

## A FEW WORDS ON KINDNESS TO ANIMALS.



**K**INDNESS to animals seems to be a speciality of man, and of man in his highest state of Christian civilisation. A dark and mysterious side of nature exhibits a vast amount of suffering, which, if not inexplicable, has hitherto not been explained to us. We have only to look at the teeth of a pike, or watch

a cat playing with a terrified mouse, or hear the shrill buzz of pain when a spider catches and deliberately sucks the life out of a fly, to perceive that a vein of agony runs through the whole of nature, and thrills the world of insignificance. When we magnify and examine even a drop of water we may see its minute population obviously exposed to terror and distress, as some stronger atom of life preys upon the weaker.

Moreover, among the larger animals, beyond the maternal impulse, which makes the bear robbed of its whelps to be dangerous, and sets the hen not only to gather her chickens under her wings if the hawk is seen in the air, but to defend them with self-sacrificing vehemence, we may perceive an utter absence of what we understand by sympathy and consideration. The sick beast is butted from the herd and left to die. The ox loosened from the yoke will munch in perfect unconcern though its fellow be goaded to extremity, or driven to death before its eyes. There is no compassion among those whose conduct has given a special significance to the words "brutal" and "inhuman." It is reserved for man to show kindness. When he does he is aptly called "humane." At present, he seems to be the one channel through which any tenderness, beyond the maternal instinct, is shown in the animal world. In him alone is seen the working of a spirit which produces unselfishness and regard for the feelings of others. This is his divine inheritance, and to this all the efforts which are made to promote kindness to animals appeal. As he is touched with the mystic contagion of Christianity, learning to love his neighbour as himself, and do as he would be done by; as he realises the sacredness of human life, so he comes to be tender, not merely to his peers, not merely to his kin, but to the beast of the field, and the dumb companions of his busy and domestic hours.

It has, indeed, struck me, in the small but still significant experience which I have had of the East, that where human life is cheap, and people are accustomed to cruel phases of human punishment, the dumb animal is proportionately ill-used. Last spring, when I was in Egypt, I was told that the hippopotamus-

whip had till quite lately been in constant use by the magistrate, even for minor offences; the offender being flogged on the feet with this terrible instrument. On more than one occasion, too, we found that the accidental death of a native was sneered at as a small concern, not worth inquiring into. Cairo surgeons have little difficulty in getting "subjects." Here were people who, though in divers respects they showed what was estimable in human conduct, had been familiar with open magisterial cruelty and held life cheap. And one result seemed to show itself in the treatment of their animals. The way in which donkeys especially were beaten was truly horrible. Even the best-kept—those which were let for hire to residents and travellers in Cairo—were deliberately provided with a "raw," into which the drivers thrust their pointed sticks. In some instances, in consequence of the remonstrance of English tourists, the donkey-boys, seemingly incapable of perceiving that the protests were made against cruelty to the animal, and not merely because of the feelings of the riders, had scooped out the conventional raw under the broad breeching which the animals wore. Then they hit them on the spot where the sore was concealed.

Much the same indifference to brute feeling was perceptible in the ill-governed, suffering Palestine, where herdsmen and shepherds might frequently be seen driving cattle, sheep, and goats with no mere pebbles, but hard and heavy stones, viciously thrown. Of course the poor homeless, owner-less dog of the East suffers still more. He is a perpetual target, and as every field, road, and path in a great part of Palestine is an inexhaustible arsenal of missiles, the dogs live in a shower of them. I tried hard to tame one there, giving him scraps and good words, but our Syrian attendants could not be kept from incessantly pelting him. Poor dog! he tried to do us a good turn by sleeping outside our tents and barking at suspicious-looking humans, but he lived a sadly checkered life for a week while in our company, and at last lost all faith in the influence of my good intentions, and carried his battered carcase away. So much for cruelty to animals in the "sacred" East. Let us look to the West.

It seems to me that regard for human life and susceptibilities precedes and produces that for the feelings of lower animals, and that thus cruelty can be radically checked or done away with only by the promotion of Christian charity. We must use the highest motives to produce the lowest results, and appeal to the divine inheritance of man if we would see kindness shown to the dumb brutes associated with our life.

No doubt if people would think more, even without, perhaps, consciously bringing to bear the greater motives which lie at the root of all kindness, they would see opportunities for its exercise and be glad to use them. They would detect a want of consideration which they had previously failed in from sheer inadvertence. For instance, the cruelty shown by children,

especially boys, arises I believe mostly from mere thoughtlessness, and it is an excellent plan to give prizes in schools for essays on kindness to animals. This may well open many a lad's eyes to the cruelty of acts which he does, not from any radically bad disposition, but because he has not thought about the matter at all. Still, it is to the conscious spread of the Christian spirit that we must look for that temper of consideration which leads us to act mercifully towards all animals, including those which we are compelled to destroy because they are noxious, and in the killing of those which are afterwards used for food.

