crushed the two miners to

death. I heard some one say that a boy and a mule had just left the place, thus narrowly escaping the fate of the men.

This was the first accident I had seen since coming into the mines, and I did not soon get over my fright. Even after the fallen rock had been removed, when we were again working near the place I felt afraid, and would hurry past the spot with all possible speed. I have seen many accidents since that day, but none has ever affected me quite so powerfully as did that one—I suppose because I soon became used to such happenings. We easily accustom ourselves to our surroundings, and the things that at first frighten us greatly we soon pass by unheeded. It is well that this is so, for otherwise our lives would, if possible, be more wretched than they now are.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE STRIKE AND A VACATION

AFTER the accident, we worked on for some time just as before, and I was beginning to think that the disagreement between the company and the men must have been settled, that the promised strike was not to come off, and that I should not get the rest which I had been anticipating, when one morning the time came for work, but no one appeared to take us out.

The boss had given us our breakfast at the usual hour and had gotten us ready for the duties of the day, but we waited in vain for our drivers. For the first time, except Sundays, since I had entered the mines Patsy failed to put in his appearance, so I knew that the men had quit work and that he had been obliged to go out with them, much as he had dreaded doing so.

At noon the boss and two of his men came to give us food and drink, and I heard them saying that

the strike was on in earnest. All the men and boys employed in the collieries owned by that company had gone out that morning, and there was no telling when the trouble would end. Perhaps it would not last long, the boss said, and the mules would be left where they were till he saw how things were going. I was very much disappointed when I heard this, for I had not forgotten the outside world, and longed for its brightness and cheer once more. However, our masters had said we must wait a while, and from that decision there was no appeal.

Now that we were not working I did not know day from night, nor breakfast from supper; therefore I cannot tell how long we remained in the mines after the strike began. I only know that we had been there some time when one day the boss with some of the drivers came to take us out, and to my joy Patsy was one of the number.

We were soon ready to leave our dark habitation, and as the boys were leading us along to the foot of the shaft, whence we were to be taken to the surface, I heard them talking about the strike. There was no prospect of a settlement, they said, and no one could tell when the works would start again.



It might be in a few weeks, and it might not be for many months. In either case we were sure of our rest, and I was happy in thinking about it.

I cannot tell how delighted I was to be out of my prison, but my pleasure was not unmixed with pain, for no sooner did we come into the light than I was seized with stinging pains in the eyeballs; and a sudden dimness of vision which would have made it utterly impossible for me to find my way if Patsy had not been leading me. I did not then know the reason of this trouble, but I have since learned that my eyes, having been so long in total darkness, were unable to stand the bright sunlight, and this caused the sudden pain and temporary blindness. All mules that have been kept in the mines a long time suffer thus when brought out into the light, and I have heard that some have become blind for life from this same cause. We were taken to the same barn that we had occupied on our arrival, and there we stayed for some time, waiting for the strike to end. These barns were not very well lighted, and this partial darkness did much to help my eyes. They began to get better at once, and in a little while they had im-

proved so much that I was able to look about me again.

When we went into the mines it was late summer and the grass was dry and brown, but now spring had come and field and forest were clothed in bright green. By this I knew that we had been in the mines many months, if not years. The weather was warm, and we spent the greater part of every day in the large yard that surrounded the barn. The first time I was turned loose I searched for my lost friends, but they were not there. Then I looked for the cripples I had seen in the next yard, but they, too, were gone and the place was filled with strangers. The old mule I had talked with that first day, I never saw again.

I have said I was delighted to be out of the mines and free from work, but as day after day went by and the strike continued, I began to grow restless and long for a change. All day long I had nothing to do but to stand by the yard fence and look over at the fields of grass and grain, and the little river running between green banks and shady groves; and as the time lengthened I longed more and more for a taste of the green grass that looked so tempt-

ing, and a brisk run in the sweet spring air. The more I thought of these pleasures that lay just beyond my reach, the stronger became my desire to enjoy them, so I made up my mind to get out at the first opportunity and see what lay beyond the farm where we were quartered.

The chance came sooner than I had expected. One of the farm hands, on his way to the barn one morning, left the gate unfastened, and I was not long in pushing it open far enough to make my escape. I squeezed through the opening, and without a thought as to where I should go, ran down the road as fast as my legs could carry me, and in a few minutes had left the barns and my companions far behind me.

I shall never forget how free I felt as I trotted along, stopping here and there to feed on the sweet grass, or resting a while under the trees that grew by the roadside. I was free once more; there was no more work for me, down in the blackness of the mine! So happy was I in my newly found freedom, that I did not notice where I was going, but wandered on and on till I left the open country and came to the suburbs of a city.

I was somewhat startled to find myself in so thickly settled a place, but since I had come thus far, a feeling partly of bewilderment, partly of curiosity led me to venture farther, and I traveled on till I entered one of the principal streets. Here evidence of the strike could be seen on every hand. On the streets were many idle men and boys — the men gathered in groups talking, the boys playing games and making as much noise as possible.

I soon became much confused, for people were hurrying in every direction, and wagons and street cars were running here and there, all making such a tumult that I hardly knew what to do. By the time I had gotten into the midst of all this confusion I became thoroughly frightened and wished I had not been so anxious to leave my place of safety in the yard. I turned about, thinking to make my escape, but this I found no easy matter, for no sooner did the idle boys discover me than I was set upon from all sides.

I ran down one street and up another, only to be followed by a crowd of boys, who yelled at me and pelted me with refuse from the streets till I was so dazed that I did not know which way to turn to

escape. To make the matter worse, a number of vicious dogs that had joined the boys ran barking, snapping and snarling around my heels till I was nearly wild with fright. At last I broke through the ranks and ran for my life, not knowing or caring where, and finally succeeded in getting away from my tormentors.

I did not stop running, however, till I had left the town and come out into the open country. Here I stopped to look around me, and, to my delight, found myself near the little river that flowed through the company's farm. I ran down to the water and quenched my thirst, then stopped in a clump of willows on the bank to rest; here I was found a short time later by one of the farm hands and taken back to the yard, a very dirty and tired, but a much wiser and more contented mule.

Since my experience that day I have never cared to venture beyond the limits of my own territory. I proved to my own satisfaction the truth of my mother's words: "It is always best to be content where one is placed."

## CHAPTER XIII

### GREEN PASTURES AND NEW ACQUAINTANCES

THE morning after my visit to town I heard the boss telling one of the men that, as there was no prospect of the strike coming to an end, the mules would be taken out to pasture the next day. We were to go far out into the country, where a pasture had been hired for us, and stay there till the works started or cold weather set in.

Words cannot express how rejoiced I was to hear this news. The knowledge that I was to go out into the green fields once more, at liberty to roam over them at will, made me so happy that it hardly seemed as though I could wait for the next day to come; but my last experience had taught me a lesson I should not soon forget, so I waited with what patience I could command for the hours to pass.

The next day dawned bright and clear, and as we were hurried out of the barn and started on our

journey, I was reminded of the day that we were taken from our home in the Bluegrass country. We were fastened together, three or four side by side, and with a driver for each group, and in the lead a heavy wagon drawn by a span of mules, we set out.

We were driven along the valley till we came to a place where a narrow pass cut through the mountains. Into this pass we went, and in a little while had begun a gradual ascent. We traveled through this defile for a long distance, going up and on till we passed beyond the mountains and came out into a farming country. Our road now took us over hills and through valleys for many miles, and brought us at last to a large farm containing numerous fields of grain and vegetables and many acres of good pasturage.

These pastures were to be our home while we stayed in the country, and into them we were soon driven; then, after the gate had been securely fastened, so that none might escape and wander away, we were left to go where we pleased. These pastures were very nice quarters for us after our long stay in the dark mines, and had May and Whitefoot

been with me, I could easily have imagined myself back in my old home. A part of the land we grazed over was woodland through which flowed a little river, so we had plenty of shade and water.

There was a large number of mules in the field—nearly all of them strangers to me. As time passed by and I became somewhat acquainted with them, I found some that I liked very well, but many of them were ugly, and I had learned early in life to keep well away from all such characters, so I avoided them as far as possible.

Among the better class was a pretty young mule, so entirely different from all the others as to make her very noticeable. She was small, much like May in build, but in color she was spotted like an Arabian horse. I saw that she had been branded on the hip, like the horses and ponies I had seen in the stockyards, so I knew she had come from some ranch in the far West. The beautiful coloring of this mule first attracted my attention; then I noticed that she always seemed gentle and kind, so I soon grew to like her very much, and one day, after I had become better acquainted with her, I asked her to tell me her name and the story of her life.



She said she had come from a ranch in the West and had never had any name till she came to the mines; then her driver had called her Jennie. When a colt she had roamed over the grassy plains and had never known fear or suffering but once, and that was at the "round-up," when she had been branded. That was a terrible experience, she said, but it was soon over, and the wound made by the cruel iron had healed quickly. After that she had gone where she pleased, and no stranger dared claim her, for she wore her owner's mark.

When old enough to be broken and put to work she had been driven, with many others, to a western market and there sold. She had been brought east with a lot of horses, mules and ponies, had been sold at auction and after many trying experiences had come at last to the coal mines, and there the breaking-in process had begun.

In the beginning her treatment had been very severe, and many marks besides her western brand marred the beauty of her skin. She told me that her first driver had been a very cruel boy. He had beaten and abused her without mercy for no other reason but her failure to understand, at once, all

that was required of her. This boy had used her so badly that she had become discouraged, and had about made up her mind to refuse to work.

