

# THE HERALD OF THE GOLDEN AGE

"Thy Will be Done on Earth."

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THE ORDER OF THE GOLDEN AGE.

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ONE PENNY.

## The Death Penalty.

A thrill of horror went through American society recently because a woman who had committed murder was executed by means of electricity. The description of her being led up to the fatal chair, of her head and feet being bared for the fatal application of the electrodes and of the sickening suspense which took place during the few brief moments in which these preliminaries were made, caused such a shudder to run through the public mind that many Journals stated that probably this would be the last execution of a woman in the United States. The death penalty is indeed a terrible thing to contemplate, even when it is inflicted in the most humane manner possible upon one who has committed the crime of murdering a human being. The world has so come to regard it, and when the dread sentence of the law is carried out, every precaution is taken to make death as swift and painless as possible, even in the case of the worst criminal.



This being so, is it not time for Christian nations to reflect upon their action in meting out the death penalty to those who belong to the sub-human races and who are perfectly innocent of any crime whatever? Is it just that those who have committed no deeds of violence, who have wronged no one, and who have in numberless cases served man faithfully and well by long years of devoted toil, should be condemned to a violent death, and be handed over to bungling executioners who are often untrained—or worse still to professional scientific tormentors—without any pity being shown to them or any steps being taken to mitigate their sufferings in the hour of death? By what process of reasoning can this action of civilized communities be justified? What excuse can be made for it? How can it be reconciled with the teaching of Him who declared Justice and Mercy to be two of the three "weightier matters of the Law" and who commanded His followers to be as merciful as their Heavenly Father.

The old superstition which for centuries has been upheld by the Papal Church, and which has been handed down by them to the other Churches—that animals have no souls and therefore no rights—is now almost universally regarded as a fallacy which has no evidence to support it at all. An American Judge, some time since, declared that upon investigation he had found that more than half the human race believed in the immortality of animals, and that as many as one hundred and seventy authors had written books in the English language which upheld this belief. Few persons, if any, who have reached the spiritual plane of thought and consciousness, have any doubt about the future life of the animal creation, for they cannot ignore the manifestation of individuality which is apparent in all the more highly developed creatures, nor escape the conclusion that Eternal Justice demands that some compensation should be made for the anguish which myriads of them are made to endure through the tyranny of man.

Apart, however, from the question of their immortality, there can be no doubt that they have nerves of sensation, that they can feel and suffer just as we do ourselves, that they love life as we do, that they shrink from a violent death just as we should, and that they betray every evidence of acute pain under the surgeon's scalpel, the drover's whip, and the slaughterman's axe or knife. At Deptford, cows were seen by the Special Correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* to shake with terror, as with staring eyeballs they watched their fellow victims one by one being killed and disembowelled before them. Physiologists have declared that many of the lower creatures manifest a sensibility to pain which fully equals that of the average human being, and this being the case, how can we justify their condemnation to such forms of death as would be regarded as positively scandalous if meted out to the worst human criminal. Even if we still disbelieve in an after-life for them, this should but furnish another reason why we should save them from needless pain and agony during their one short career.

Take the case of worn-out horses, for instance. If men and women had not been rendered callous and brutal by long centuries of barbaric carnivorous diet, in all probability they would have given some consideration to the fate of these ill-used creatures, who after years of hard work and perpetual flogging, and deprivation of natural liberty and the joys of parentage—which lot is generally borne with a patience far

surpassing that displayed by the average human being—are either handed over to the tender mercies of a ‘knacker’ and executed in a most barbarous and primitive fashion, or are shipped, when so old as to be scarcely able to stand, to some foreign port where without a single friend in the world they are butchered and made into potted meat. Truly the ingratitude and hardness of heart manifested in this common treatment of faithful servants, is such as to make one stand appalled at man’s delusion in considering himself possessed of either humaneness or integrity. Surely a lethal chamber might be established in each of our towns and cities, where horses and other animals when they get old might be given a quiet and peaceful death, if their owners feel that, having ceased to be profitable to those who have exploited them, their right to further existence has been forfeited. A humane appliance of this sort could be erected for a hundred pounds, and Municipal Councils might surely be expected in the near future to regard such an addition to the local abattoir as a public necessity if the public mind could be raised to such an un-wanted level of thought as to demand it. Private individuals might also immortalise their names by bearing the expense of fitting up one or more public lethal chambers, and we commend this suggestion both to Town Councillors and to wealthy philanthropists and humanitarians.

