

VARIOUS

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL
OF POPULAR
LITERATURE, SCIENCE,
AND ART, NO. 714

Various

**Chambers's Journal of Popular
Literature, Science, and Art, No. 714**

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Various Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Art, No. 714 / September 1, 1877

TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

In our youthful days in the early years of the present century, little consideration was given to a systematic kindness to animals. Horses were overwrought without mercy, when ill-fed and with wounds which should have excited compassion. If they sunk down in their misery, they were left to die, the chances being that, in their last hours, they were inhumanly pelted with stones by boys; – no one, not even magistrates or clergymen, giving any concern to the cruelties that were perpetrated. All that we have seen, without exciting a word of remonstrance. A wretch who habitually turned out his old, overwrought, and half-starved horses to die on the town-green, never incurred any check or reprobation. His proceedings were viewed with perfect indifference. People, while passing along in a demure sort of way to church, would see a crowd of boys pitching stones into the wounds of a dying horse, and not one of these decorous church-goers endeavoured to stop these horrid acts of inhumanity. Like the Pharisees of old, they passed on the other side. Such within recollection is a small sample of the unchecked atrocities of our young days. Cats were pelted to death. Birds' nests were robbed. Dogs had kettles tied to their tail, and were hounded to madness by howling multitudes. Oxen were overdriven to an infuriated condition, and their frantic and revengeful career formed an acceptable subject of public amusement.

Barbarous in a certain sense as these comparatively recent times were, there had already been shewn instances of a kind consideration for animals. The poet Cowper, it will be recollected, wrote touchingly of the hares which he had domesticated. Sir Walter Scott's tender regard for his dogs has been recently noticed in these pages. There was here and there a glimmering consciousness that animals had some sort of claims on the mercy of mankind. What strikes one as curious is that society had retrograded in this respect. The oldest laws in the world, found in the early books of the Old Testament, enjoin a kind treatment of animals. If we see an ass fall which belongs to some one with whom we have a cause of difference, we are to throw aside private feelings, and hasten to help the animal. We are not to take a bird when sitting on its eggs, or on its young; a most humane injunction. In various texts the Hebrews were enjoined to have due regard for the comfort of the ox, the ass, or any other animal which laboured for them. In these venerable records, mercy is enjoined towards all living creatures.

The modern world, with all its pompous claims to civilisation, strangely drifted into an entire neglect of these beneficent obligations. Throughout Christendom, any laws enforcing a kind treatment of animals are few in number, and of very recent date. Even within our remembrance, clergymen were not usually in the habit of inculcating that species of kindness to domesticated creatures which we read of in the Old Testament; nor were children ordinarily taught lessons of humanity within the family circle. The oldest statutory laws concerning animals are those for the protection of game; but these laws proceeded on no principle of kindness. They were intended only to protect certain birds and quadrupeds during the breeding season, with a view to what is called 'sport,' the pleasure of killing them by licensed individuals – the license for indulging in this species of luxury being, as is well known, pretty costly. It is not our wish to hold up 'sport' of a legitimate kind to ridicule. The chief matter of regret is the coarse way in which game is sometimes pursued and killed even by licensed sportsmen: their operations in what is known as a *battue*, when vast numbers of animals are driven

into narrow spaces, and shot down and maimed without mercy, being, as we think, no better than wholesale butchery; and not what might be expected from persons of taste and education.