Had she done so she would have been spoiled for life. Happily for her, however, just at that time she was put into the hands of another driver, and with the change better times came for her. The new driver proved to be a good-hearted boy who treated her kindly, and in a short time she learned to do her work well, and was now a trusty, valuable servant.

After Jennie had finished her story I related to her my own experience. I told of my old home and my young master, I spoke of the wilfulness and discontent of Wildfire and of my affection for May and Whitefoot, whom I had lost and never expected to see again. After exchanging confidences in this way, Jennie and I became intimate friends, and we spent many happy hours together during the remainder of our stay in the country.

But there was one animal among us, that summer, that interested me more deeply than all the others, and this was an old horse. He had been hurt in one shoulder and limped badly; his coat,

which must once have been smooth and shining, was rough from lack of care, and his skin scarred by blows from the heavy mine whip; yet there was that in his manner which told of better days. He was small, but heavily built, while his long tail and mane, that fell far below his knees, and his long, heavy foretop all showed plainly that he belonged to a breed of horses that men call French Canadians. In color he was jet black, excepting one white foot and a white star on his forehead, and in his young days he must have been very handsome.

To me his manner said as plainly as words, that although among us, yet he was not of us. He seemed so lonely and so out of place that I could not help wondering where he had come from, and what ill wind of fortune had brought him into company so uncongenial.

The more I thought of him, the more curious I became to know his history, and I determined to make his acquaintance as soon as possible. He spent much of his time alone in a secluded corner of the field, and it was thus I found him one day, and began at once to cultivate his good will. In a few days I had so won his confidence that he told

me his name. "Black Billy" he had been called in his younger and happier days, but now he was plain Billy or Bill.

## CHAPTER XIV

### BLACK BILLY'S STORY

AFTER I had made friends with Billy, I spent much of my time in his company, and one day, as we were standing under the shade of a large tree by the creek, I asked him for the story of his life. He gave it to me, and I will repeat it to you as nearly as possible in his own words.

I was raised on a small farm not very far from this spot. If we might go out of these fields I could take you in a short time to the place where my happiest years were spent. My master was not a rich man and owned no other horses but myself and my mate, a pretty light bay mare named Nelly, of whom I was very fond. I have heard that our master bought us when we were colts, but of that I have no recollection. In connection with my early life I remember only the kind master and mistress, and the farm where we all lived so comfortably.

My master was very fond of us and always gave us the best of care, but it was my mistress whom I especially loved. She petted us, fed us lumps of sugar and other dainties, and made such friends of us that I soon learned to run and meet her whenever she came into the field, and would follow her about much as a dog follows his master. I have been separated from her many years now, but the affection I then formed for her has led me always to think well of women. Man has neglected and abused me, but from women I have received nothing but kindness, and I shall always love them the best.

When you look at me now you may not believe that I was once very high-spirited and full of life, but it is none the less true. I loved to caper and play about the fields, and even when in the harness I could not always restrain my desire to run. This playful spirit led me to form some habits that I now know were very bad ones. I would run and jump over every obstacle that lay in my path, and in that way I soon learned to scale any fence, high or low, and could go from one field to another whenever I pleased. Men called me "breachy,"

and my master would sometimes punish me by keeping me shut in the barn, while my mate, whom I could never persuade to jump with me, was allowed to feed in a field near by.

But this habit of jumping was not the worst of my faults. I very early learned to run away from my good master after he had harnessed me for work, and this sport my mate seemed to enjoy as much as I. She would never start first, but when I took the bit in my teeth and started off for a good run, she never hesitated to follow me. We did not enjoy that sort of fun very often, however, for one day when we had run away with the heavy wagon behind us, and had smashed it nearly into kindling wood, my master went to town and came back bringing for me a different sort of bit from the one I had before worn.

This bit he compelled me to wear, and after that I did not find running away so pleasant. My mouth was so cruelly punished whenever I attempted it, that I soon steadied down into a trusty, reliable horse. I never meant any harm by my fun, but I have since learned that wrong-doing always harms somebody.

I was never tired in those days, for the work we did on the little farm was mere play to me then. Our master never allowed his oat bin to get empty, and his good feeding and good care showed plainly in our high spirits and smooth, glossy coats. Often at night, when our day's work was finished, our master would hitch us to a light wagon, and he and our mistress would take long drives in the surrounding country. I think I was never happier than when being driven in this way.

Those years were full of pleasure for me, but they ended all too soon, and then sad changes came to us. I shall never forget the cold winter morning when we waited in our stalls for the coming of the master who had never before failed to give us our food and drink at the proper time. That morning a neighbor came in his place, and then I learned that he was very ill. My mate and I were taken out and driven, at our highest speed, to the nearest town for the doctor; then followed a few anxious days of waiting, and then they said he was dead, and I never saw him again.

After the death of my master, my mistress was unable to work the farm; consequently she had no



further use for us. At a public sale or auction all the loose property belonging to the farm was sold, and my mate and I were bought by a man named Brown, a distant relative of my dead master, who lived a few miles away. It was with many regrets that I left my kind mistress and the home where I had been so happy; but I was naturally of a hopeful disposition, and I decided to make the best of the situation and hope for good times.

While Mr. Brown was not a cruel man, yet I soon found that he was not the careful, painstaking master to whom we were used. The work we had to do at our new home was not much harder than that we had formerly done, but the care we received was very different. At first Mr. Brown gave us passably good care; but as time went by, and we became an old story, he began to neglect us. Our stable often went for days at a time without being cleaned. Our coats were no longer smooth and glossy, but were dusty and rough, and marked by the prints of the harness we wore, for we were not curried and brushed every day as we had been before. Sometimes our master would go away and leave us for days at a time, with no care save that

given us by a young girl who lived in the family. This girl did what she could to make us comfortable, but at first she was very much afraid of me. It took some time for me to convince her that I would not harm her, but when this was done and I had gained her confidence, we became fast friends and I grew to love her.

But neglect of his animals was not the worst of Mr. Brown's failings. As I came to know him better I learned that he was one of the many who love to spend their time in and around saloons. I suppose he enjoyed the company he found there, and I know he liked the drink, for he never came home from his trips without being more or less under the influence of liquor. We were often driven to town on business, and we seldom went home without stopping for a time before some saloon. In fact, so used did we become to this way of doing that we would pull up to our accustomed stopping-place without orders, and wait there while our master went in and got his drinks.

When the fall of the year came and the products of the farm were ready for market, we were often seen standing before the saloon. Mr. Brown would

go to town with produce, and, after disposing of his load, would hitch us in front of the tavern and leave us there for hours at a time. Often we have stood thus till late in the night, with no supper, and no blankets to protect us from the cold, while our master drank and played cards within. At a late hour we were driven home and put into the barn. Our harness would be taken off and some food given us, and that was all the care we ever received after our long and weary waiting. We were never rubbed down and brushed, to warm us and make us more comfortable.

This treatment was very hard to endure, and yet we had one thing in our favor. Although our master neglected us in many ways and we suffered many discomforts in consequence, he never allowed us to go hungry, excepting such times as we were obliged to stand before the saloons. Perhaps he imagined that the fumes of the bad whiskey kept us from getting hungry then; I cannot say as to that; but those were the only times that we were ever really hungry. When at home we had plenty of hay to eat and usually a little grain. In summer, when not at work, we were turned into the pasture

to feed on grass, and those were happy times for me. I had long since lost all desire to run away, but the habit of jumping fences was one of which I could never entirely break myself. Many a time I have jumped into a field of oats or corn and there feasted to my heart's content, while Nelly waited for me outside the fence.

We lived many years in the employ of Mr. Brown and gave him faithful service. We became used to discomforts of all kinds and ceased to care for them. So long as I was not hungry, and had Nelly with me, I was content.

The young girl of whom I have spoken was very kind to us, and I soon gave her the affection that I had felt for my former mistress. She taught me to wear the saddle and to carry her on my back; and in company with one of her girl friends would take long rides over the country roads. I think I enjoyed those excursions quite as much as she, especially if my mate were one of the company. Very often, however, she was not permitted to go, but another horse, named Dick, who belonged to a neighbor near by, was taken in her stead. I did not like Dick, for although he was not to blame, I

could never quite forgive him for taking Nelly's place. Go where I might, I never wished for any company but hers.

We were growing old in Mr. Brown's service, and the time had come when we were not quite so well able to do hard work as we had been in former years. I am of a much hardier breed of horses than was Nelly, so she was first to give out when old age came creeping on. She did not appear to be sick, but simply grew weaker day by day, till one morning, in early spring, she lay down in her stall and never got up again. In a few more days she was dead; then my master hitched me to the sled and compelled me to draw her lifeless body to a far corner of the farm, where he dug a grave and buried her. After she was hidden from my sight, he took me back to my lonely stable, where I mourned long and deeply for my dear mate.

In a few days a new horse stood in Nelly's stall. The spring and summer work came on and I worked by the side of this horse all through the season, but he could not take the place of my lost companion in my affections. No horse could ever do that. A few more years went by and I was still

toiling by the side of the horse that had taken Nelly's place, though hardly able to do so now because of my growing infirmities. One day I heard my master saying to a neighbor that, as I was no longer able to do the work of the farm, and as he could not afford to keep three horses, he would sell me cheap if he could only find a buyer.