The rapidly growing sentiment in favour of the recognition of the Rights of Animals will, before many years have passed, cause all thoughtful men and women to blush with shame for the brutality which is displayed in Christian countries towards the higher races of creatures, and to ask themselves seriously the question whether the infliction of the death penalty upon a highly organized animal does not involve a responsibility of the most serious nature. He who said, “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again,” also declared that “the merciful shall obtain Mercy,” and it behoves us to reflect upon the meaning which lies involved in such teaching. It may be a long way yet to the time when Isaiah’s prophecy will be fulfilled—that “He that slayeth an ox shall be as he that slayeth a man”—but we may all help to hasten the day when the groaning of the subject creation shall be hushed, by raising our voices in protest against every form of inhumanity and the heartless sacrifice of such numberless victims as are at present offered up upon the altar of human tyranny and lust.

The Editor.

### THE BLESSED LIFE.

If some great purpose fill thy soul  
 Inspiring thee for others’ good,  
 Press on with courage to the goal,  
 Howe’er misunderstood.  
 Toil on with pure, unselfish aim,  
 In patience till thy task is done,  
 Care not for either praise or blame,  
 Enough the victory won.  
 All noble deeds, designed to bless,  
 Are valued not by sordid price;  
 Things born of struggle, storm and stress,  
 Bring fullest sacrifice.  
 All truth is meant to meet some need,  
 And light the upward path of man,  
 Who but for that were weak indeed,  
 With all his power to plan.  
 Fear not; thy sacrifice shall be  
 A greater and a nobler gain;  
 The cloud that hides the sun from thee  
 Will bring thee needful rain.      “Shafts.”

## The Search for Happiness.

To be happy is the desire of all creatures. This instinctive desire, which is never fully gratified in this world,



is nevertheless a promise that eventually perfect happiness will be obtained.

How divergent are the roads trodden by men in their pursuit of this common goal! One man thinks that the indulgence of the pleasures of the senses will lead him thither; another that the acquisition of wealth or power will bring him contentment; another that knowledge or proficiency in some art will satisfy the cravings of his soul; another that the most desirable object of ambition is fame and name; yet another thinks that it is by belief in some creed that he will find rest unto his soul. It may nevertheless be confidently asserted that not one of these realizes the object of his desire; not one finds the satisfaction he anticipated in the attainment of his ambition.

In truth however, the solution of this, the greatest of life’s enigmas, is so simple, that one is amazed that the majority of mankind should so persistently pursue a mirage, which, receding as they approach it, ever eludes them. How much we may learn from the experience of the *blasé*, of the man who has drunk of life’s pleasures to the dregs, and has come to the conclusion that it is all vanity and vexation of spirit, that life, when employed solely in the search for pleasure, becomes an intolerable burden. And yet the majority of people refuse to take the lesson to heart, they refuse to profit by the experience of those who have travelled the same path before them; everyone must himself taste of the bitter cup, each must ring the changes of pleasure after pleasure, of desire after desire gratified, until he likewise finds that there still remains an aching void, there still remains a heart’s yearning unsatisfied. Lured on by desire, the modern world in its eager search for happiness pursues a phantom, a mere will-o’-the-wisp.

Can all the riches of the wealthy confer upon them the priceless boon of a contented spirit? And when a man has reached the pinnacle of his fame, or the goal of his life’s ambition, to obtain which he has sacrificed his whole life, is the happiness and satisfaction achieved of anything more than a transitory nature? After years and years of unremitting effort the artist or musician, novelist or poet, produces his masterpiece. It is finished. What then? Is he now quite happy and contented? Nay, he at once sets to work on another. And so the moment one desire has been gratified another springs up in its place, and this repeats itself *ad infinitum*. Every time we think we have reached the summit of the highest hill, we find that another and yet loftier looms up before us, until the soul falls back baffled and exhausted. Let us remember that desire never can be satisfied, that it grows by what it feeds on: that desire, like hope, springs eternal in the human breast. And so long as one desire remains unfulfilled so long is perfect happiness unattainable.