Although in the early years of the present century there were no laws for the specific purpose of preventing cruelty to animals, thoughtful and humane persons were beginning to give attention to the subject. In 1809, Sir Charles Bunbury brought into the House of Commons a bill for the 'Prevention of wanton and malicious cruelty to Animals.' Mr Windham, a cabinet minister, little to his credit, opposed the bill, and it failed to pass. The next attempt at legislation on the subject was made by Lord Erskine in the House of Lords in 1810. His measure was opposed by Lord Ellenborough, and had to be withdrawn. There the matter rested until 1821, when Mr Richard Martin, member of parliament for Galway, brought a bill into the House of Commons for the 'Prevention of Cruelty to Horses.' It encountered torrents of ridicule, and after passing a second reading in a thin house, was no further proceeded with. Mr Martin, however, was not discouraged. He felt he was right, and returned to the encounter. In 1822, he introduced a new and more comprehensive bill. Instead of horses, he used the word 'cattle;' this bill passed through all its stages, and became an act of parliament. This act of 1822 was the first ever enacted against cruel and improper treatment of animals. Let there be every honour to the memory of Richard Martin for his noble struggle on behalf of defenceless creatures. In 1825, he brought in a bill for the suppression of bear-baiting and other cruel sports. Not without surprise do we learn that Sir Robert Peel met the bill with determined opposition, and that it was thrown out. To think that so eminent a statesman as Peel should have been a supporter of bear-baiting! No fact could better present an idea of what was still the backward state of feeling among educated persons on the subject of cruelty to animals.

The year 1826 found Mr Martin still at his post. He framed a bill to extend protection to dogs, cats, and other domesticated animals from cruelty. In this it might have been expected he would have been successful. But no. His arguments to move the House of Commons were unavailing. Mr Martin died in 1834. Not until 1835, when more enlarged ideas prevailed, was there an Act to throw a protecting shield over cattle in the market, on the way to the slaughter-house, and in the roads and streets generally; over all such animals as dogs, bulls, bears, or cocks, kept for purposes of baiting or fighting; over all animals kept in pounds or inclosures without a sufficiency of food or drink; and over all worn-out horses, compelled to work when broken down with weakness or disease.

It was reserved for the beneficent reign of the present Queen to see a comprehensive Act of Parliament for the prevention of cruelty to animals. This was the Act of 1849 (which was extended to Scotland in 1850), that now forms the basis for prosecuting cases of cruelty, and may be called the charter which conferred on domesticated animals a right to protection. Lamenting the backwardness of England in establishing such a charter, it is not without pride that one knows that England was after all the first country in modern times to enforce the principle that the lower animals are entitled to be protected by law. That principle, as we have shewn, is not new. It was recognised by the ancient Hebrews, and it is pleasing to feel that at length modern common-sense has legislatively assumed its propriety. Latterly, there have been several additional Acts of Parliament, chiefly as concerns protection to sea-birds and small land-birds; but while well meant, these Acts are very imperfect. The eggs of sea-birds not being protected, the nests of these animals may be rifled with impunity. As regards small birds, a number are left out in the list of protected animals – the skylark for one. These deficiencies are unfortunate. Sea-birds, though generally looked on with indifference, are of great public utility. They benefit agriculturists by eating the worms and grubs in newly ploughed land; they hover over parts of the sea and point out where there are shoals of herrings and other fish; they are useful to the mariner in foggy weather, by their warning cries near the rock-bound coast. How beautiful that arrangement of Nature, in making provision for birds to live on shelving rocks by the sea-shore, there to act like beacons, in warning off the bark of the mariner from a coast that would cause its destruction! Considering that wonderful provision, how scandalous, how short-sighted the practice of rifling the nests of sea-birds! A supplementary Act to protect the eggs of sea-birds cannot,

as a matter of public duty, be too soon passed. Already, on some parts of the coast, sea-birds are said to be rapidly disappearing.