I cannot tell you how my feelings were hurt by this unkind speech. What! was I to be sold away from the home to which I had come when in my prime, and where I had labored so long and faithfully, only because I was growing too old for the work I had been used to doing? Was I to be torn from the place I had grown to love because my heartless master was too stingy to give me the little food necessary to keep me alive? I am sure the cost would not have been much, and I had earned it and much more many times over. Besides, I was still able to do light work, and I should have been so happy to end my days on the farm, and to be buried beside poor Nelly.

I thought a great deal on what I had heard Mr. Brown say, but could hardly believe that he really meant to sell me. I found in a few days, however,

that he had not been joking, for when the neighbor to whom he had been talking offered him twenty-five dollars for me the bargain was closed at once. I was soon taken away; and since that day—when I looked for the last time on my old home—I have lost all interest in life.

The man who purchased me soon repented of his bargain and sold me to another man, and he took me to the coal mines. There I was put to hauling cars—a task entirely too heavy for me. For a time I did the work to the best of my ability, although I received many beatings because I could not do so well as a mule or a younger horse. Some time ago I had my shoulder hurt between the cars and a pillar. Since then I have been unable to work, and a few weeks ago I, with some crippled mules, was sent out here. I expect we shall go back to the mines as soon as we are able; then a little more toil and rough usage will finish me, and I shall be glad when it is all over and I am at rest.

When Billy had finished his story, he walked away to another part of the pasture and left me to meditate on the injustice of man to the lower

animals over whom the Creator has given him dominion, and to wonder if he would ever be called to give an account of his stewardship over them.



## CHAPTER XV.

### AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE

WE STAYED in the country a long time, and the summer was fast drawing to a close, when one morning the boss, with some boys to help, came to take us back to the mines. I heard him telling the farmer that the strike had been declared off, and that the collieries would resume work on the following Monday.

My long vacation had given me a complete rest, and I now felt quite equal to the hard work that I knew lay before me, though I was sorry to leave the pleasant pasture, with its sweet grass and cool shade, for I felt sure I should never see it again.

I did not see Black Billy among the mules that went back to the mines, so I felt sure that he was not yet fit for work and had been left behind in the pasture. I was glad of this for his sake, for it would give the poor old fellow a little longer rest.

We returned over the same road by which we had gone out, but when we reached the valley the drove was divided and a part went back to the mine in which I had worked before, while the rest were driven farther up the valley to another colliery belonging to the same company. I do not know why my field of labor was changed, but so it was. I was put in with the latter number and in a short time we reached our destination.

I found the new stable much smaller than that which I had formerly occupied; still, it was large enough to accommodate a number of mules. On being given my place in the barn I learned that Jennie was to occupy one of the stalls next to mine. Since losing May and Whitefoot, I had never met a mule that had so won my friendship as this one; so when I found that she was to be my companion and fellow worker I was much pleased.

The day after our return was spent in shoeing the mules and in getting everything about the breaker ready for work. Then followed a day of rest, and early Monday morning the familiar toot of the whistles called all hands to work. Here a new experience awaited me. Instead of going into

the mines through the shaft, as I had done on our first entrance, we were taken out past the breaker, to a place where a hole, called a slope, had been driven into the side of the mountain. Here we halted for a few minutes while the drivers lighted their lamps; then in single file we entered the dark passage, made our way down the gradual descent to the bottom, then along the gangway to the part of the mine where our work was to begin.

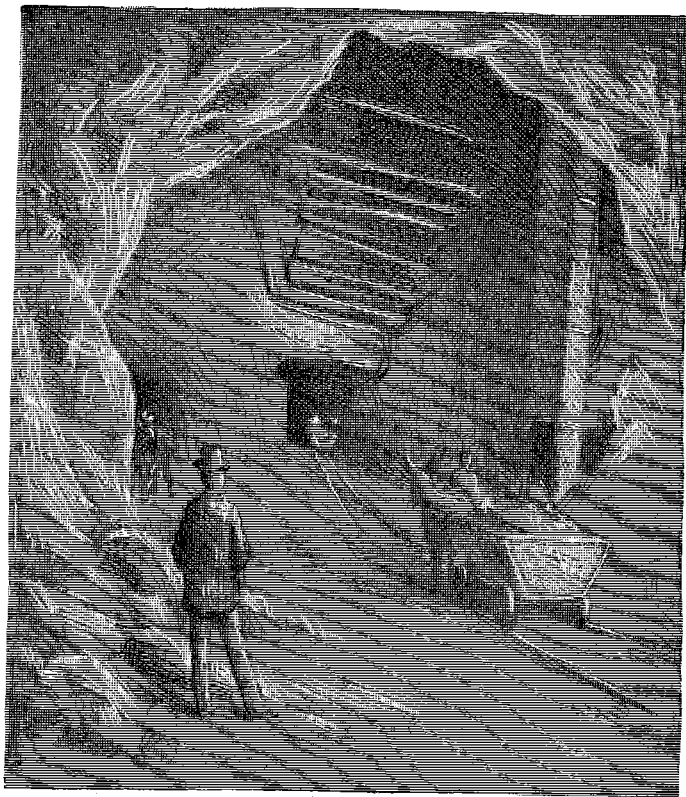
I found that the work in my new field was about the same as that I had formerly done, but I was not long in discovering that my new driver was not the good-natured Patsy of former days. I was given into the hands of a tall, slim boy with a dark, thin face and black eyes that would gleam with an evil light whenever anything happened to displease him. This boy was called Tom, and he proved himself a hard master. I think he must have driven some very wicked mules before I was given to him, for he seemed to think there was no other way to manage me but with vile language and blows from his heavy mine whip.

This treatment was new and very discouraging to me. I had always been a faithful worker, and

Patsy had been a kind, considerate driver; so I hardly knew how to behave when ill-treated. I remembered my mother's advice, and tried to do my best; yet scarcely a day passed that I was not abused by Tom's vile tongue and beaten by his cruel "mule skinner" for some trivial mistake or fancied offense.

There was one thing, however, that made me like this new place much better than the old one, and that was the privilege we enjoyed of coming to the surface every day. This made my life much less dreary, notwithstanding all of Tom's abuse. Mules that go into the works through a slope are not generally stabled in the mines, as are those taken down a shaft, but go in every morning and come out at night. We now enjoyed fresh air and a little sunlight every day, and on Sunday, our day off, we were given the freedom of the yards around the barn when the weather permitted of our being turned out. This way of living was a great improvement on that in the dark mines, and the world seemed brighter and life much pleasanter and better worth living because of this arrangement.

I have said that Jennie occupied a stall next to



IN A COAL MINE

me, and for that reason I was not so lonely as I should otherwise have been. Under a kind driver, life was much happier for her now, and whenever

I grew downhearted over my hard lot she would encourage me with kindly sympathy and cheerful words.

In the other stall next to me stood a large gray mule whom I found to be rather an agreeable companion. He, too, had come from a ranch in the West, and on coming into the mines had been named Darby. Darby's history was made up of just such experiences as come to most mine mules, so I need not repeat it here. Suffice it to say that he was a trusty animal and was valued highly by his owners. His driver was a kind boy, and whenever an opportunity offered he would give me a pleasant word or show me some little kindness, which went a long way toward making up for Tom's brutality.

Since the strike the collieries had been working better than before. Much of the time they were running full time, which made it better for the men from a money point of view, but very hard for the mules. We went to our work early in the morning and came out to our stables late in the afternoon tired and hungry, and in this way the autumn and winter went by.

So far I had been very fortunate in regard to accidents; I had never been seriously injured and with the exception of that one time in my early experience, had never been near the scene of any mine disaster; but now the time had come when I was to witness something so terrible that I shall never be able to forget it.

For those of my readers who have never visited the interior of a coal mine I will explain something of its construction and workings. I have spoken of the main passage or gangway, and of the many passages leading away from it to the various chambers. When the coal vein is of about the same thickness throughout, these passages are driven comparatively level; in such places the mule draws the empty cars into the chambers and the loaded ones out to the main branch. But if the vein varies in thickness, the passages slope gradually from the bottom of the thicker part up to the thinner sections. Such slopes are called planes or runs. A run is a slope on which the empty cars are drawn up by the mule and when loaded, are let down by sliding the wheels. This is done by passing sprags through the wheels in such a way that the latter

cannot revolve. Sprags are sticks about eighteen inches long and from two to three inches thick, made of any tough wood.

A plane is a grade on which a wheel called a friction wheel is used. Over this wheel is passed a wire rope that lets down a trip of loaded cars which in their descent draw up a trip of empty ones. This explanation brings me back to the accident which took from me a kind friend.

We went to our work as usual, one morning, and for a time all went well. Darby was working with me and we were busy drawing cars into the chambers and out to the collecting branch, where they were made into trips and slid down the run to the level; there we were again hitched to them, and drew them away to the foot. On reaching the top of a run we were unfastened from the cars and were supposed to remain there till the loaded trip had gone down the slope. This we did not always do, however, for sometimes our drivers were so daring as to bring us safely down and get out of the way before the cars came down. This coming down before the trip is against mine rules, as it is very dangerous for both boy and mule.



