



VOLUME II:
LONGHORNS TO LADY WONDER

by

Vicki Watson

Cover by Janet Griffin-Scott

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Horsestory Volume II: Longhorns to Lady Wonder

Table of Contents

1. Cowboys and Longhorns.....	1
2. Speedy President.....	7
3. Blind Tom	11
4. Fire Horses.....	15
5. Wonder Horses	21
6. Ten-Foot Cops.....	25
7. The Great Epizootic.....	31
8. Williamsburg Warnings.....	35
9. Aristides	41
10. Sleepy Tom	43
11. Comanche.....	47
12. Black Beauty	53
13. Animal Welfare	57
14. Equine Movie Star	63
15. Tom Bass.....	67
16. Buffalo Bill.....	71
17. Twenty Mule Teams	75
18. Riding For Ladies	81
19. Bucking Horses	85
20. Beautiful Jim Key.....	91
21. Clever Hans	97
22. Talking Horses of Elberfeld.....	101
23. Captain.....	105
24. The Great Cowboy Race	111
25. The Great Horse Manure Crisis.....	117
26. Horse vs. Bike.....	119
27. Rural Free Delivery	123
28. Equine Moving Company	127
29. Rough Walkers.....	131
30. Rodney.....	135
31. Lifeboat Horses	141

32. Horse Fountains.....	145
33. The First Cowgirl.....	149
34. Horses, Dogs, And Diphtheria	153
35. Black Jockeys.....	157
36. Wink.....	163
37. The Midnight Ride To The Presidency	167
38. The Roosevelts Are Horse People.....	171
39. Horses And Bears	177
40. Billings' Banquet	179
41. Horse Correspondence School	183
42. Polar Ponies.....	189
43. The Abernathy Brothers.....	197
44. Stable Wrecker	207
45. Two-Gun Nan	209
46. The Girl from Wyoming.....	213
47. Suffrage Riders	217
48. The Overland Westerners	219
49. The Great War	227
50. Warrior And His General.....	233
51. Simpson And Murphy	239
52. Notable WWI Animals.....	243
53. Wartime Horse Rescues.....	247
54. Army Remount	249
55. Exterminator	253
56. Grand Canyon Mules.....	257
57. Sir Barton.....	261
58. Man o' War	265
59. Automobile vs. Horse.....	271
60. Silent Cal's Hobby Horse	275
61. Diving Horses.....	277
62. Lady Wonder.....	283

Introduction

Although our past is intertwined with horses, the stories of those strong and loyal helpers have mostly been forgotten. Many viewed the horse as simply a piece of equipment used to get a job done. For those people, writing an account of their horses would have been like someone today writing about the car they drive to work.

But horses are not lifeless machines. During the Great Epizootic of 1872, many came to realize how much they had taken these faithful animals for granted.

When we are born he fetches the doctor. He is the motive-power before the hearse that carries us to our last home. ... He loves us all; he licks our hand; he kicks our enemies—sometimes ourselves. He propels street cars at five cents a ride, giving employment to large numbers of conductors and drivers. He eats oats, and hay, and corn, affording joy and sometimes profit to the farmer. ... He runs races and runs away. He smashes buggies and gives wages to carriage-makers. He “sniffs the battle afar off,” and gallops madly to death in the cavalry charge. He is a courageous creature, under the pressure of circumstances. ... He is a luxury, a comfort, a convenience, a necessity, a docile patient slave, a creature capable of loving and of being loved, interesting and intelligent, competent to do most everything but stand on his head, climb up a ladder, talk, and vote ...

Chicago Tribune, November 5, 1872

No one could ever feel that way about a hunk of metal, plastic, or silicon. Although “progress” was inevitable, we lost something valuable when we replaced horses with machines.

The Horsestory series highlights the diverse roles horses played over the years, and, when available, relates the stories of specific animals. As a lifelong horse lover, I was surprised to find so many ways horses collaborated with humans to accomplish amazing things.

A recurring theme in this second volume is change. At that time, equines were relied upon to power nearly everything that required power. But automobiles and other machines encroached on horses’ territory until in the 1920s, automobiles outnumbered equines.

A book could be written about each of these chapters—and many have. If you’re intrigued by a topic, dig in and do additional research.

Vicki Watson



offender offered resistance the great teeth would grasp flesh along with clothing. The pair were a familiar sight for years at 7th and U Sts. N. W., where they were stationed.