As every one knows, dogs are often lost in large towns, and roam about miserably in search of their master or mistress. A sight of them in such circumstances is exceedingly pitiable. In the Metropolis, a humane plan for succouring lost dogs has been established. Some years ago, a benevolent lady, Mrs Tealby, was enabled, by the aid of public subscriptions, to set on foot a temporary Home for Lost and Starving Dogs, which has existed since 1860. It is situated at Battersea Park Road. Any dog, when found and brought to the Home, is taken in and succoured under certain necessary conditions. If a dog, after being housed and succoured, is applied for by the owner (with satisfactory proof of ownership), the animal is given up on payment of the expenses of its keep. If no owner comes forward, every unclaimed dog is sold for the benefit of the institution, or otherwise disposed of according to circumstances. The Home is growing in usefulness. In one year recently more than three thousand three hundred dogs were restored to their former owners or sent to new homes. Many owners who recover their favourites through the agency of this institution, not only refund the expenses incurred, but assist the funds by subscriptions in the name of their recovered pets – as for instance, 'In memory of Pup,' 'For little Fido,' 'In name of darling Charlie,' 'The mite from an old dog;' and so on. This deserving and well managed institution is well worth visiting. Only, the visitor must be prepared to see painful demonstrations from some of the unhappy inmates. On the approach of the visitor, each animal eagerly hastens to see if he be his dear master. And when a sniff and a glance render too evident the fact that you are not the person wished for, something like a tear steals from the poor doggie's eye. The happiness shewn when one of the animals finds his lost master is equally expressive. Looking to the great good done in the cause of humanity by this meritorious Home for Lost and Starving Dogs, it may be hoped that efforts will not be wanting to establish similar institutions elsewhere.

There is another admirable establishment worth referring to. It is known as the Brown Institution, from having been founded by the bequest in 1851 of a large sum of money by Mr Thomas Brown. Its design was the advancement of knowledge concerning the diseases of animals, the best mode of treating them for the purpose of cure, and the encouragement of humane conduct towards animals generally. The Institution combines the quality of an infirmary and a dispensary for animals belonging to persons who are not well able to pay for ordinary medical attendance, and therefore does not trench on veterinary establishments. Several thousands of animals are treated annually. The Institution, which is under the direction of the Senate of the University of London, is situated in Wandsworth Road, near Vauxhall Railway Station. As an hospital and dispensary for poor horses, dogs, and other animals, the Brown Institution is unique of its kind. As far as we know, there is nothing like it in the world. What a prodigious step in advance is the Home for Dogs, and the Institution now described, from the condition of things at the beginning of the nineteenth century!

In speaking of the improved treatment of defenceless creatures within recent times, a prominent place is due to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, located in Jermyn Street, London. Standing at the head of all organisations of the kind in the United Kingdom, this Society may be considered the watchful guardian of the rights of animals, and without whose agency the laws we have enumerated would, as regards England, stand a poor chance of being enforced. The business of this Society is conducted mainly by the employment of persons all over the country to find out cases of cruelty, and to bring the offenders to justice. The Society diffuses hand-bills and placards in places where they may come prominently under the notice of persons likely to infringe the law. It further has issued various publications calculated to stir up the feelings in behalf of animals.

The hand-bills and placards deserve special notice. Sheep salesmen are reminded that convictions have been obtained against persons for ill-treating sheep by cutting and lacerating their ears, as a means of identifying them from sheep belonging to other consigners. Shepherds are warned, by a cited example, to abstain from a specified mode of treating sheep for certain maladies; because

pain is inflicted, which a veterinary surgeon knows how to avoid, but which an ignorant though well-meaning shepherd may not. Farmers are reminded that it is a punishable offence to crowd too many sheep together on going to market; instances being cited in which eleven sheep were crammed into a small cart, with their legs tied tightly together. Captains of freight steamers are informed that penalties have been enforced against a captain for so overcrowding his vessel, on a voyage from Holland to the Thames, as to cause the sheep much pain and suffering; carriers and cattle-barge owners are under the same legal obligations.

In regard to cows, one placard cautions persons sending them to market with the udder greatly distended with milk, and from which the poor animals evidently suffer much pain. Cattle rearers are told that penalties have been enforced against one of their body for sawing off the horns of fourteen heifers so close to the head as to cause blood to flow in considerable quantity, and to make the animals stamp and moan; the object of such a mode of cutting being to increase the market value of the horns. Butchers are reminded that it is a punishable offence to bleed calves to death merely for the sake of giving additional whiteness to veal. Consigners and carriers are alike reminded that the Act of 1849 imposes fines or imprisonment as a punishment for conveying animals in such way as to subject them to unnecessary pain or suffering; the neglect to give proper food and water to the animals, whether coming to market, at market, or in removal from market, is announced in another hand-bill to be an infringement of the same statute.