About the middle of the forenoon I had come safely down, and Darby and his driver were on their way, when I heard a trip coming, and I knew by the sound that something was wrong. Tom stopped to see what was the matter, and on looking around we were horrified to see the whole trip running away down the grade. The sprags had failed to work right and the cars were running wild, and fast gaining on Darby and his driver, who were trying their best to reach a place of safety. When near the bottom of the grade, the boy saw that it would be impossible for him to reach the level ahead of the oncoming cars, and attempted to dodge into a niche beside a pillar; but before he and his beast could make their escape the cars had caught them, and in less time than it takes to tell it the whole trip had jumped the track and was piled in a confused mass on the unfortunate boy and his mule.

News of the accident quickly spread to all parts of the works, and men and boys came hurrying from every direction to assist in removing the broken cars and tons of coal from the unfortunates beneath them. Many hands make quick work, and in a short time the wreckage was removed. Darby

was crushed to a jelly, but the boy was found standing upright against a pillar, squeezed to death. His body was not cut and disfigured as it would have been had he been caught in a different position, but the life had been pressed out of him.

The accident caused a suspension of work for the day, and we were hurried away to our places in the barn. As I looked at Darby's empty stall and realized that neither he nor his kind driver would ever enter it again, I could not help feeling lonely. But nothing was ever allowed to interfere with our work for very long at a time. About the coal mines vacancies are soon filled and accidents soon forgotten. In the eager race for gold, the death of a boy and a mule does not count for much; so the next morning we went to our work as though nothing had happened, and at night, when I came in, I found a new mule occupying Darby's stall and a new boy in the place of the one not yet buried.

This new mule was not a very attractive looking beast, but there was something in his appearance that made me look at him again and again. His manner seemed familiar, but it was a long time before I could think where I had seen him;

then the past came slowly back and I knew that in the battered, vicious looking occupant of the adjoining stall, I beheld a companion of my brighter, happier days—Wildfire.

## CHAPTER XVI

### WILDFIRE

YES, I had found Wildfire; but how different in looks was this Wildfire from the one I had known, away in the Bluegrass! His hide was seamed and roughened by blows from the terrible "mule skinner," his legs were stiff and swollen, and his long ears lay back against his ugly looking head in a way that meant harm to anyone who came within his reach. Taken altogether, he was a wicked looking animal, and I saw at once that his naturally stubborn temper had not been improved by his contact with the world.

I spoke to him kindly, calling him by the name he had borne when with us, but he only stared at me. Then I told him who I was, and asked him if he did not remember our old home and the times when he had been so anxious to get away and see the world. After I had talked to him for some time the angry look died out of his eyes, his ears

resumed their natural position, and looking at me in a friendly sort of way, he made answer:

“Yes, I am—or, rather, was once—Wildfire, but it had been so long since I had heard the name that I hardly remembered it. I am called Turk now. That was the name they gave me when I first came to the mines, and I think it suits me very well. I have proven to them that I can be a Turk in more than name.”

I then asked Wildfire to tell me where he had been and how he had fared since the day he had gone away so joyfully to see what the great world was like.

“I remember that time very well, now that you speak of it,” he replied, “and I admit that I was anxious to see the world; but my acquaintance with it has not been such as to make me love it very dearly. Had I been as wise in those days as I am now, I should not have been so eager to try the unknown. However, it will make but little difference to either of us in the end, what we have liked or disliked.

“I left home willingly,” he went on. “I was crowded into one of those prisons called stock cars,

and brought to this horrible place, where I must grind out a miserable existence in order that man may increase his gains. I have been beaten and abused for what I could not help, and when I have struck back in self-defense I have been beaten again for that. So I have come to the conclusion that all mankind, especially boy-kind, are my natural enemies, and my best course is to get even with them whenever I have a chance."

I told Wildfire that perhaps he would fare better if he were more gentle and did the best he could, but he would not listen to me.

"Tell me how much better you have fared than I—with all your goodness," he said. "You loved your home and would have stayed there forever, perfectly contented; but did that save you from being sold into bondage? You have traveled the same road I have, are in the same box that I am in. We are both here because our master loved money and raised us for the purpose of increasing his wealth. You say he treated us kindly. So he did; but he did it because it was to his interest to take good care of us—not out of any particular love that he had for us.

“So you see it is just as I have told you: our likes or dislikes will not help us in the least; we are destined to give all there is of us, even our very lives, in the interest of our lord and master, man. It would not seem so utterly unbearable if they would give us decent drivers—men who understood their business—but to be beaten and knocked around by half-grown boys who have never had experience in anything but slate picking, is more than mule flesh ought to stand. You need not talk to me of gentleness; I mean to pay them for their abuse every time I have an opportunity, and some day I intend to go on a strike, and then they shall see who comes out ahead.”

I saw that it would be useless to argue with him any longer, so I changed the subject by asking him where he had worked before coming to this place. He told me that ever since coming to the mines he had worked in a colliery not far distant. A short time before he had been caught between two cars and had one of his legs disabled, so he had been sent to the barn for treatment. There he had stayed till the injured leg had so far healed as to be considered fit for service, then he had been

brought to our colliery to take the place of the unfortunate Darby.

After my first long talk with Wildfire concerning the line of conduct he had marked out for himself, I did not mention the matter to him again. But as we were often near each other when at work, I had many opportunities of seeing him show his viciousness and trickery. He was a wicked beast to deal with, and no small amount of nerve and daring was required of anyone who undertook to handle him, but his driver did not seem to fear him. The boy was always very cautious in his manner of approach, but when once he had Wildfire in the harness, would rule him with great firmness, always managing to get the required amount of work out of him.

Wildfire had always had a wilful temper; still, I believe that had it been his fortune to fall into the hands of a good driver who treated him fairly and kindly, he might have made a profitable servant. As it was, the treatment he had received had aroused all that was bad in his nature, and made him the "vicious, ugly brute" of common phrase.

I worked near Wildfire a long time, and every



day I could see that he was growing more wicked and obstinate. At biting, striking, and kicking, he was an expert, and no one ever knew what his next move would be. The man or boy who came near him must be constantly on guard. The poor fellow never received a kind word, and hardly a day passed that he was not severely punished; yet he did not mend his ways in the least.

One morning we were working near each other and, for a wonder, Wildfire appeared to be in a fairly good humor. He started in to work without trouble, and it seemed as though, for that day at least, all would go well. We had worked well on into the forenoon, drawing cars into and out of the chambers. Wildfire had started in with his cars and had gone a part of the distance, his driver walking behind him, when he suddenly stopped and his heels flew out like lightning. So quick and unexpected was the move that the boy had no chance to dodge the blow, and it took him squarely in the forehead, killing him instantly.

After this display of treachery, not every boy was anxious to undertake the management of so wicked a beast, so he was given to one of the most

reckless and daring of all the drivers. I knew when I looked at this boy that it would be a bitter fight between him and Wildfire, and in this I was not mistaken.

The boy had not driven him many days before Wildfire brought matters to a climax by refusing positively to work, and this move was quite as sudden and unexpected as had been the kick that killed his former driver.

We were taking our trips of loaded cars to the foot, I a little in advance of Wildfire, and had covered about half of the distance, when I heard the sound of blows and oaths behind me. Tom called a halt, and on looking back we saw that Wildfire had stopped and would not take another step. His driver was beating him unmercifully and using all the oaths and vile names at his command; still the mule did not stir. The noise attracted other drivers, and soon a number had gathered around to watch the fight. Many plans for making the balky mule go were proposed and tried, but all were a failure. Wildfire was in one of his ugliest moods, and no amount of persuasion or force could move him. He had gone on a strike, just as he had said

he would, and I could see by the gleam of his eye that he meant to fight it out. All the obstinacy in his nature was aroused, he had taken his stand, and his whole attitude said as plainly as words, "No surrender."

Now comes the horrible part of the story.

After some time had been spent in useless attempts to force Wildfire to move, some one suggested that a chain be fastened around his lower jaw and a mule hitched to the other end; in that way he would be compelled to go. No sooner was this plan proposed, than his driver hastened to try it. A long chain was procured and one end wrapped around his lower jaw and securely fastened; then, to my surprise and horror, I was unhitched from my cars and fastened to the other end of the chain.

If I have ever had a desire to balk, it was then; but the habit of obedience was strong in me, so when Tom gave me the word to go, emphasized by a heavy blow from his mine whip, I lunged forward, then halted as suddenly as I had started. Wildfire had not moved. Instead I felt the chain grow tighter, then I heard a sound as of something

breaking and tearing. Tom unfastened me from the chain as quickly as possible, and on looking at Wildfire I saw that his jaw had been broken and a portion torn off so that it only hung by the skin.

I think the driver was somewhat frightened at the result of his experiment, for he unhitched and led Wildfire away to the boss without delay. I did not see the poor animal after that, for when I went to the barn at night his stall was empty; but I heard the boys talking over the affair and saying that the boss had taken his knife and cut off the broken piece of jaw. So if poor Wildfire is still living he is getting along without lower lip or teeth to help him in eating. The boss had said that he would be good for many a day yet, but I have always hoped that his end came soon; for nothing but death could relieve him of his sufferings.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A NIGHT OF TERROR

FOR a long time after the events related in the last chapter, our life passed quietly enough. I have never seen Wildfire since, but the cruel treatment he had received made a lasting impression on my mind—one I shall never be able to shake off. I have nothing to offer in defense of Wildfire's conduct, but I cannot help thinking that, as man is the higher animal and has been given reasoning faculties, the greater wrong lies at his door in cases of this sort. Had poor Wildfire met with more patience and kindness he might have been a different creature, and then his sad story need never have been written.

