

## THE DOGS' HOME, BATTERSEA.

By BASIL TOZER.

*With eye upraised, his master's looks to scan,  
The joy, the solace, and the aid of man;  
The rich man's guardian and the poor man's friend,  
The only creature faithful to the end.*

"THERE is nothing," says Bulwer Lytton, in his famous book, "My Novel"—"there is nothing that more moves us to tears than the hearty kindness of a dog, when something in human beings has pained or chilled us." Sportsmen probably realise the truth of this statement more than anybody else, for the reason that sportsmen—who must not be confounded with those peculiar creatures called "sporting men"—are, as a rule, the most humane and sensitive of all human beings. Sentimentalists, and perhaps also the anti-sporting community in general, will at first contradict this last assertion, but a perusal of the list of names of subscribers to the excellent institution about to be described must force them quickly to retract their own words of contradiction and to admit that though England is the country most devoted to sport and to manly exercises, Englishmen and Englishwomen are not only sympathetic and kind-hearted, but also opposed to cruelty.

It was in the year 1859 that the late Mrs. Tealby and a friend first thought of forming a temporary home for lost and starving dogs in an obscure road in Holloway, and about the year 1871, in the face of considerable opposition, they succeeded in starting at Battersea a small place of refuge, which has since developed into the now widely known Home. No sooner was it opened than a certain section of the Press immediately began to attack it upon every side, and to try its best to damn the institution as a useless, if not an objectionable establishment. "What was its object?" asked these ignorant though possibly well-meaning writers. "Why could not homeless dogs be destroyed by the police?" "Was it not a wicked sin," that was their favourite phrase, "to spend money in order to support brute animals while thousands of poor people were starving?" and so on and so on. But these

and similar questions were soon satisfactorily answered, and then the indignant voice of the Press gradually subsided into a whisper, and finally, for a short time, it became silent. When next it spoke it had changed its tone. Now it utters only words of praise, not merely with regard to the foundress, her courage and her perseverance, but respecting the home itself, its excellent management, and its great use.

As for the object with which the institution was organised, it is briefly as follows: The establishment was founded, according to the words of its prospectus, in order to rescue lost dogs from misery and starvation; in order to clear the streets of the nuisance and dangers of straying, ownerless dogs; in order to substitute for cruel processes of destroying life a speedy, painless, and therefore merciful and scientific method of putting to death; in order to find owners and suitable homes for many useful and valuable animals; in order, lastly, to prevent exorbitant rewards being extorted by unprincipled and designing persons as payment for the recovery of lost dogs. Such dogs are now restored to their rightful owners by the managers of the home upon application being made for them by the said owners, and the price charged is a sum equivalent merely to the cost of keep during the residence of the dogs at the refuge, plus a small percentage, which is added to the fund for supporting the institution.

The second question, "Why could not straying dogs be destroyed by the police?" may be dismissed without comment when it is stated that during the last ten years nearly 206,000 dogs, exclusive of cats, have been admitted to the Home, most of which the police would have been obliged either to take care of or to put an end to; and that the number of ownerless dogs found about the streets is increasing annually. Last year the Home received no less than 21,728 dogs of all sorts and conditions, an advance of 4700 on the total quantity admitted in 1893; and during January, February, and March of

the current year the number brought in amounted to nearly 7000.

With regard to the assertion that money should not be spent in supporting dumb animals while human beings are starving, has it ever occurred to the originators of this objection that, supposing a dogs' home supported by voluntary contributions did not exist, a similar establishment would of necessity have to be opened immediately, and that the expense of supporting it would need to be defrayed by the ratepayers? For by Act of Parliament 30 and 31 Vict., cap. 134, the police are authorised to take possession of ownerless dogs found in the street, and to detain such dogs until the owners have claimed them and paid all expenses incurred by reason of such detention. Indeed, the authorities at the Dogs' Home have no right to receive dogs except under the Act of Parliament which enables the police to take dogs from the streets, so that in reality the managers at the Home at Battersea act indirectly, if not directly, as agents for the police, to whom they thus render great and gratuitous service.