Drovers, by another hand-bill or placard, are cautioned against urging on cattle which by lameness are unfitted to travel along the roads and streets; and against striking animals on the legs so violently as to lame them: both are practices to which drovers are too prone, and both are punishable. Farmers, graziers, and salesmen are alike warned that the season of the year should be taken into account in the transport of shorn sheep. 'It is hardly conceivable that respectable farmers and graziers, merely for the sake of profit, can in the months of December, January, February, March, or April, cruelly strip a dumb animal of that warm woollen coat which the goodness of God has provided more abundantly in winter to protect it from the cold weather; or that any English salesman will lay himself open to a criminal charge of aiding or continuing the offence by exposing shorn animals for sale at such inclement seasons.'

Horses and donkeys find a place in the safeguards which the Society endeavours to provide, by disseminating placards and hand-bills pointing out the penalties for cruelty or neglect. It is an offence against the laws to work a horse in an omnibus, cab, or other vehicle when in an infirm or worn-out state. It is an offence to beat a horse in a stable with a degree of severity amounting to cruelty, merely to make it obedient, or still worse, through an impulse of angry passion. It is an offence to set a horse to drag a cart or wagon loaded with a weight beyond his strength; many coal-merchants and their carmen have been prosecuted and fined for this unfeeling conduct. It is an offence to cruelly beat and over-ride poor donkeys; useful animals which seem fated to be the victims of very hard treatment in the world. It is a significant fact that one placard is addressed to 'excursionists and others:' those who have witnessed the treatment of donkeys by their drivers, at Hampstead Heath, Blackheath, and the humbler grades of sea-side places where holiday people assemble, will know what this means. The Society aid the inspectors of mines, or are aided by them, in bringing to justice truck-drivers and others for working horses and ponies in an unfit state in coal-pits.

It was not likely that dogs would be left out of sight by the Society; the maltreating of such animals is the subject of some of the cautionary placards, especially in localities where rough persons, prone to dog-tormenting, are known to be numerous. Cats are the subjects concerning which other warnings are given, in regard to torturing or cruelly worrying. Fishmongers are reminded that it is a punishable offence which many persons commit of 'putting living lobsters and crabs into cold water, and then placing them on a fire until the water is heated to boiling temperature, thereby causing them to endure horrible and prolonged suffering.'

That the feathered tribes should share the protection which the issuing of these placards is intended to subserve, is natural enough; seeing that the Sea-bird, Wild-bird, and Wild-fowl Acts were due in great measure to the Society. One placard states that it is a punishable offence to kill or wound any such birds (including the young in nests) within the prohibited period; and that those who sell such killed birds are also punishable. Another placard administers a similar warning in regard to wild-fowl, enumerating thirty-six species, all of which are to be safe from the gun, the snare, and the net from the 15th of February to the 10th of July, under penalties which are prescribed in the Act of 1876. Bird-fanciers are reminded that one of their fraternity was imprisoned for fourteen days for depriving a chaffinch of its sight as a means of improving its singing. Poultry-dealers are, in another hand-bill, cautioned against plucking live poultry, a cruel practice which, if proved, subjects the offender to three months' imprisonment. Carrying live fowls to market by their legs, with their heads hanging downwards; and exposing fowls to hot sunshine with their legs tied together – have brought the offenders into trouble. In another placard the patrons of pigeon-matches are warned that occasional cruelties practised by them or their servants come within the scope of the law. In one of the Society's publications, the cruelty of bearing-reins for carriage-horses is significantly pointed out.