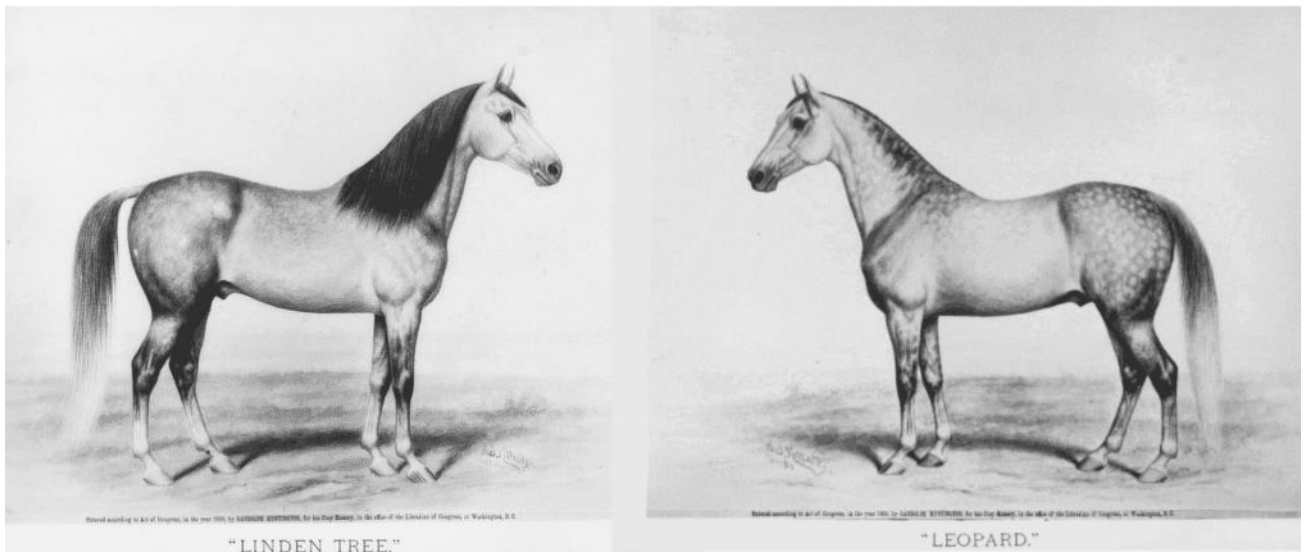
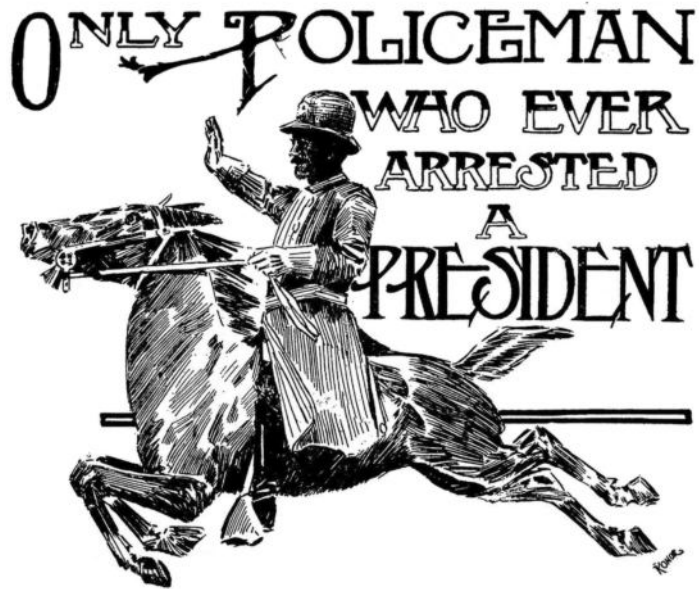
— *The Washington Post*, J. LeCount Chestnut, November 7, 1925

In 1879, the sultan of Turkey gave Grant two gray Arabian stallions, “Leopard” and “Linden” or “Linden Tree.” The stallions were valued at \$10,000 each. Grant stabled the Arabians at a farm, Ash Hill, owned by his friend, General Edward Fitzgerald Beale.

One morning, the two horses turned up missing. Beale sent for policeman West, giving him the only clue the thieves had left behind—a ragged cap. By interrogating farm employees, West determined that the cap belonged to a man named Ed Nolan, a former worker at the farm. West searched nearly the entire state of Maryland before tracking Nolan down. He and his two adult accomplices were each sentenced to ten years in prison. A boy who had worked with them was given a short jail sentence.

