and render him stubborn and sluggish. Though his pace is slow, he will continue his journey for many hours without showing signs of fatigue, and the coarsest fare suffices to keep him in health. In rocky countries and over difficult roads his feet are more sure than those of the horse, and he will carry his rider in safety along winding paths skirting the most tremendous precipices. Hardy, vigorous, and temperate, he is very valuable to the poor man. Many a wandering pedlar, and many a hawker of small commodities, has dated his rise in the world from the day when he had saved enough to buy an ass to carry his goods, thus lessening his labour by one-half, while the keep of the frugal animal scarcely increased his expenses.

The ass attains his full growth in about four years, and lives to the age of four or five and twenty. The colt is rather pretty in appearance, and quick and playful; but the laborious life led by the ass soon brings on that heavy appearance and sluggish gait which seem peculiar to the race. In Eastern countries, where the ass is frequently used instead of the horse, it appears under a better aspect than in Europe. It is larger and more lightly built, and is evidently the object of more care and attention than here, where the horse is the valued servant, and the ass only the slave. The female ass is very affectionate towards her colt, and will encounter any danger in defence of her offspring. She has but one colt at a time; very rarely two are born together.

The wild ass of the East is a very different creature from the poor domestic drudge. It is large, shapely, and handsome, and runs with especial swiftness. It is found in Tartary, Asia Minor, Persia, and many other countries. The Persians esteem its flesh a great delicacy, and capture it in pits. The wild asses associate together in herds. They are exceedingly shy, running off with great swiftness on the approach of men. Sir. R. K. Porter, the Eastern traveller, gives the following account of an exciting chase after a wild ass:

"The sun was just rising over the summits of the eastern mountains, when my greyhound Cooley suddenly darted off in pursuit of an animal, which my Persians said, from the glimpse they had of it, was an antelope. I instantly put spurs to my horse, and with my attendants gave chase. After an unrelaxed gallop of full three miles, we came up with the dog, which was then within a short stretch of the creature he pursued; when, to my surprise, and at first vexation, I found it to be an ass; but on a moment's reflection, judging from its fleetness that it must be a wild one, which the Persians prize above all other animals as an object of chase, as well as an article of food, I determined to approach as near to it as the very swift Arab I was on would carry me. But the instant of checking my horse to consider had given our game such a head of us, that, notwithstanding all our speed, we could not recover our ground on him. I, however, happened to be considerably before my companions, when, at a certain distance, the animal in its turn made a pause, and allowed me to approach within a pistol-shot of him. He then darted off again with the quickness of thought, capering, kicking, and sporting in his flight, as though he were not blown in the least, and as though the chase were his pastime. The prodigious swiftness and peculiar manner in which he fled across the plain coincided exactly with the description that Xenophon gives of the same animal in Arabia."

Such is the wild ass; but that, even in the most ancient times, the poor domestic species was the sport and butt of the mischievous, is shown by the mention made of the ass by Homer in the following lines of the "Iliad":

"The sluggish ass, with heavy strength endued,
In some wild field by troops of boys pursued,
The shivering sticks assail his sides in vain,
He crops the waving corn, and spoils the plain.
Whilst on his hide the feeble blows resound,
The beast, regardless, still maintains his ground;
Scarce from the field with all their efforts chased,
And scarce, though sated, mends his pace at last."