Jennie was still in the mines with me, and we were the same good friends. Our stalls were yet side by side, and when our day's work was finished we had many pleasant talks together, and in that way cheered and helped each other along. As long

as I had the companionship of Jennie, I did not mind my hard lot so much, for I was always sure of her sympathy, and I have found that sympathy goes a long way toward lightening one's burdens, even among animals. But there came a time when Jennie, too, was taken from me, and since then my way has seemed darker and drearier than before.

I cannot tell how long a time passed between the day that Wildfire disappeared and the night that Jennie met her awful fate, but I think it must have been several months. The season was late summer, and the weather was very warm. What I am about to describe to you stands out in my memory as the most terrible experience of my life—an experience so dreadful that even now I shudder with fear as I recall it to mind.

We had finished our day's work and gone into our stalls at night very tired and hungry. The air of our stable was almost suffocating after the coolness of the mine. The boss had given us the usual care, and had gone away, leaving us to enjoy our supper and our rest.

For a time the extreme heat made us very uncom-

fortable, but in a little while a strong breeze sprang up, the place about us grew suddenly dark, and on looking through the window, which had been left open, I saw that the sky was covered with black clouds, and I knew by the sharp flashes of lightning and the distant roar of thunder that a heavy shower was fast approaching. The storm came up very rapidly, and was soon upon us.

I had learned early in life to not be afraid at such times, so I went on contentedly eating my supper, although the rain fell in torrents, the lightning was almost blinding, and the thunder shook the barn to the very foundations. The storm had been raging thus for some time and was beginning to show signs of abating, when there came a flash of lightning more blinding than any that had preceded it, accompanied by a clap of thunder that fairly shook the earth beneath us.

For a moment I was stunned by the shock, but when I came to myself enough to realize where I was, the bright light and the smell of burning wood and hay told all too plainly what had happened. The barn had been struck by lightning and was on fire.

Then followed a great commotion. The fire whistles sounded the alarm, and men and boys came hurrying to the rescue; but the flames spread so rapidly that I knew if help did not come to us quickly we should all be roasted to death in our stalls. I have no words in which to describe the horrors of that hour—the scorching heat, the stifling smoke, the snorting and stamping of the mules as they strained at their halters in their vain attempts to escape the awful doom confronting them, and the shouts of the rescuers as they rushed in and out of the burning building.

The fire engines threw water on the flames, and every man and boy worked with all his might to rescue the mules from the burning barn, but no one displayed more coolness and bravery than Jennie's driver. Again and again did he rush into the scorching heat and blinding smoke, till he had brought out eight of us poor creatures, I being the last.

The part of the barn in which Jennie and I had our stalls was by this time so completely wrapped in fire that when the boy made another attempt to enter, to bring out his own mule, he found the



way barred by sheets of flame. Portions of the roof were already falling in, and it would have been madness for any one to enter the burning building. No earthly power could save Jennie now, so her driver was obliged to leave her to her fate. As the hungry flames came nearer, and finally enveloped her, she screamed aloud in her agony and terror; and many who stood by and heard her said the cries sounded almost human. All the mules had been saved but Jennie, and the men said she was the best and most valuable of all.

With the exception of a little singed hair, the rest of us were not hurt, and the boss soon had us in a place of shelter and safety. Then, as there was nothing more to be done but watch the fire and keep it from spreading to the other buildings, most of the crowd went home, and all became quiet again.

Many years have gone by since that awful night, but the horror of it will never be forgotten by me. Often, in my dreams, have I seen again the raging flames, the excited crowd, and above the roar of the fire and the shouts of the multitude, have heard ringing in my ears the despairing death cry of poor Jennie.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A FRIGHTFUL ORDEAL

THOSE who are unacquainted with the conditions governing the life of a mine mule may not know that his term of service is, with an occasional exception, of but a few years' duration.

In feeding these mules, very little hay is used. As I have stated, they are never fed at noon, but morning and night they are given all the grain they will eat, the principal grains used being oats and cracked corn, mixed in about equal parts. The object of this over-feeding of grain is to force strength in the animal, and the process, combined with hard work, soon exhausts his energies and makes him practically useless as far as work in the mines is concerned.

A mine mule, therefore, is generally old before his time—old and broken in body, while still young in years. As his value decreases he is put to work in more dangerous places, where he is

likely to be killed soon; or else he is sold for what he will bring, some farmer usually being the purchaser.

For some time after the strike and my long vacation, I felt better than before, and stood the hard work very well; but at last the over-feeding, joined to the hardships of my daily life, began to tell on me. I was no longer the active young creature that had gone into the mines a comparatively short time before. With every day that went by I felt myself growing less able to do my work, and had it not been that an accident which occurred about that time gave me a rest and a change, I feel sure that my career in the mines would soon have been ended.

I have spoken of my good luck in regard to accidents. Up to the time of which I am speaking, I had never suffered any serious hurt, but now I was fated to pass through one of the most frightful ordeals that ever come to a mine mule.

The life of the mule, like that of all mine workers, is always in danger, for there are many ways in which he may be severely injured or instantly killed. He may be crushed by falling rock. He

may be squeezed between two cars or between the cars and pillars—the fate of poor Darby and his driver. He may be burned by fire damp, a kind of gas that collects in the mines. Sometimes this gas collects in quantities sufficient to explode and kill both men and mules, and I have known of instances where many lives have been lost by such an explosion. At other times this gas gathers in smaller quantities along the roof; then when the miners go in with their lighted lamps it takes fire and burns, often very severely, the man or beast that happens to be within its reach. I have seen mules whose hair had been nearly all burned off in this way.

Again, there is danger of the mule being entombed—shut in the mines by a fall of rock. In such disasters, unless help comes soon, he either starves, or is killed and his flesh used to prolong the life of the men who are entombed with him.

But one of the most terrible things in the list of mine casualties is to be dragged down a grade by a trip of loaded cars. This is generally caused by the carelessness of the driver in not unhitching when he is supposed to, or by his failing to set his block right. A block is a heavy piece of timber

about eight by twelve inches in thickness, and from eight to ten feet long, set on a pivot beside the track, at the head of an incline. One end is braced against a pillar, and then the block is swung out in front of a car; the bumper or beam at the end of the car strikes against it; this prevents the car from starting down the grade before all is ready. Should this block be set insecurely, a sudden jar or anything striking against it is likely to displace it and send the whole trip flying down the run.

One day I was bringing loaded cars to the collecting branch at the head of a run. Here they were coupled together, and as fast as a trip was made ready, the block was swung off, and the cars were slid down to the main line. I had taken the last car of a trip into position, but instead of unhitching me from the car, as was his custom, Tom left me standing where he had halted me, while he went to fasten the car and at the same time talk to a laborer who was standing near.

I never could tell how it happened, but all at once the car to which I was hitched gave a jerk, the wheels began to turn, and before anyone could prevent it, the whole trip had started down the grade.

My feet were jerked from under me and I fell to the ground, but my harness held firm, and I was dragged down, bumping against pillars, sharp irons along the track, chunks of coal by the side of the road and everything that lay in the path, till the cars slackened their speed and we all brought up in a heap at the bottom.

Tom and some men came running after me and were soon at my side. My harness was quickly cut and with the help of the men I managed to get on my feet. I was so stunned by the shock that for a while I hardly knew what had happened, but when I came to myself a little I found that I was bleeding from many wounds. No bones were broken, but one leg, below the knee, was cut open to the bone, one ear was nearly torn off, several deep gashes, from which the blood was streaming, were made in my hips and thighs, the skin had been knocked off in a number of places, and my whole body was terribly battered and bruised.

I think I must have presented a sorry looking spectacle after my perilous adventure, but I look upon it now as the means of prolonging my life, for it took me out of the mines, and I did not return to

them for many a day. I was taken to the barn where injured mules are sent to be treated. Here my wounds and bruises were dressed by a man who makes a business of doctoring horses and mules (a veterinary doctor, I believe they called him), and I was made as comfortable as possible.

It would not do to let me die yet, for I had cost too much money to be cast aside for a few cuts and bruises. What the old mule in the cripple yard had told me, on the day of my arrival, I now found to be true. They meant to get out of me all there was in me. So I was kept in the mule hospital and my injuries attended to till my wounds healed and I was able to go to work again.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE RETURN TO WORK

I RECOVERED from my injuries very slowly, and it was a long time before I was able to go back to work. The cut on my leg proved more serious than all the others. Not only was the flesh laid open to the bone, but the knee joint had been so badly hurt that the fluid known as "joint water" had run out, leaving the knee stiff and almost useless. The disfiguring bunch that I wear on my leg to-day, and shall carry as long as I live, was caused by that accident.

After my wounds had so far healed that they did not require dressing every day, I was turned loose in the yard surrounding the barn. This yard was so large that it was like a small field. Here I could limp around as I pleased, and had much leisure in which to think over my experience and to wonder if the future held in store anything worse than the past had brought me.



I was now in the position that the old cripple had been in.

“Wait,” he had said, “till you have seen a few years of service in the pit. You will not be so spry then, I can tell you.”

Well! I had seen the few years of service, and his words had come true. I was far from being high-spirited and full of life now. I could not run and jump as I did on the day that I escaped from the yard and made my flying trip to town. No, I was not “spry” now. I could only limp painfully about, almost on three legs, as he had done then. How long the time seemed since that conversation with the old mule, and how many things had happened! Yet it had not been long—only a few years at the most, and now I, too, was nearly “used up.”