— *The Evening Star*, Washington D.C., September 27, 1908.

Apparently, the horses were recovered unharmed as Leopard became the earliest imported Arabian registered with The Arabian Horse Club of America. A book about the stallions was written by Randolph Huntington in 1885. Both Arabians lived into old age and were said to be “full of ginger to the last.”



When responding to a fire, speed is of the essence, but harnessing a horse can be a slow process. A quick-hitch system was developed that could be fastened on with just a few snaps. The harnesses were suspended from the ceiling by rods called spiders, hanging directly over the place where each horse stood. As soon as the horses were in position, the harnesses dropped down over the animals' backs, and the snaps were fastened. James Kennedy of Chicago invented one version of this harness. His system was known as Kennedy's Automatic Harness Holder and Hanger.



Bits were usually kept in the horses' mouths except when they were fed grain. That way, all that needed to be done to complete the harnessing was to hook the reins onto the bit rings.

Once fully trained, the horses ran to their positions by themselves when an alarm rang. With the quick-hitch harnesses, firefighters were out the station door in thirty seconds, often faster. The horses were so eager to take off, they sometimes left before the driver was in the wagon! In at least one case, the driver was on board, but no one had been able to attach the reins to the horses' bits. The driver couldn't steer his team, but the horses made it to the fire without his guidance.

Fire departments kept lists of the horses they owned. Each horse was assigned a number, and its color, height, weight, and age were recorded. The horses were more than numbers to the firefighters, though. The men knew their lives often depended on their equine partners.

In addition to the firefighters, each station employed one or more hostlers whose duty was to care for the horses and their equipment. Hostlers were up early in the morning to feed the horses and clean stalls. The hostler often drove the first team out of the station, pulling the hose wagon, with the Fire Captain riding beside and directing him. When they arrived at a fire, the hostler unhooked the horses and moved them to safety. After the fire was out, the hostler hooked the teams up again. Once they were back at the station, he would sponge down, water, and feed the horses, and clean the harness and bridles.

One of the most destructive fires in America was the Boston Fire that occurred on November 9th and 10th, 1872. By the time the alarm sounded, a six-story building in Boston's business district was engulfed in flames. Because most of the buildings were constructed of wood, the fire rapidly grew out of control.

Making things even worse, horses across America suffered that year from equine influenza, what was known as The Great Epizootic. Boston was past the worst of the disease outbreak, but they were short of horses, and the ones they had were not back to full strength. Men had to pull some of the fire



George Cheney and his mare

“Well, if that’s so, somebody’s got to let them know it; you, George, alarm the folks here, and I’ll drive down the river.” Graves jumped back into his milk wagon to head toward Skinnerville, leaving Cheney to warn the people in Williamsburg.

Cheney started off on a fresh livery horse and warned a few more people before high water prevented any further advance. Concerned for his own family, he turned around and started back for the cabin, taking an alternate route on higher ground. His mare, left hot and exhausted in the livery stable, stood for hours in flood water up to her back, but she survived the ordeal.

In George’s absence, his wife, Elizabeth, watched the dam. Twenty minutes after the initial slide, she saw the eastern half of the dam explode from the bottom upward “as though someone had inserted a giant shovel under the base and thrown the dirt skyward.”

The gaping hole in the embankment allowed the water to rush out of the reservoir, making “an awful noise, like an earthquake.” An hour later, all six hundred million gallons of water had drained out of the reservoir.

But in the 1870s, Stanford's interest was horse racing. Photographer Eadweard Muybridge photographed Stanford's Standardbred Occident at a trot in 1873, but the images were blurry. For several years, Muybridge experimented with faster shutter speeds and more sensitive film emulsions. During this time, the photographer was tried for murder but was acquitted on the grounds of justifiable homicide.

In 1877, he re-photographed Occident with better results. However, the image was still fuzzy and required retouching by an artist to improve its quality.