The Society has been encouraged in its benevolent exertions by a letter from Her Majesty the Queen, addressed in 1874 to the Earl of Harrowby, in his capacity as President. There was an assembly in London of foreign delegates representing similar associations, on the occasion of the holding of the half-century jubilee of the parent Society. Her Majesty requested the President to give expression publicly to her warm interest in the success of the efforts made here and abroad for the purpose of diminishing the cruelties practised on dumb animals. 'The Queen hears and reads with horror of the sufferings which the brute creation often undergo from the thoughtlessness of the ignorant, and she fears also sometimes from the experiments in pursuit of science. For the removal of the former the Queen trusts much to the progress of education; and in regard to the pursuit of science, she hopes that the advantage of those anæsthetic discoveries from which man has derived so much benefit himself, in the alleviation of suffering, may be fully extended to the lower animals. Her Majesty rejoices that the Society awakens the interest of the young by the presentation of prizes for essays connected with the subject, and hears with gratification that her son and daughter-in-law shew their interest and sympathy by presenting those prizes at your meetings.'

Looking to the distinguished patronage of the Society from Her Majesty downwards, its vast array of supporters, and the large number of Societies which it has helped to originate at home and abroad, we naturally rely upon it for promoting a consolidation and expansion of the laws against cruelty to animals. These laws, as has been seen, are composed of shreds and patches, brought into existence with difficulty, and in many respects imperfect. The time appears to have come when the whole should be combined in a statute applicable to all parts of the United Kingdom. That certain actions should be deemed cruelties punishable by law in England and not in Scotland, is anything but creditable, and not a little ludicrous. This is a point to which the attention of legislators should be seriously invited. From the fragmentary and confused condition of the statutes, we have experienced much difficulty in ascertaining what, as a whole, the law really is. This chaotic state of things detracts, we think, not a little from the glory which may be freely claimed by the English for their legislation in behalf of animals. A consolidated Act with all reasonable improvements, would be something to point to with satisfaction, and probably go far to insure a legalised system of kind treatment of animals all over the globe.

W. C.

FROM DAWN TO SUNSET A STORY IN THREE PARTS

By Alaster Græme
INTRODUCTORY

Every man loves the land where he got life and liberty. The heart of the mountaineer is chained to his rugged mountain-home; he loves the wild and whirling blast, the snow-storm and the brooding clouds. Every true heart beats truly for country and for home. Thus the 'children of the peat-bog' and the fen cling to the illimitable wolds and the 'level shining mere,' beautiful even now.

Beautiful *then*, when long ago, primeval forests clothed the land. When in later times the bells of minster towers sounded far and near, and the deep bay of the Brunswald hounds awoke the echoes of the wold; when old Crowland's towers gleamed through mist; and the heights of that far-famed isle, the Camp of Refuge, where, amidst blood and battle, and beneath the 'White Christ' uplifted, the gallant Saxon fought the wild Viking; where the Saxon made his last dread stand for England's liberty, while men fell dead, and bones lay bleaching on every island and valley of the fen.

Beautiful *now*, O Fen-land! where still I seem to hear the wild shout of your outlaw hunters, hunting the red-deer and the wolf; where still I seem to hear the war-cry of the men of Danelagh, or imagine the great fires sweeping the boundless plains. Wide are your marshes still, and dark and deep your woods; the keen winds bring the driving snow; dense fog and mist and drenching rains sweep strongly from the sea; dark and capricious are the autumn days, and full of storm; yet overhead stretches a free heaven, boundless and open; underfoot stretch the free plains, wide and open; and over all sweeps the magnificence of the cloud-scenery, unbroken and unopposed; and the splendour of the sunrise and the sunset lights the low isles like flame.

PART I. – DAWN

CHAPTER THE FIRST

Thus did the suns rise and set in glory across the level lands of Enderby; old Enderby manor, where the Flemings had dwelt for centuries; old Enderby, with its 'clanging rookery,' its grand timber, its turrets and its towers. Under that arched gateway has swept many a gay cavalcade with hawk and hound; has passed slowly many a hearse with sable plumes and horses; has stepped many a brave bridegroom leading his blushing bride, while the far-famed bells of Enderby pealed out loud and clear.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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