At present the Home, including kennels, yards, and outbuildings, covers exactly an acre of land, and though the inmates are already much cramped for space, there will be accommodation for about a thousand dogs and a hundred cats when certain old and dilapidated kennels have been pulled down and a new set erected on their site. Some four hundred cats are admitted during the twelve months, many being sent as boarders by persons leaving town for a short time only. The price charged weekly for such boarders is eighteenpence each. The dogs are fed almost entirely upon Spratt's dog biscuits. Upon an average the consumption of these biscuits is thirty tons a year. One point that immediately strikes the visitor upon his entering the yards is the extreme neatness and cleanliness prevalent everywhere. Neither does any offensive smell assail his nostrils, though many of the dogs must be in a deplorable state in every way when first received. And here it may be well to mention that the regulations concerning their admission are as excellent as they are methodical and practical. When a fresh batch of dogs is brought in by the police—some are brought in every day, driven in a cart—all the new arrivals are placed in a large room especially built and adapted for the purpose and remote from the kennels. Here they are chained to the wall, out

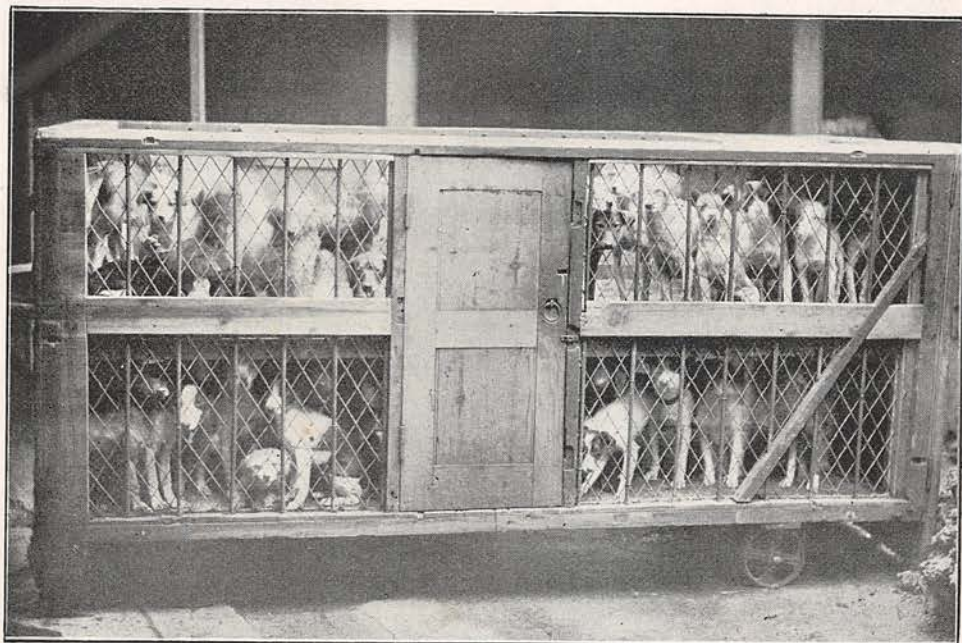
of reach of one another. They are then carefully examined, numbered, and a minute description of each is inscribed in a register. By means of this plan any individual dog applied for may be identified almost immediately, and much time and trouble are thus saved. Formerly the dogs were destroyed after being kept for three days, but at the special request of her Majesty the Queen, who, together with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales and H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, honours the home by being its patron, no dog is now put an end to within five days of the time of its arrival, unless exceptional circumstances render immediate destruction necessary. Valuable animals are often retained for a much longer period than five days. It is satisfactory to record that neither rabies nor hydrophobia has been seen at the Home for several years, though of course cases of epilepsy and similar fits, often mistaken for madness, are fairly common. Rabies and hydrophobia, indeed, are forms of disorder unknown at the Home. Last year 750 dogs were brought to Battersea by private persons. Of these, 177 were given to the institution; the remainder were taken there by persons glad to avail themselves of the painless process, presently to be described, of destroying their aged favourites. When it becomes more widely known that by merely paying a shilling any person may ensure his dog or cat being put to death absolutely without pain, probably many owners of dumb friends will resort to the humane method instead of poisoning or drowning. Last year also, 2023 dogs were purchased by persons who undertook to provide them with comfortable homes, and 1427 were restored to their proprietors. Of the 440 cats taken in during the year, 210 were brought by their owners to be temporarily boarded; the rest were brought by humanely disposed persons. The majority of the latter lot of cats were in a suffering condition, and it was necessary to destroy them almost immediately.

There are ten kennel-men or attendants, who are fond of their charges and like the work. These men have, so to speak, grown up with the establishment, and any one of them is able to tell you anything that you may wish to know about it. Almost needless it is to add that formerly they followed a calling in the country. One of them, for instance, a finely set-up, well-built man, thoroughly versed in matters canine, and undoubtedly a good judge of a dog, used to be gamekeeper upon a large estate in Devonshire. Between April 1

and Sept. 30 they are on duty from 6 a.m. until 6 p.m.; between Oct. 1 and March 31, from 7 a.m. until 4 p.m., and they have a private reading-room supplied with plenty of books and current literature.