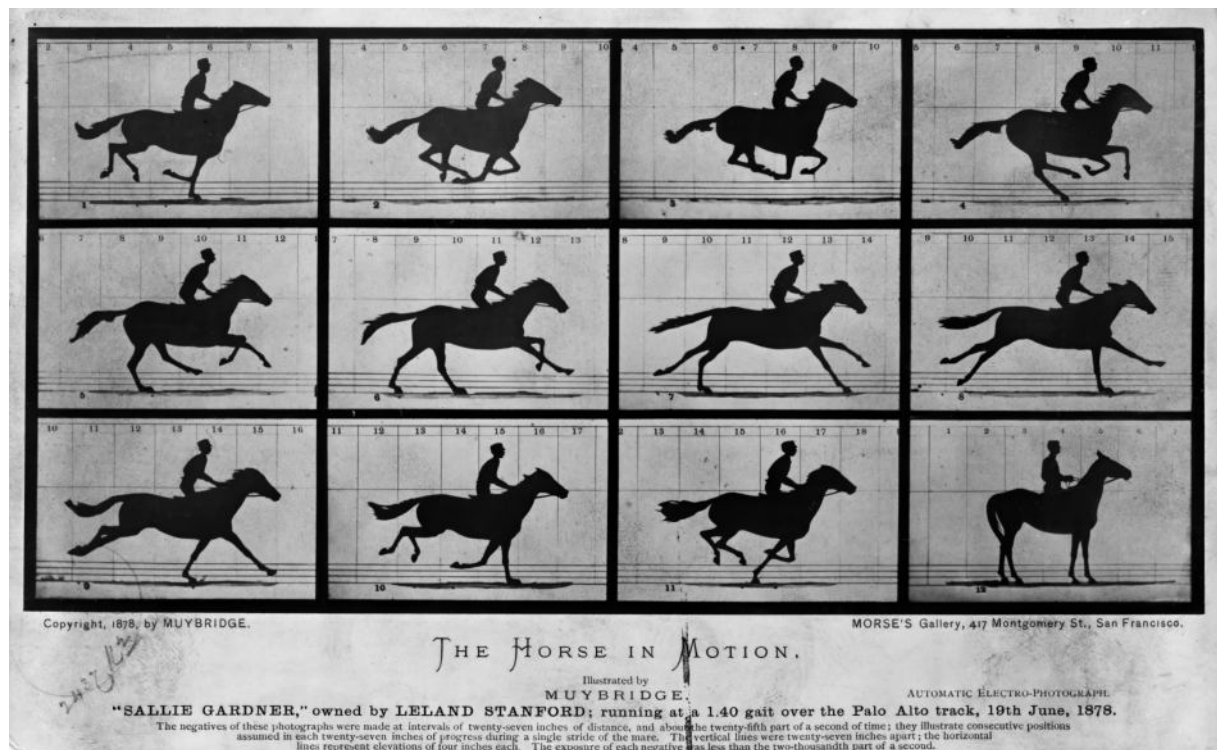


This may be another Stanford mare, Annie G.

It wasn't until 1878 that Muybridge had cameras with fast enough film and shutter speeds to freeze the motion of a galloping horse. That horse was Stanford's Kentucky Thoroughbred, Sallie Gardner.

To capture the galloping mare's movement, Muybridge set up twenty-four cameras, twenty-seven inches apart, with chest-high trip wires rigged across the track. Each time the Thoroughbred hit a wire, an exposure was made in the connected camera.

The resulting twenty-four images were placed on a disc to be viewed in a machine Muybridge had invented—a zoopraxiscope. Cycling rapidly through the stop-action photographs produced a movie-like effect.



Oakes said, “The horse threw his heart over, followed by his body and all I had to do was give him encouragement and hang on.”

Because of her skill in training and riding horses, Emma Peek, from Mendon, Michigan, joined with D. H. Harris to tour the country as an equestrian performer. The two later married, and she became known as “Madame Marantette—Queen of the Saddle.”

