

## MERCY TO MAN AND BEAST.

THE other day we heard of a story relating to the care of the poor by London clergy which will interest our readers. It having been decided to build some schools in connection with a church not far from St. Paul's Cathedral, a bishop presided at one of the committee meetings to finally approve the builder's estimate, when one of the younger curates, knowing well that among his poor flock many working men are cheated of their just wage, begged my lord chairman to see that a proper and just bond should be given by the builder that his scaffolders, bricklayers, plasterers, etc., should be assured a reasonable payment without reduction. After considerable discussion a clause was inserted in the agreement to this effect, for especially in the service of God's church it was deemed right that His poor should be thus far protected.

This incident reminds us of a story connected with a horse, and was told in olden

times by *Sabbas de Castillon*, a knight of St. John of Jerusalem. There was once in Calabria a law made that whoso would complain against any man of ingratitude was bound to ring a certain little bell appointed for that purpose, at the sound of which certain commissioners met together, who having heard the complaint and defence of the parties, if they found that the party grieved had ground for his grief, they would presently award the complainant some satisfaction under penalty of a great fine. Now it happened that a Calabrian having for some years drawn full service out of his horse, which by labour and old age was fallen blind, became full of sores and was lame and altogether unprofitable, drove and beat the poor beast out of his stable, so that wanting meat he was fain to feed poorly abroad, pitifully tormented with wasps and flies. The horse limping and searching for some shadowy place, lighted upon the chapel, mis-

taking it for his stable. By chance there stuck in the bell-rope some boughs of a tree which the beast tugging at caused the bell to ring. The judges presently came together after the accustomed manner, and finding nobody there but the horse which they saw so lean and in such ill plight, they made him be brought into the market-place, and causing the owner to be brought before them, straightly enjoined him to take the poor horse into his care again, to feed him and use him in all respects as he was wont to be used in his days of health and strength, natural equity requiring that forasmuch as the horse had spent his years in his master's service he should in his old age be maintained by him.

It is surely the will of Almighty God that honest work, whether by man or by dumb beasts, should be decently rewarded by those who draw service from them for their own benefit.



## A USEFUL COMPANION FOR A WALKING TOUR.

I MET a very sensible tramp at Arcos; a man who ought to go a long way and not fare badly either. He was accompanied by a tame nanny-goat, with a fine full udder of milk, and so, go where he would, his wholesome wine-bottle was ever at hand.

It looked odd, but why not a goat instead

of a useless dog? The dog is a dear, good fellow, feeling and sympathising with all our cares. There is no one like him when the way is long and the heart is low. You can't mistake the charity in his eyes: he is everything for you, and proud to be your companion in adversity—few men and women are like him in this. But you can't milk a dog,

and you must feed him, while this "nanny" feeds both herself and her master.

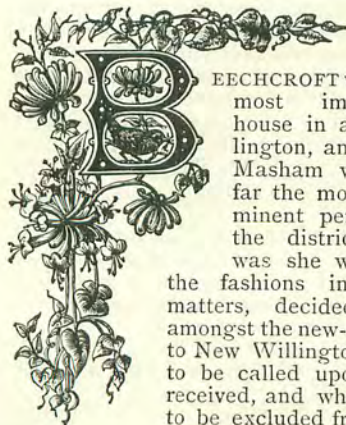
I am selfish. I would like to have been the discoverer of the advantages of a goat companion; but I will give the Spanish tramp his due: may he go far, and get fat on the rich nutriment which his little friend yields him.—From *A Vagabond in Spain*.

## HALF-A-DOZEN SISTERS.

By EVELYN EVERETT-GREEN, Author of "Greyfriars," "Next Door Neighbours," "Barbara's Brothers," etc.

## CHAPTER IV.

AT BEECHCROFT.



**B**EECHCROFT was the most important house in all Willington, and Mrs. Masham was by far the most prominent person in the district. It was she who set the fashions in local matters, decided who amongst the new-comers to New Willington were to be called upon and received, and who were to be excluded from the magic circle which comprised the *élite* of the neighbourhood. She constantly had friends down from London, who brought with them the latest news and the most fashionable

wearing apparel, and imported an atmosphere of fashionable frivolity into the entertainments at Beechcroft. Mr. Masham, it was said, had made his large fortune on the stock-exchange; but he had married a well-born beauty, and had indulged her in most of her costly fancies. He had been quite content to remain something of a cypher in his own house, and when he died some three years ago, it was said in some quarters that his widow would not greatly miss him, and would soon console herself.

These prognostications had not proved true. Mrs. Masham had a warm heart, and she had been much attached to her undemonstrative husband. She was not a broken-hearted widow, and did not pose as one. But for two years she had lived in considerable seclusion, and during the third had only re-commenced receiving on a modest scale.

Now however that the third year of her widowhood had expired, she had grown used to her loneliness, and the desire for pleasure had once more awakened, and she was contemplating with satisfaction

the thought of keeping open house and making herself the centre of a gay social circle. She had no thoughts of matrimony for herself. She retained an affectionate and grateful remembrance of her husband, but she meant to lead a happy life, and hoped that she might make others happy also.

The three years of her seclusion had changed Guinivere and Beatrice Wilberforce from girls in the school-room to grown-up and emancipated young ladies. Mrs. Masham had always been fond of the girls from the Larches, and had made much of all of them in her way; but these two were professedly her favourites, and it was these two to whom she desired to play the part of fairy god-mother. She thought it a pity that the three Greys were taking so independent a stand with regard to their future, instead of seeking the good old-fashioned method of marriage, which seemed to her the best and most natural termination to the girlhood of a gently-born woman. But it was the fashion nowadays for girls to make their own