Perhaps the objects that most interest the general public are the lethal chamber, invented by Dr. Benjamin Ward Richardson, F.R.S. (now Sir Benjamin Richardson), and erected at the Home in 1884, and the crematorium, which stands within a few yards of it. By means of the lethal chamber one hundred dogs may be put to a painless death at one and the same

chamber is so constructed that a cage, in which dogs about to be destroyed are placed, can be run into it with great rapidity immediately the sliding door has been raised, and can be as quickly enclosed. This, of course, is effected by pulling down the door again. The cage consists of a wooden framework with light iron bars, and a wooden door upon either side of it, two doors at one end and another door upon the top. It can be filled and emptied through these doors very quickly. In order that it may hold as many animals as possible and yet not cause them dis-



*Photo by Brock, Wandsworth Road.*

GOING INTO THE LETHAL CHAMBER.

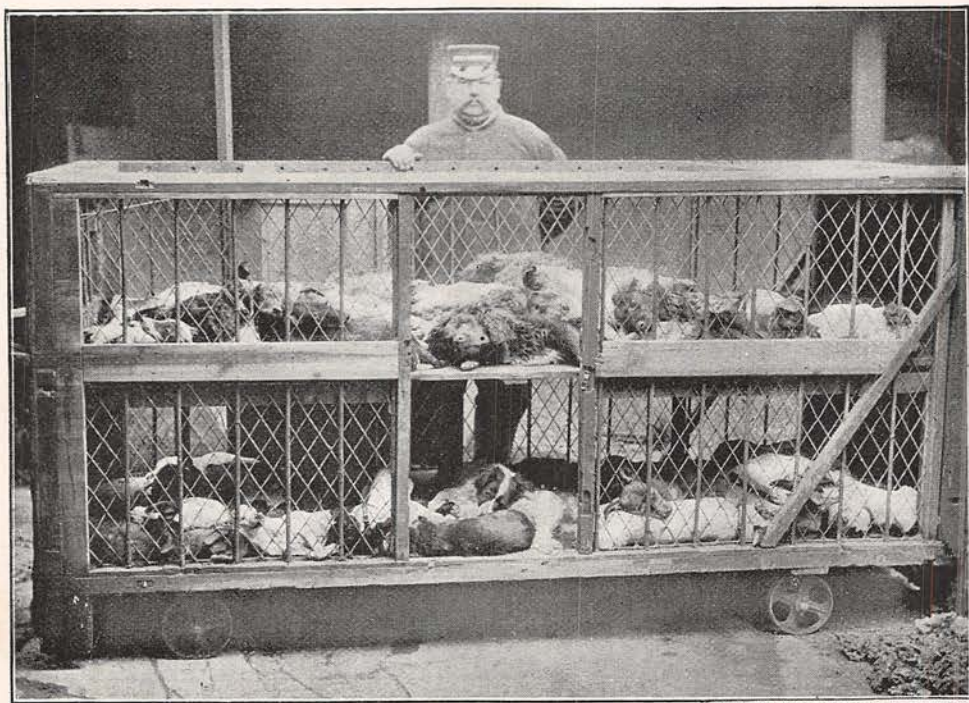
time and within a few minutes, and in the crematorium two hundred dogs or cats can be consumed together. The time needed for the cremation lasts about eight hours. However, a more lengthy description of the lethal chamber will no doubt be of interest.

The chamber itself, then, which is built of brick, is hermetically sealed, except in front, where there is a sliding door, and at the escape-pipe or flue. Before the doomed animals are placed within it the chamber itself is fully charged with narcotic vapour—that is to say, an atmosphere of carbonic acid, through which chloroform has been introduced in the form of a spray, up to complete saturation. The

comfort, the cage is divided into two parts or tiers, the flooring of the upper tier being freely perforated in a way that establishes a communication between the upper and lower divisions, and allows a due distribution of the lethal atmosphere. The cage runs on 8-in. wheels, and travels upon iron tram-rails. Immediately the sliding door has been pushed up the cage is run into the chamber and the door instantly closed again. The anæsthetic sleep is induced within one minute, and death takes place usually within the two minutes that follow, though the cage is never withdrawn within half an hour. This sort of death is brought about by anæsthesia, and not, as some suppose,