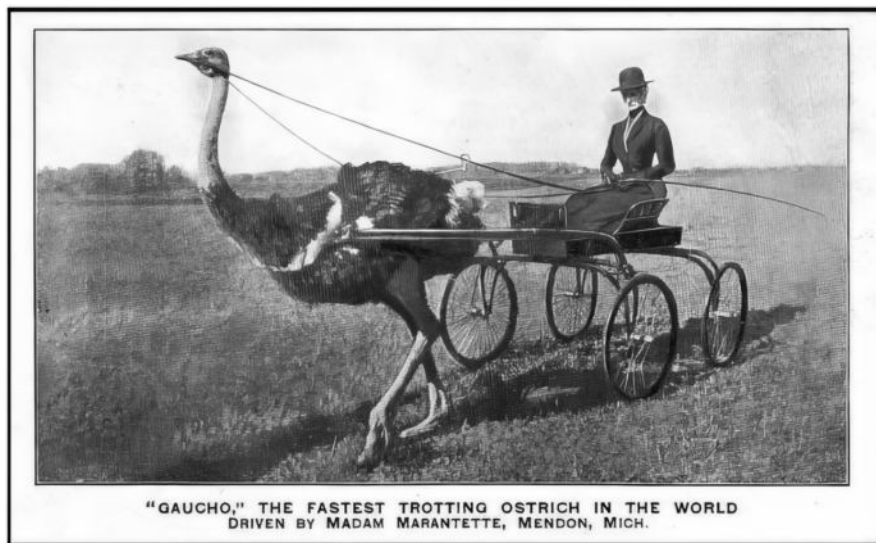
It wasn't only horses Peek trained. The couple traveled with an ostrich named Gaucho, who pulled a carriage, either alone or teamed with a horse. Gaucho was said to be the fastest trotting ostrich in the world, although whether any other trotting ostriches existed to race against is doubtful.

Emma claimed she never rode astride, even as a child, always preferring to ride sidesaddle. Marantette described a horse named Filemaker as the best horse she ever owned. It's claimed the pair jumped seven feet three and a half inches during an exhibition in Massachusetts in 1891.

After Filemaker passed away in 1896, she jumped another horse, St. Patrick, a 16 hand Irish hunter. St. Patrick surpassed Filemaker's record with a seven-foot ten-inch jump in Michigan in 1904. None of Marantette's jumps were witnessed by any equestrian organization, so they were never officially recognized as records. In 1918, a grass fire in St. Patrick's pasture burned his back legs, and the great jumper had to be put down.



Esther Stace



After World War I, it became more acceptable for women to wear split skirts or pants, making riding astride possible. By 1930, astride was the preferred method of riding for women. In recent years, there has been renewed interest in sidesaddle riding, particularly in show events.

It was uncommon in the South to teach slaves to read, but William learned alongside John Key's children. When the Civil War began, William joined the Confederate army with the Key sons in order to protect them.

After the war, William Key was a free man, and his ability with animals served him well. Considered a veterinarian, despite a lack of formal training, William was called Doc Key. One of Doc's dreams was to raise a successful racehorse.

Lauretta, Jim Key's mother, was a full-blooded Arabian, formerly owned by a Persian sheikh. The beautiful gray mare was stolen from the sheikh and sold to P. T. Barnum's circus while it toured Europe. Lauretta came to America, and for years, was exhibited as the Queen of Arabian Horses.

It's uncertain whether the part about the sheikh is true, but years later, William Key found Lauretta abused and neglected at a ramshackle circus in Mississippi. He purchased the mare, and over the next year, using the Keystone liniment he'd developed, Lauretta was restored to health.

Many horsemen traveled to races at the track on Doc Key's farm. When Doc spotted the horse, Tennessee Volunteer at one of those races, he knew right away that was the horse who should sire Lauretta's foal. Volunteer, a Standardbred, was a descendant of the famed racer Hambletonian. Lauretta was the smartest horse Doc Key had ever known, and Tennessee Volunteer was the fastest. How could those two produce anything but a champion racehorse?

The night the foal arrived, Doc's hopes were dashed. As he surveyed the scraggly colt, Doc wasn't sure the weak, wobbly thing would be able to walk, let alone race.

As if the little colt hadn't gotten off to a bad enough start in life, Lauretta died when Jim Key was young. His beloved mare's death was devastating. As he grieved, Doc kept to himself—except for the presence of Jim Key. The colt seemed to sense Doc's sadness and wouldn't leave the man's side.



Quite often in those days one would see three or four houses in a row moving toward the new village and at times the families would be living in them. A special temporary bridge was made for them to cross over at the Cross River.

— *Katonah Times*

Katonah, named for a 17th-century Ramapo Indian chief, has remained small. The population of the village in the 2010 census was 1,679. In 2007, representatives of Katonah opposed an attempt by Martha Stewart to trademark the name of their village for her furniture line. Stewart gave up on the “Katonah Collection” and her trademark application was abandoned.

Katonah wasn't the only place where horses moved houses. This photo shows a similar process where a Victorian home was moved in San Francisco, California, in 1908.