I thought over the matter a great deal during those idle days, and wondered how many mules it would take to run all the collieries in the land during a man’s lifetime. The poor creatures are so quickly used up that surely the number must be legion. Ah! how little man thinks of or cares for the faithful servants that go down every day with

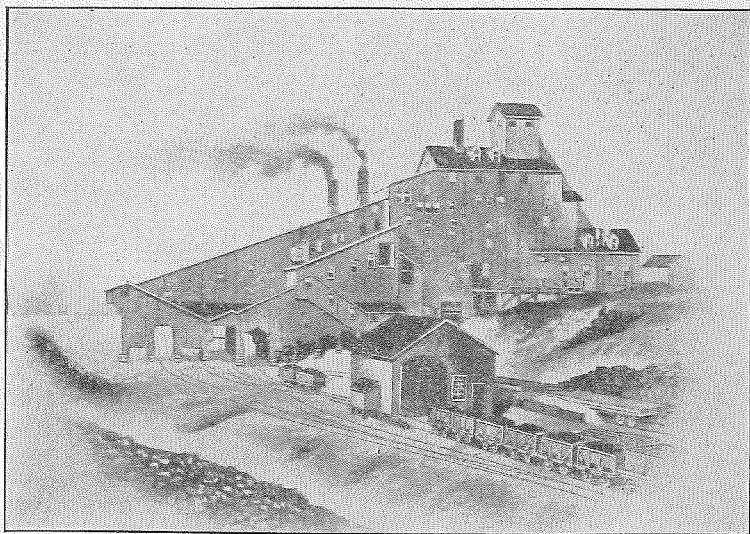
him into the pit, and there toil, and suffer, and even die, that he may reap the benefits of their labors!

I think several weeks must have gone by before my wounds were far enough healed to permit of my being reported for duty; for be it remembered that a mule is seldom entirely well when he is sent back to the mines. As soon as he is able to be put in the harness and gotten out to work somewhere (and there is generally a place for him about the mines), he goes to work, and his hurts may take care of themselves.

My enforced rest had restored to me a little of my former energy, so when the time came for me to return to the mines I went cheerfully, although my injured leg was still much swollen and at times very painful. I did not know it then, but I learned afterward that my owners knew I should always be lame, and so were determined to put me back and get all they could out of me before they were obliged to kill or sell me.

Well! I went back to work, but not to the place where I had been last. Instead, I was taken to a colliery situated still farther up the valley, and at this new place another surprise awaited

me. I did not go down a shaft nor through a slope into the mines, but was driven out to the breaker, where I saw something different from anything I had heretofore seen around the coal works.



SHAFT AND PLANT

The law governing all coal corporations requires that the shaft be placed a certain number of feet from the breaker. I have heard men say that this is done so that should the breaker take fire and

burn, the fire can be kept from destroying the machinery about the shaft and endangering the lives of the men and mules in the mines. At most shafts the coal is hoisted to the surface and the cars run over a track to the breaker, where it is lifted by machinery to the top, and there weighed and docked; then it is emptied into rollers to be crushed, screened, and made ready for market.

At this shaft a trestle (which is something like a very high bridge) had been built from the shaft to the top of the breaker. One end of this trestle was over the mouth of the shaft, and here the loaded cars, one at a time, were brought up from the "foot." As each car reached the top a mule was hitched to it, and it was drawn to the top of the breaker, where the coal was disposed of as before described. I soon learned that the object in building the trestle was to make the work more simple and save the expense of putting in hoisting apparatus at the breaker. By the use of the trestle the coal was lifted from the mines to the necessary height at once; then there was nothing more to do but to take it to the breaker and weigh and empty it.

I soon found that the drawing of these loaded

cars to the breaker and the empty ones back to the shaft was to be my new work. At first I did not like this. The trestle seemed to me a dangerous place, and the very thought of working so high in the air filled me with fear, and I shall never forget how frightened I was when I was first put on the carriage and lifted to its dizzy heights. It was with fear and trembling that I began my work there, but after I had made a few trips over the new route, my self-confidence came back to me, and then I got along very well.

I have spoken of the water that is always found in the mines. In nearly all mines water comes in in such quantities as to make it necessary to place a pump at the bottom of the mine. A shaft leads from this to the surface, and at this shaft is placed an engine and machinery for running the pump. This shaft is called the pump shaft, and is always situated some distance from the breaker. A track is laid to the pump shaft and over this track carloads of culm are drawn to feed the fires of the engine, and the cinders and ashes are taken away. Generally some mule too worn out or crippled for service in the mines is put at this work, and anyone

passing by one of these places on a week day may see the patient beast going steadily to and from the shaft, taking in the culm and bringing away the ashes.

On the day of my arrival at the new place, as I was going to my work, I noticed an old mule creeping slowly away toward the pump shaft, but he was too far away for me to tell much about his appearance; besides, I was too much taken up with my own affairs just then to think of anything else. In the excitement of beginning work on the trestle all other matters were forgotten; but by the time the noon rest came I had regained a little of my self-possession and was able to look about me, and I then had a better view of the old mule that I had seen in the morning.

He was a most dilapidated old fellow. He was not poor in flesh, for the mules are never that around the mines, but the misery he was enduring showed in his every movement and looked at me out of his sad eyes. I had thought my lameness hard to bear, but how shall I describe what I saw in this miserable creature! A scarred and roughened coat, shoulders worn and swollen, dim, watery

eyes that looked at one with a pathetic, wistful expression, and a manner devoid of all spirit—that was the picture the poor animal presented at first sight.

On closer inspection I saw that his four feet had once been white, but were now blackened by coal dust, and that his legs were stiff and covered with bruises. On one of his feet just above the hoof was a large sore that must have been there for a long time. The flesh seemed to have fairly rotted from the bone, and vermin were creeping about it in a sickening manner. I gazed at the forlorn object with pity, and my heart swelled with indignation to think that any animal so unfit for it should be forced to work. The oftener I looked at him, the more impelled I felt to look again; and at last the conviction forced itself on my mind that the miserable creature before me was none other than my dear old friend Whitefoot!

## CHAPTER XX

### A SAD MEETING

To SAY that I was shocked at the condition in which I found my old friend expresses my feelings far too feebly; I was utterly horrified. The impression made on my mind by his forlorn appearance I found it impossible to shake off. All that afternoon, as I traveled to and fro over the trestle, his image was constantly before me; and so anxious was I to learn more about him that I could hardly wait for the day to end.

I hoped that when I went in from work I should find Whitefoot stalled near me; then I could hear his sad story, for I felt sure that it was a painful one. In this hope I was disappointed, however, for when I entered my stall at night I saw nothing of him. The barn was a large one, and there were many mules quartered in it, but nowhere did I see my old chum. I was much cast down, but I did not lose hope, for I knew he must be some-



where about the barn, and that sooner or later I should meet him again.

The next morning as I went to my work, I saw Whitefoot drawing a car to the pump shaft, and at noon I again had a nearer view; but no opportunity came for me to speak with him; and in this way the days of the week went by. Every morning I found him at his task and every night he disappeared from my sight, till Saturday night came and I had neither spoken with nor learned anything more about Whitefoot. Still, this did not discourage me, for I knew that when Sunday came and we were turned loose in the yard, I should be sure of seeing him if he were quartered anywhere about those premises.

Sunday morning—my first Sunday in this new field—dawned bright and clear; and at an early hour we mules were taken from our stalls and turned out into the large yard surrounding the barn.

The crowd among which I found myself that morning was indeed a motley looking one. Many of them, like myself, were badly crippled, and nearly all of them looked as though they had seen

hard service. However, the company I was in did not interest me just then, for I had but one thought, and that was to find my old comrade Whitefoot. With this object in view, I started on a tour of inspection around the yard.

I had thought so much during the week of meeting my old friend on the Sabbath, that the hope had grown almost to a certainty, nor was I disappointed. I had scarcely gone half of the distance around the yard when I spied an old mule standing alone in its farthest corner. He had gotten as far away from his fellows as was possible, and stood with drooping head and listless air, seeming to have no interest whatever in his surroundings. At first sight I knew that this lonely creature was none other than Whitefoot, and I hastened, with what speed my lameness would permit, to greet him.

As I reached him and spoke, he stared at me in a way that said as plainly as words: "Who are you? I do not know you." Then, calling him by the name he had borne when we roamed together over the Bluegrass pastures, I told him I was Lightfoot, his old friend, and asked him to tell me

where he had been and how he had fared since that morning at the beginning of our service in the coal country, when we were lost to each other.

The sound of the old name seemed to rouse him from his indifference. He looked at me again, and I saw that I had awakened his interest; then he gave himself a vigorous shake, as though to rid himself of the apathy that had so long possessed him, and limping closer to my side, he said:

“So you are Lightfoot, are you? I knew a mule by that name, away back in my early home, and we were very intimate friends. We came together to the coal regions, and here I lost him. Now you come and tell me that you are he. I can hardly believe that you are the same Lightfoot, once so full of life, the favorite and pet of our young master, yet something tells me it is true.

“Well,” he went on, “I am sure I should never have known you! I see that you, like myself, have not found life in the great world any too pleasant. We are both greatly changed; but that is not to be wondered at, considering the lives we are obliged to live in this terrible country. I think our master Harry would hardly know either of us now, were

he to see us. But how did you recognize me? I am surprised that you should see anything in the miserable object I now am, to remind you of the Whitefoot of former days."