Perhaps it is in the case of such as are domesticated, or, as they might call it, enslaved, where the use of natural instinct is in some measure checked, or even occasionally prohibited, that the greatest concern should be shown. There are people, however, kind enough in their way, who have never realised the enforced attitude of indifference to toil which the bearing-rein gives to the horse. When they get into the carriage waiting at the door, they see the noble beasts tossing their heads and champing their bits as if with a reserve of energy. The fact is that they are uncomfortable, not zealous. They are protesting to the best of their power against the strap which hinders the natural position of the neck, and which is to them what a stiff and enormously high stock is to a man. It makes them hold their heads up, no doubt, and look courageous, but they are in truth grievously distressed, and moreover, especially when going up hill, or at any time in dragging a heavy load, an undue strain is then put upon the muscles of their legs, which suffer in consequence. The short bearing-rein is an instrument of domestic torture. Even pets sometimes suffer from unkind thoughtlessness. It is better to keep one or two kittens of a litter, and have them disposed of afterwards, than expose perhaps a favourite cat to the keen physical distress which follows when they are all drowned at once, and she has none to feed. Her pain, when deprived of all, is not mental but bodily. The thirst of a house-dog, too, is sometimes intense when the filling of the water-pan has been carelessly forgotten. Perhaps canaries inherit an aptitude for slavery, but the obvious discomfort indicated by the gestures of wild birds which have been caught and imprisoned should, methinks, be reckoned pathetic. They have not the sense to resent their imprisonment by silence. They that lead them away captive require of them then a song, and melody in their heaviness; and, unlike the Jews, they sing. But, to me, the song of a caged lark is more like a prayer to heaven for freedom than an acceptance of captivity. I fancy that many pets, if they could only make themselves understood, would be found to take a very rebellious estimate of the fondness which is bestowed upon them.

How many people, too, when they want to catch a troublesome rat, fail to think of the prolonged laceration inflicted by the toothed trap, or when they carve a joint of veal forget that its whiteness is caused by the artificially prolonged decease of the calf! This, moreover, renders the meat less wholesome than it would be if the animal were killed outright.

In respect to the shooting of game which is afterwards used for food, it seems almost needless to say that the aim of the sportsman should be to kill his game "clean"—not, *i.e.*, fire into a covey for the chance of getting one or two while several others are wounded. Out of pure consideration, too, he should refuse long shots, whereby the bird is often hit, though not struck down.

I must mention, however, one point in respect to fishing. It is idle to suppose that worms do not feel when threaded on a hook. The strength of their struggles is then astonishing, and the prolonged heaving and writhing of a worm's free head and tail while the rest of its body is impaled is a proof of the continued agony which it feels, the commencement of which is indicated by the thrill which goes through it when first pricked with the barb. I have in my time been very fond of fishing, but I have killed my worms first. This is done literally in the fraction of a second, by dropping them into scalding water. The worm dies so instantaneously as not to move in the least. If it is dropped in while curled up, it does not even straighten itself; and it is not spoiled as bait by its death. On several occasions I have fished with worms thus killed, while another has been fishing with live ones under precisely similar conditions in respect to the water and the locality, and caught more fish. Indeed, the hook can be covered better with a dead worm than with a live one. I imagine, moreover, that some way might be discovered whereby worms might be preserved in air-tight bottles or tins, and kept so that the fisherman would be sure to be able to take suitable bait with him, and not be dependent upon digging, which is very uncertain at some times. I wish some enterprising tackle-shop proprietor would try whether he could not keep a store of preserved worms, and thus prevent a vast amount of small but acute misery. Anyhow, I know from considerable experience that dead worms are, for bait, as good as, if not better than, live ones—*i.e.*, if they are killed in the way I have mentioned. I may add that they had better first be kept in damp moss for some time. They are then subsequently very much "tougher" than when killed directly after being dug up, though in this latter case their death is also instantaneous.