In 1916, Cincinnati, Ohio, which had closed its fountains, had an outbreak of glanders, anyway. The controversy over the fountains raged, but most cities kept them closed. Women in some towns formed crews stationed at water hydrants to fill buckets of water for horses to drink.

The invention of the automobile meant the gradual disappearance of most horses from the cities. This issue with the water fountains may have hastened that transition. Without the public fountains, workers found it challenging to provide their horses with enough water during the day. At about that



For example, they listed one horse as Animal Number 111, a bay gelding of at least seven years. Purchased for \$215, he was at the facility just over a year before he died. In that time, he underwent nine rounds of bleedings.

By 1901, the use of the diphtheria antitoxin was quite successful. Amand Ravold, a physician who had studied in Paris under Pasteur, was the director of a laboratory in St. Louis. Jim, whose previous job was pulling a milk wagon, was one horse used in Ravold's lab to produce the serum. Over his career, Jim produced seven and a half gallons of diphtheria antitoxin.

This is where the stories of Jim, and Bessie Baker, converge. Dr. Harris injected the girl with diphtheria antitoxin, courtesy of Jim. As a preventative, the doctor also injected Bessie's two younger siblings. Four days later, Bessie's condition was worse. Dr. Harris returned to the Baker's home to discover the girl was suffering from tetanus (lockjaw). The doctor could do nothing for her, and Bessie passed away the following day. Her two siblings also died of tetanus within the week.

By November 7, thirteen tetanus deaths were reported in the area. All the deaths traced back to serum dated September 30 that Dr. Ravold produced from Jim's blood. When lab workers realized the horse had tetanus, Jim was euthanized. But the contaminated serum was already in use.

The tetanus deaths were reported nationwide. People panicked and refused the diphtheria vaccine and antitoxin.

In December, the St. Louis Board of Health held an inquiry. Dr. Ravold insisted he and a janitor, Henry Taylor, destroyed the September 30 batch of serum after Jim's death. However, the janitor contradicted him, confessing that he released some of the September 30 serum. He thought it was safe, and they had run out of other batches.



Robert Scott, Terra Nova Expedition

After the failed Nimrod Expedition, Robert Falcon Scott gathered an effort to reach the South Pole. The Terra Nova Expedition took place from 1910 to 1913. Scott was racing against Amundsen to be the first to the Pole.

Cecil Henry Meares, a crew member in charge of the dog teams, traveled to northern China to purchase twenty ponies for the expedition. Knowing little about horses, Meares' prime consideration, I colored animals. The seller took advantage of many of the ponies were old or lame. Some accounts refer to these animals as Siberian ponies, another name for Manchurians.



Lawrence Oates, an accomplished horseman, would be in charge of the ponies on the expedition. He arrived later at the quarantine station on Quail Island in New Zealand and was startled by the poor condition of the ponies. He considered the animals too old and worn-out for the trip. Oates informed Scott that the ponies were unsuitable, but his boss disagreed. One pony was suspected of having a disease and was left behind, leaving nineteen ponies for the expedition.

Apsley Cherry-Garrard, at twenty-four, was one of the youngest members of the Terra Nova expedition. In his book, published in 1922, *The Worst Journey In The World Antarctic 1910-1913*, Cherry-Garrard provides many details about the expedition's ponies.

The nineteen ponies included Blossom, Blücher, Bones, Chinaman, Christopher, Davy, Guts, Hackenschmidt, Jehu, Jimmy Pigg, Jones, Michael, Nobby, Punch, Snatcher, Snippets, Uncle Bill, Victor, and Weary Willy.

Hackenschmidt received his name because of "his vicious habit of using both fore and hind legs in attacking those who came near him." ¹

As they continued gathering supplies in New Zealand, trainers worked with the ponies, teaching them to pull large sleds. The ponies varied in strength and temperament.

But it was soon clear that these ponies were an uneven lot. There were the steady workers like Punch and Nobby; there were one or two definitely weak ponies like Blossom, Blücher and Jehu; and there were one or two strong but rather impossible beasts. One of these was soon known as Weary Willie. His outward appearance belied him, for he looked like a pony. A brief acquaintance soon convinced me that he was without doubt a cross between a pig and a mule.

There were runaways innumerable, and all kinds of falls. But these ponies could tumble about unharmed in a way which would cause an English horse to lie up for a week.

— *The Worst Journey In The World*, chapter 4