I told him that his pitiful condition had first attracted my attention, then I had noticed his four white feet, and this had led me to look at him a little more closely, till I had come to the conclusion that he was none other than Whitefoot, the friend from whom I had been so long separated. I told him of my joy at meeting him again, of my disappointment when I did not find him stalled near me, and of my determination to search for and if possible find him, when we should be turned loose on the Sabbath.

He said his stall was in an opposite part of the mule barn; thus, as we had not gone out nor come in at the same time, we had missed each other, both night and morning. We talked together a long time and did not separate until the stable boy came to put us back into our stalls.

## CHAPTER XXI

### WHITEFOOT'S STORY

MY FRIEND and I had much to talk about during the time we spent together that Sunday. I told Whitefoot about my life since I had last seen him, of my friendship for Jennie, of her terrible death, and of Wildfire's tragic end. Then I asked him where he had been and how he had fared in all this time. His experiences had been much like mine: he had worked in a colliery not far from the one in which I had been working, and belonging to the same company.

The reader will remember that there were many collieries along this narrow valley, and friends might work near one another for a long time without meeting, unless chance, as in our case, should bring them together.

I have said Whitefoot's adventures had been about the same as those of most other mine mules. He had met with bad drivers and had received the

usual amount of abuse that the average boy considers necessary to make life interesting for the mule. When I asked him if he knew what had become of May, he was silent for some time, then replied: "Yes, I know well what became of her, and dreadful as was her fate, I have wished many times that it had been mine also. We die but once, and a quick ending of all our miseries would be far better than a life like mine." I then urged him to tell me May's story, which he did, as follows:

When we were separated from you that morning, we were both taken to the same mine, and, after being put through the usual breaking-in process, were set to work near each other. We were also lucky enough to be stalled side by side, so that we were enabled to see and talk to each other every day. This arrangement made it much more pleasant for me, for May's company helped to brighten the dark places in my life. She was always cheerful, and seemed to accept with perfect indifference whatever came to her. I never once saw May show the least unwillingness in her work, or resentment at her driver when treated badly.

I have said that for a long time after we entered the mine, May and I were so fortunate as to work near each other; but as the coal in the thicker veins became exhausted, work was carried into the thin veins, and then May was often taken away to work in places where it would have been impossible for me to go.

You remember that May was small, and for that reason she could work where the roof was low, as is always the case in the thin veins. In some parts of these veins the roof is so low that no mule, however small, can enter. When such places are found, the roof is generally blasted away till an opening is made sufficiently high to admit of the cars being run in. To do this work small mules are in demand, for should the mule be a little too tall, it would suffer greatly from the jagged rocks overhead. Mules that work in these places generally wear head and hip coverings made of heavy leather.

The air in these low veins is usually more impure than that in other parts of the mines, because of the imperfect ventilation. May often told me how hard it was to work in these low places, but she

did that, as she did everything else, patiently and without complaint.

It must have been a long time that we worked in this mine, for in some parts of the vein the coal had all been taken out, and we had gone far into the earth. I think we must have been working at least two miles from the foot of the shaft, when the disaster occurred which took May from me forever.

There are two kinds of air passages into the mines. One is a hole put straight down, called an air shaft. The other is driven in from the surface and slopes down to the vein. This is called an "air-way" or "drift," and may be used as a means of entrance and exit. Sometimes two openings are made, side by side, with perhaps ten or fifteen feet of coal between—one for air, the other a drive-way. The air will then come down one and go out the other.

I have heard that the present law requires two openings through which men and mules may go to and from work, but at that time only one was provided. As the work was carried farther away from the shaft, a gangway and an air-way were driven in to where the coal was being mined, and kept



open. May was working in the low veins all the time now and I seldom saw her through the day, but when night came we could talk to each other, for we still had our stalls side by side.

When all the coal has been taken from a vein or section of a vein, the place is said to be "worked out." It is customary then to remove the pillars also, leaving the roof with no support but the wooden props of which I have already spoken. After a few years these props decay, the roof weakens and a cave-in is the result.

This practice of robbing pillars is often carried on under towns and cities, causing much destruction of property and sometimes loss of life by the caves that result. I have often wondered how men can be so heartless as to endanger the lives and property of others for the sake of gain to themselves, but so it is. Some men will stop for nothing if they see an opportunity to increase their own wealth. But I have wandered from Whitefoot's story.

Not far from where we were at work was an abandoned working. For some time I had heard

the men saying that the roof in this place was squeezing, and that to work near it was dangerous, for it was liable to fall at any moment. Should it do so, it would block up the way of escape from the other workings near, even if the adjoining roof did not fall also. But the bosses and superintendent did not take this view of the case. They ordered that the affected roof be strengthened by additional props. This was done, and the work went on as usual.

For several weeks we pursued our daily routine, and then, without a moment's warning, the long-feared trouble came. The old mine caved in, carrying down great masses of rock and completely shutting up the passages to the chambers near by. It happened that the place where I was at work lay just outside the danger line, but all the men and mules in the workings near the fall were either killed or imprisoned.

The disaster caused intense excitement around the mines. Work was at once suspended, and every available man was set to work removing the fallen rock. It was hoped that the imprisoned miners were not dead, and might be reached and brought

out alive. The work of rescue was pushed with all possible speed, and, after many days and nights of toil and anxious waiting, an opening was made through one of the thinnest sections of the fall, and four men more dead than alive were brought to the surface.

I did not see the men, but I heard my driver and the barn boss talking about them, for the disaster was the only topic of conversation now. They told of the despair that had seized these men when they first realized their condition, and of the horrible agony they endured during that long period of waiting. They had found a drip of pure water, which was very fortunate for them, for without it they could not have lived till help reached them. They had eaten, little by little, the food they had with them, and when that was all gone and they were pressed by hunger, had killed their faithful servant, the patient little mule, and had eaten some of its flesh. In this way their lives were prolonged till help came.

Of all the men imprisoned by that fall of rock, those four were the only ones brought out alive. A few dead bodies were recovered, but the major-

ity were never found. The great mass of earth had shut them securely in, and their awful prison became their grave. Of the mules none were ever found alive. I suppose that after a few days they were killed by the men imprisoned with them, for I have heard that on such occasions mules become mad after a certain time, and are then as dangerous as wild beasts.

Of the fate of one mule at least I was certain: I knew that the animal killed to prolong the lives of the four rescued men was none other than May; and when I looked at her empty stall, and thought of her gentleness and long-suffering, the words of the old cripple, on our first day in the coal fields, came back to me, and I knew that in her case his prophecy was fulfilled. She toiled and suffered, and at the last gave her life to save that of her master; and through her sacrifice four lives were saved and four homes were made happy. Surely in her death she accomplished more than in her life. Of her we can truly say, that her death was not in vain.

## CHAPTER XXII

### BACK TO THE COUNTRY

I SAW Whitefoot a number of times after our first meeting, but neither of us ever referred to May again. I often thought of her sad fate, however, and I was glad that by means of her death four lives had been saved.

In any case, to die was far better than to live and endure such suffering as Whitefoot endured. I have described the pitiful condition in which I found him, and it remained the same while he lived. For a few weeks longer he dragged on in his miserable way, and then he was gone, and I never saw him again; but one morning, while on my way to work, I saw a wagon being driven along the road in which was a dead mule, and I felt sure that it was Whitefoot. I think that at last the boss had taken pity on him and had him killed, then had sold his dead body to a fertilizer company; and thus was Whitefoot's career finished.

I felt lonely after my old friend was gone, more lonely than I can tell. I knew that I too should soon be unable to do my work. My lame knee seemed to get worse daily, and I could feel a general giving-way through all my system, but I did not stop work. I toiled on till I was so worn out as to be practically worthless about the mines; then I, with a lot of other cripples, was put up and sold. I had always heard that when worn-out mine mules are sold the purchasers are generally farmers, and this I believe is true. I think that nearly every one of the lot sold with me went into the country.

I was much pleased when I learned that I was to go away from the black dust and smoke in which I had worked so long, to live among green fields and running streams once more. I hoped that now I should see easier and better times; but I was not long in discovering that a mule's life, even in the country, is far from being all pleasure.

Mr. Smith, my new master, was not a great improvement on those who had preceded him. He was a selfish man, and had a wicked, ungovernable temper. He flew into a rage at the slightest prov-

ocation, and poured out his wrath on whatever animal came first in his way; but on none did it ever fall more heavily than on me, and on Tray, the old house dog. I have sometimes thought that had I been a valuable horse, policy would have induced him to give me better care and kinder treatment; but I was only an old mule bought for almost nothing, and when I was gone he could get another, so from the first my life was made miserable.

I was put to work on the farm soon after I reached my new home. The work was new to me and at first I did not always understand everything that was required of me, but I did to the best of my ability whatever was given me to do, receiving in return poor care and many severe beatings. I sometimes thought that my master was always watching for an excuse to beat me, so often did I feel the lash.

But this new life in the country suited me far better than the old life in the mines, notwithstanding all its drawbacks. Sometimes, when there was no work that was urgent, I was turned out into the pasture and permitted to run there for a few days.

These periods of rest did me much good. They always put fresh vigor into my worn-out body, and seemed to give me a new lease of life.