Bird's-nesting, as sometimes pursued, has rightfully been counted among cruel pursuits. There is something specially pitiless in the taking of a whole nest. It is the sacking of a home in the very crisis of home life, and the distress of the parents is conspicuously pathetic. Still, the collection of eggs has a great charm for a boy, and thereby he certainly may gain much desirable knowledge in one branch of natural history. But he may gratify this taste without cruelty to the bird. One or two eggs taken from a nest are soon replaced by the mother. The collector gets his specimens, and the feathered family is no worse for the tax he has levied on it. The taking of the living calow brood really serves no purpose, except in the eyes of those ignorant people who do not realise the great use of small birds in destroying mischievous grubs and insects. I do not know a more pitiful sight of its

kind than that of a nest of gaping fledglings in the hands of a heedless boy.

The deliberate cruelty of killing birds, especially with poisoned grain, in the breeding season, is almost inconceivable in one who thinks at all. While the pleasant spring day passes, and all nature is returning to fresh life, one pictures the full warm nest, high up in the newly-budded tree, with the slow torture of its helpless family, till every little expectant bill is shut at last, and all is dead and cold.

But I must have done. I said at first that no compassion is shown by the lower animals amongst

themselves. Perhaps I ought to make some exception in the case of dogs. I have known a dog spontaneously and tenderly take a litter of orphaned kittens under its charge. Almost anything, however, may be expected of dogs. We all know the story of the discriminating political dog which was used to fetch a certain "daily" every morning, and on another paper once being offered to him, flatly refused to be the bearer of it. I should not be surprised to hear of such a dog promoting the circulation of the publications of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals by bringing a bundle of them home to his master.

HARRY JONES.

## GARDENING IN FEBRUARY.



WALK round the garden in February will show us that its early gaiety is once more beginning to delight us in the shape of the simple crocus and snowdrop. Unpretending as these flowers are, their undeniable popularity lies, we suppose, in the fact of their being almost the first to display their colours after the severity of a long and dreary winter, the worst of which they would fain bid us hope is now over. Perhaps a very few words about them may, therefore, not be out of place at this

season of the year. First, then, as to the crocus. No one, at the outset, requires to be told that the crocus is very hardy. It is certainly marvellously independent of cold weather. How often have we not, when an influenza is keeping us on the fire side of our window-pane, gazed out at its merry yellow head thrusting itself rudely through the white background of the surrounding snow, and almost watched it expanding its petals the very moment that it catches sight of the rays of the sun! And then a little later on in the year, in the month of March perhaps, we notice that our flower is beginning to look very straggling, ragged, and disorderly. The floescence indeed is simply jagged and spoilt, and bears every trace of having fallen a victim to a depredator of some sort. With a little more observation, that depredator we soon discover to be the sparrow. Notice three or four of these fellows at work among your crocuses and having a meal off them. They are paying, in fact, a morning visit to their dispensary, for we recollect that one of the medicinal properties of the crocus is that it is a stimulant. We recollect also that we put saffron in the water that we give to our moulting canaries, so that we wonder the less that the sparrows persist in spoiling our crocuses, when we know that the saffron of our shops is nothing more than the dried and prepared stigmas of the *Crocus sativus*—

those long reddish-orange drooping stigmas with which some of us are familiar. But it is with the horticultural rather than with the medicinal properties of the crocus that we have to deal. The crocus, then, prefers in the way of soil a light sandy loam, and if we are putting in our bulbs with a view of growing for increase, we are careful to select the finest bulbs, and plant them some six inches apart and four deep; and, at any rate, have a good three inches of soil above the crown. Now this bulb-planting generally takes place about October, the month indeed for putting in the generality of bulbs. Some have recommended that the soil be enriched by the addition of a little cow-dung or some rotted turf. In the autumn, seed-pods can be gathered from those that have been well established, or whose floescence you have remarked as particularly fine, but we shall speak presently of raising from seed. The bulbs themselves should not be disturbed until the leaves have well decayed. Sometimes, however, we certainly find it necessary to lift our bulbs carefully in the month of May or June, when we are bedding out, in order to make room for our geraniums and calceolarias, &c.; but we have before frequently given a caution against the fatal and absurd practice of lopping off the bulb foliage for this purpose, and leaving the bulb in the ground. Of course the longer the bulbs remain in the earth, the greater perfection will they attain. The crocus requires no protection and is well able to look after himself. Indeed he gives less trouble than almost any other flower we could name. Now in order to raise crocuses from seed, it is best to sow them immediately after being gathered. This would be about the month of October. As the majority if not all of the seeds may be relied upon to vegetate, sow only thinly and in light dry earth, either in a prepared bed or in large pots or pans or boxes, of course due precaution being taken to drain in the usual manner with holes and potsherds. Carefully rake the seed in so as to cover it, or better still, sift some of your compost through a fine sieve so as to get from a quarter to half an inch of fine soil over your seed. If you have sown in boxes you need not be particular to place them in sheltered situations, and