

Musings of a Mule

I am only a common or garden mule
Who was bred in the U.S.A.
I was born in a barn on a Western farm
Many thousands of miles away
From where I am munching a Government lunch
At Great Britain's expense to-day.

With dozens of others I knew, and have seen,
In my Little Grey Home in the West
Where the grazing was succulent, luscious, and green,
And Life was a bit of a jest
I have sniffed in the salt breeze blowing over the seas
And I've landed in France with the rest.

The journey was horrid - a horrible dream
Was the loading - its shindy and row
And the people expecting a moke to be keen
To swarm up a frightening "brow"
And slither down ramps that were greasy and damp
To a standing unfit for a cow.

They packed us like herrings 'way down in the hold,
With never a thought nor a care
For animals worthy more Government gold
Than all of the rest who were there
And the best spot, of course, was reserved for the horse
Who *had* to have plenty of air.

Well, we jibbed and we strafed and we kicked the Light Draught
And I planted my heels in the hide
Of a man on the ship who was flicking a whip
And whose manners I could not abide,
But I've travelled so often since then in the trucks
I have learnt how to swallow my pride
And I go where I'm put without lifting a foot
For a rag song and dance on the side.

Many months at a time I was up on the Somme
In the rain and the mud and the mire:
We were "packing" the shells to the various Hells
In the dips of the vast undulations and dells
Where the field guns were belching their fire.

It was very poor sport when the forage ran short
First to eight and then six pounds a day,
But we managed to live on the blankets they brought,
But blankets I think, and have always thought,
Are but poor substitution for hay.

I remember a week when we played hide and seek
With the shrapnel the Boches sent over:
I remember the night when they pitied my plight,
And pipped me, and put me clean out of the fight
With a "Blighty" - then I was in clover.

For they dressed me and sent me quick out of the line
To a hospital down at the Base,
Where the standings were good and the weather was fine
And the rations were not disgrace:
There, just within sound of the Heavies I found
La France can be quite a good place.

And now I've recovered - I'm weary and thin
And I'm out of condition and stale,
My ribs and my hips are too big for my skin
And I've left all the hair of my tail
On the middlemost bar of the paddock I'm in,
For they turned me out loose as I'm frail.

Now the life in a paddock according to men
Is a sort of a beautiful song
Where animals wander around and can squander
The time as they wander along,
With nothing to worry them, nothing to do
Except for food intervals daily: but you
Can take it from me they are wrong,
For paddocks are places conducive to thoughts
That settle unbid on the brain,
And often I find them to follow a kind
Of a minor key tune or refrain
As I doze for an hour in the afternoon sun
Or I stand with my rump to the rain
I dream of the barn on my Illinois farm
And I *long* to be back there again.

L.L.L.L., Base Indian Remount Depot, B.E.F. France