I did not make friends with the farm animals very easily, for they all seemed to fear me except my mate and work-fellow, an old blind horse, and old Tray. The horse I pitied exceedingly, for I thought his case worse than my own, but I never cared for his company. To the dog I soon became much attached. He often ran away to the fields to hide from his cruel master, and when I was not at work we spent many pleasant hours together.

Tray had lived on this farm a long time and knew what to expect when his master was in a rage, so he generally managed to keep out of the way till the fit of anger had passed off. Poor Tray! He suffered much, and his end came very suddenly; for one day when Mr. Smith was in one of his desperate moods and Tray had offended him in some way, the poor old dog was caught unawares and beaten to death.

I was forced to stand by and witness this terrible deed, for we had been hauling stone for a wall, and Smith halted us right there while he vented



his spite on the innocent object of his displeasure. Alas for poor Tray! his fate was terrible, and so is that of any creature that falls into the power of such a monster. I have heard much of man's superiority over the brutè creation, but when I think of all the tortures that I have seen inflicted on defenseless dumb animals, and of the brutal killing of poor Tray, I am led to wonder which is the greater beast, the inhuman man or the poor creature that he abuses.

I lived with Smith through the spring, summer and autumn, till winter came and the work on the farm was all done; then, as he had no work to keep me busy through the cold weather, he sold me to his brother. The latter put me at work hauling props from the woods to the mines, and that has been my principal business ever since.

Although Smith the second is not so passionate and cruel as his brother, yet he is far from being a kind master; so my change of owners has not bettered my condition in the least. To get all he can out of everything and everybody around him, and to give as little in return as possible, is the aim of my heartless master, and that is the reason

I am left to suffer as I do. He has driven me beyond my strength, beaten me without cause, allowed me to endure hunger and cold, till now I am nearing the end. Soon I too shall travel the road over which Black Billy and Whitefoot and numberless other poor creatures have gone to their final resting-place, and I care not how soon that journey begins; for my life is only a burden and I long to lay it down and rest.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### VICTOR'S STORY

I AM a large St. Bernard dog, and my name is Victor. I live on a farm in the country, and am a very happy dog. Indeed, I ought to be happy, for my home is a good one and my master and mistress are very kind to me and always thoughtful of my comfort. My master says money would not buy me from him, so you see he must care a good deal for me. He has taken great pains with my education, and I am said to be very wise for a dog. I can do many things that people consider amusing, such as opening and shutting doors, sitting in a chair, carrying parcels for my mistress, and speaking when I am hungry.

But the thing I love best to do is to accompany my master on his rounds about the farm, and to make myself generally useful. I go alone and bring the cows from the pasture, when it is milking time, and am always careful to bring every one. I

never fail to look them over after they are in the yard, and if by chance I find one missing I go back and hunt till I have found that one and brought it in. I also help my master in many other ways. I carry for him any basket, parcel or pail that is not too heavy for me. I keep things in order about the farm by day, and when night comes I am ever on the watch, listening for any sound that might threaten harm to my home or to my dear master and mistress.

My master has often told me of my renowned lineage and of the great service many of my ancestors rendered to humanity by saving the lives of persons lost in the snow and in other places. He says these splendid dogs were sent out by their masters to hunt for lost persons, and the brave fellows never returned till they had found the wanderers; then if the person was unable to follow to a place of safety, the wise creature would go back to his master and lead men to the rescue.

I feel sure that I am a true St. Bernard, for often after my master has been telling me these stories, I am filled with a desire to do some great service to mankind; but that opportunity has never

yet come, so I must be contented in my own place and be the best servant I can to the master and mistress who are so fond of me, and whom I love so dearly.

As I have said, I am a very happy and contented dog. If all animals had masters like mine, and were as well cared for as I, there would be no need of the humane societies and bands of mercy that are to be found throughout our country. Many times have I heard my master tell of the neglect and cruelty suffered by helpless animals, and I know it is all true, for he is a leading member in one of these humane societies, and has studied the matter thoroughly.

Then, too, I have learned much by observation. Of all my acquaintances I can think of none who receives treatment so kind as that given me. Some are treated with indifference and neglect, and many have suffered great cruelties, while some have even died at the hands of their masters.

I remember very distinctly the case of poor Tray, a shepherd dog who lived not far from my home. Tray was a good dog, but he had a wicked master, who fed him poorly, abused him sadly, and

at last cruelly murdered him because of some fancied offense. If his master had given him a merciful death, it would not have been a matter of regret; but to kill him in so brutal a manner was a wicked, inhuman act, so my master says, and he thinks the man should have been punished for it.

If time and space would permit, I could tell of many, many wrongs that I have seen inflicted on helpless animals, but I will mention only one other case, that of Colliery Jim, the old mine mule I found wandering by our farm some months ago. At first sight I pitied him, and after I had made his acquaintance, and he had given me the history of his life, I became so much interested in him that I persuaded my master to write down and give to the world the story he told us.

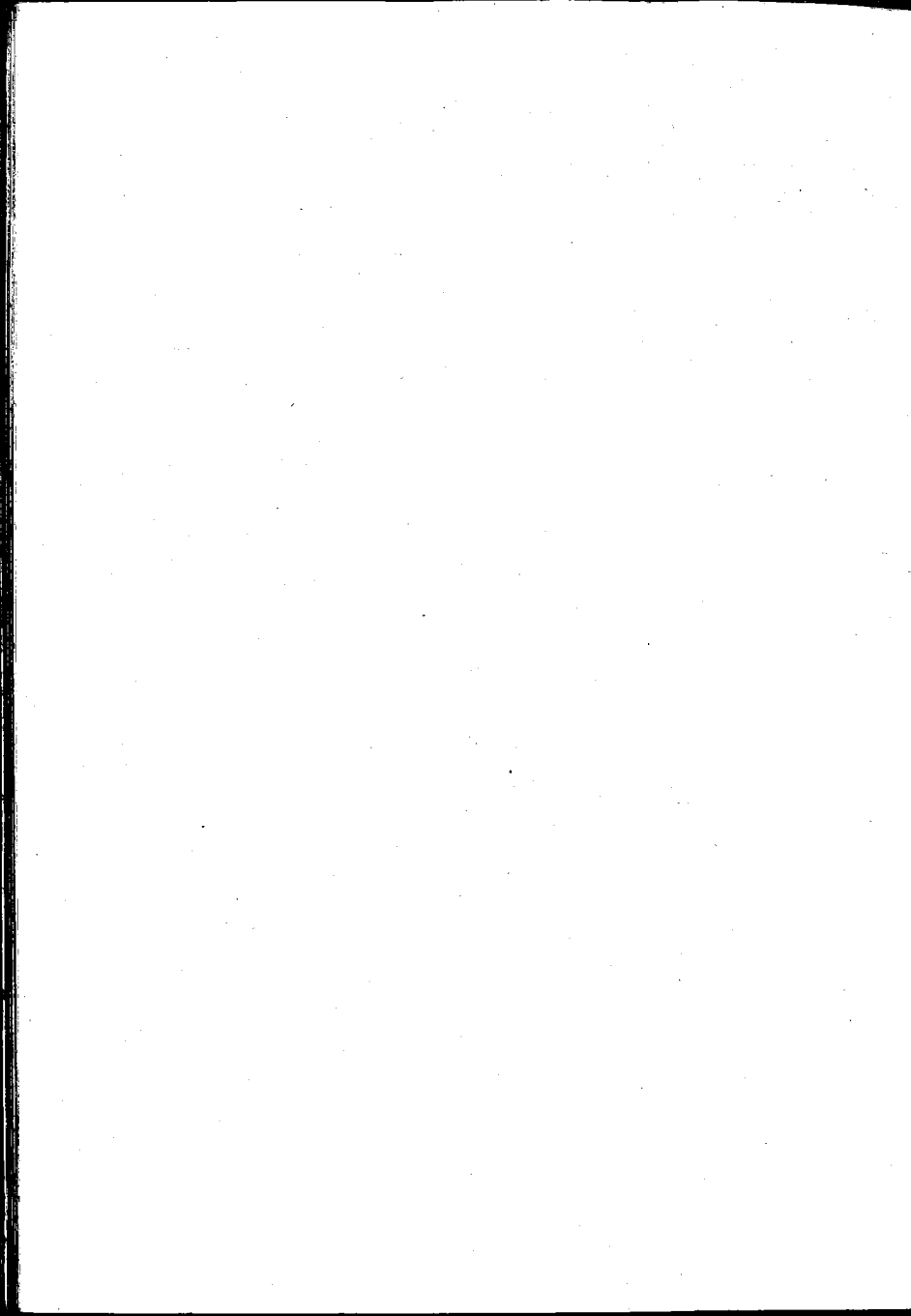
Poor Jim! His was a checkered life, with more shadows than sunshine along the way; and when I found him lying dead by the roadside, this morning, I was glad in my heart, for I know that at last all his troubles are ended.

My master has sent for the township authorities to come and take away the body, and when that is done and the poor old carcass has been made into

fertilizer, the world will have seen the last of Colliery Jim; but the service he rendered and the sufferings he endured should not be forgotten.

My master says there is one All Powerful, Who rules over the affairs of earth; that He sees and remembers all the deeds of men, both good and bad, and that He will reward everyone according to his works. If that be true, perhaps when that time of final reckoning comes, men will find that all dumb creatures have rights which should be respected, and that even a mule is entitled to fair treatment through life, and a merciful death.

THE END







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