by suffocation or asphyxia. Physiologically, there is a distinctive difference between these two modes of death. Death by anæsthesia is death by sleep; death by asphyxia is death by deprivation of air. Death by anæsthesia is typically represented in death by chloroform; death by asphyxia is typically represented in drowning and strangulation. When properly carried out, death by anæsthesia is much the more certain and by far the less violent of the two processes. The animals sleep into death, as it were, no sign of a

drowning, poisoning by prussic acid, shooting, and stunning—the lethal method stands far ahead on every ground of practical readiness, certainty, and humanity. I cannot, however, let this opportunity pass of testifying that the method for twenty years carried out at the Dogs' Home of killing with prussic acid has been, by the skill and experience of the operators, brought to a great state of perfection and painlessness. The objections to it are moral and physical. It is a tax that few men can usually bear to have



*Photo by Brock, Wandsworth Road.*

COMING OUT OF THE LETHAL CHAMBER.

spasm or struggle being ever presented by their dead bodies. The anæsthetic, too, has convincingly been proved to be painless, for we know that human beings who have almost died while under the influence of chloroform have afterwards declared that they felt no pain whatsoever; and at present there is no reason for supposing that dumb animals are more sensitive than men and women. Indeed, Dr. Benjamin Richardson himself, upon May 15, 1884—the day upon which his lethal chamber was used for the first time—spoke as follows—

“Compared with the other modes of extinguishing animal life—such as hanging,

every week to take hundreds of dogs one after the other, and by force administer to each, by the mouth, the deadly dose of prussic acid. Further, the poison is so deadly that I look upon it as almost a miracle that no man has been accidentally killed by it during the process.”

A waggish visitor the other day standing with a friend behind the cage containing dogs and cats about to be sent into their last long sleep, playfully remarked that it would be well if some of our criminals and dangerous and incurable madmen could be sent shuffling off this mortal coil in a similar sensible and painless manner. “Criminals and madmen?” exclaimed

his friend with a laugh that a certain well-known novelist would undoubtedly have called "metallic," "say, rather, our labour leaders and land agitators, our women who did, and women who could, our new woman and our bad musicians. Well might they be shuffled off, and nobody would feel one penny the worse." Possibly some of us agree with him.

Before the crematorium had been built, the dead bodies were sent by rail into the country and there stacked, a bed of charcoal being placed between each layer of bodies, and the gruesome mass was ultimately utilised as manure. But gradually the exportation of "Londoners," as the railwaymen called these bodies, became so enormous that the shrewd country cousin took very marked exception to this steadily increasing influx of ill-starred foreign produce, and, the supply having evidently exceeded the demand, further consignments of "Londoners" were declined with thanks. At this crisis, Sir George Measom opportunely introduced his new invention. Had he not done so, it is hard to say what would have happened, for much as the town born and bred man may sneer at his country brother, he is but seldom able to thwart him when the latter has made up his mind to bring about a change that he deems to be of importance.

*Under no conditions whatsoever are either dogs or cats supplied for purposes of vivisection.* These words are italicised because there appears to be a prevalent and growing belief that the managers of the home supply hospitals and private persons with living subjects upon which to experiment. Upon the contrary, the seventh "Notice to

the Public" posted up at the institution distinctly states that "Animals are never sold for the purpose of physiological, pathological, toxicological, or other experiments being made upon them; they are not sold to any person giving his address at a hospital; they are not sold to low-class dealers; and they are not sold to persons who may be regarded as unlikely to provide them with good homes. Every buyer is, as a condition of purchase, required to state on the counterfoil of the receipt which is delivered to him, *and which constitutes his title*, the real purpose for which the animal is required, and that it is not purchased and shall not be used for experimentation."

The Duke of Portland is President of the home. Sir George Samuel Measom, J.P., is treasurer and chairman of the committee, while Mr. Henry J. Ward is the secretary and acting manager; Mr. A. J. Sewell, M.R.C.V.S., is the hon. inspecting veterinary surgeon. The place is well worth seeing—the average daily number of inmates being over five hundred. It is open to visitors nearly all day, except on Sundays, Christmas Days, and Good Fridays. It is situated within twenty minutes' drive of Piccadilly Circus, and it may be reached by train direct from Victoria or London Bridge, or by boat. Battersea railway station almost adjoins the Home. Battersea Park pier lies within five minutes' walk of it. Owing to the rapidly increasing number of dogs sent to the refuge month by month, and also to the recent death of many of the regular subscribers, the Home is at the present time sadly in need of funds. It certainly deserves support.