

# Black Beauty

## Chapter 15 Our New Home

1

The next morning after breakfast, Joe came to say goodbye to us, and Merry legs neighed to us from the yard. Then John put the saddle on Ginger and the leading rein on me, and rode us across the county to Earlshall Park, our new home.

After we arrived, John asked for Mr. York, and we waited a long time for him to come outside and meet with us. He was a fine-looking man with a stern voice. He was very friendly and polite to John and looked us over quickly before he called a groom to take us to the stable.

We were taken to a light, airy stable and placed in stalls adjoining each other. In about half an hour John and Mr. York came in to see us. Mr. York asked John to tell him about any particular habit or likes and dislikes that Ginger or I might have. John explained that we were a good team and could be expected to work hard if treated well and with kindness. He told Mr. York of Ginger's hard life and warned that if she was treated badly, she would return to her bad-tempered ways. They were going out of the stable when John stopped and said, "I had better tell you that we have never used the check-rein with either of them. The black horse has had one on, and the dealer said it was the gag-bit that spoiled Ginger's temper."

"Well," said York, "if they come here, they must wear the check-rein. I prefer a loose rein myself, and the owner is very understanding about horses. But his wife has other ideas. She wants to be fashionable, and she demands that the horses be reined tightly whenever she goes out in the carriage."

"I am very sorry about this," said John, "but please try to treat the horses with kindness, for they are used to good treatment.

Then he came around to us and spoke to us in a soft and loving voice. He sounded very sad.

I held my face close to him. That was the only way I could say goodbye. Before I knew it, he was gone, and I never saw him again.

The next day our new owner came to see us. He seemed quite pleased with us and listened thoughtfully while Mr. York repeated what John had told him about the check-rein. Our new master said he understood, but that his wife insisted upon using this tight rein. He told Mr. York to be gentle with us and to get used to the rein a little at a time.

The next day we were harnessed and put on the carriage. The mistress came to look at us. She was a tall, elegant-looking woman, but something was bothering her. She said nothing and got into the carriage. This was my first time wearing the check-rein, and although it was uncomfortable not to be able to get my head down once in a while, it did not pull my head higher than I was used to. I was a little worried about Ginger, but she seemed to be quiet and content.

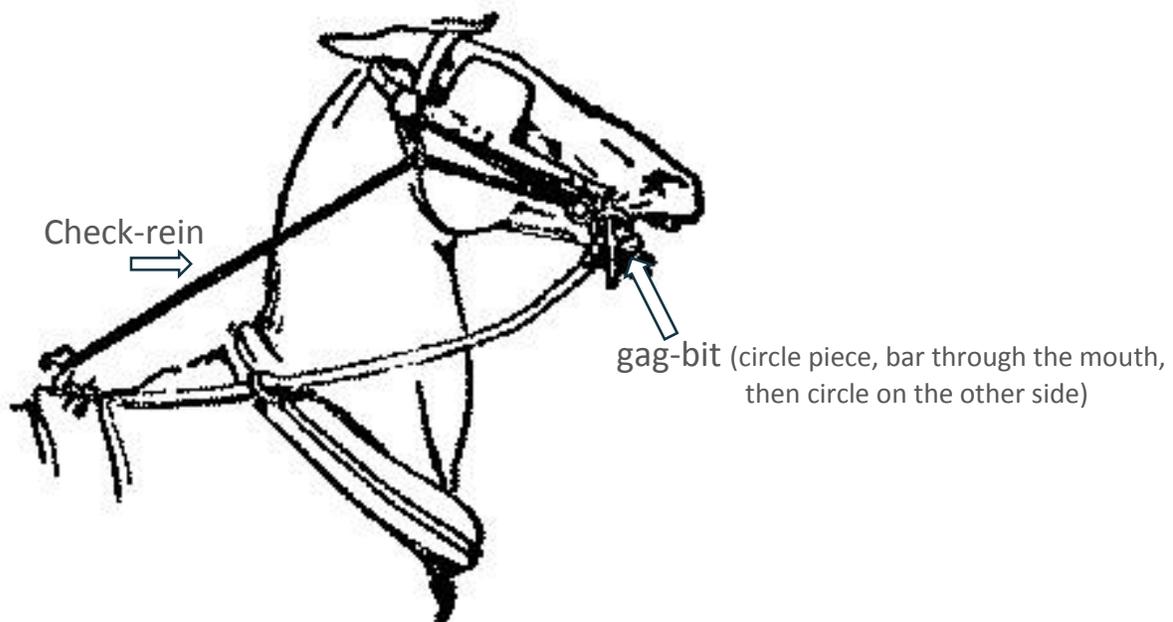
The next afternoon, we were again put on the carriage, and our mistress came down to meet us.

“Mr. York,” she said, “you must put those horses’ heads higher. I don’t like the way they look.”

York explained that we were not used to a tight rein, but the mistress still asked him to tighten the rein.

Soon I began to understand all the stores I had heard from the other horses. Day by day, hole by hole, our bearing reins were shortened, and instead of looking forward to having the harness put on, as I used to, I began to dread it. When we pulled the carriage uphill, I had to pull with my head up. That took all the spirit out of me. My back and my legs ached with pain. Ginger too seemed restless, but she said very little.

At last I thought the worst was over, since for several days there was not more shortening. But I was soon to learn that the worst was yet to come.



One afternoon, our mistress came down later than usual to take her daily ride. She looked angry and ordered York to raise our heads up even higher. York came to me first. He drew my head back and fixed the rein so tight that it was almost unbearable. Then he went to Ginger, who was jerking her head up and down against the bit. She had a good idea what was coming, and the second York took the rein off in order to shorten it she reared up so suddenly that York was hit in the nose and the groom was nearly knocked over. At once they both tried to calm her, but she was a match for them and went on plunging, rearing and kicking. At last she kicked right over the carriage pole and fell down. There is no telling what else she might have done if York had not held her head down to stop her from struggling.

The groom soon set me free from ginger and the carriage and led me back to the stable. Before long, Ginger was led in by two other grooms. She had been knocked around and bruised. York came with her and looked us both over. He seemed very upset and complained about a world that cared more for fashion than living things. He was sorry that he hadn't taken a stronger stand when the mistress insisted that our reins be made shorter.

Ginger was never put on the carriage again, but as soon as her bruises healed, one of the master's sons said he would like to have her, for he was sure she would make a good hunter. I still was used to pull the carriage. Only this time I had a new partner.

What I suffered with that rein for four long months would be hard to describe. I am sure that if it had lasted much longer, my health and temper both would have given way. I would foam at the mouth because of the sharp bit on my tongue and jaw and the unnatural position of my head. There was also a terrible pressure on my windpipe which made my breathing very uncomfortable. When I returned to the stable my mouth and tongue ached, and my neck and chest were sore. I also felt worn and depressed.

In my old home I always knew that John and my master were friends, but here I had no friends, York surely must have known how the rein hurt me, but he did nothing.