



The Order of the Golden Age



But Who Slew all These?

By Josiah Oldfield M.A., B.C.L., M.R.C.S.
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" Where all life dies, death lives, nature breeds,
Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,
Abominable, unutterable, and worse
Than fables yet have feigned, or fear conceived."
(Milton, *P. L.*, ii, v. 6).

Every day, week in, week out, nearly three thousand cattle, twenty thousand sheep, and five thousand pigs are slaughtered *in England alone*! Every time the clock ticks, twenty animals in pain and anguish breathe out their gasping breath and die by a violent death.

This calculation takes no thought of the thousands that fall from the sky with broken wings and shattered limbs, or that scream upon the wild moors their last scream of fear ere the pall of Death closes upon their throat for ever.

It takes no thought of the happy rabbits playing in the evening gloaming till the click of the jagged steel is heard and then the long hours of pain while the flesh is torn through, shred by shred, until only the broken bone and the tough sinews hold back the panting fevered creature from the liberty it has lost. Death comes at last, even to the meanest creature in the most cruel of traps.

It takes no thought of the maimed and wounded that lie in their holes and die, or that fall upon the lonely rocks and flap out their lives, or beakless, slowly starving, pine away.

It leaves out of count the fishes of the sea and river and the wild beasts shot in their native forests.

It takes no count of all these, and yet its toll of deaths recorded, of deaths that are violent, of deaths that are painful, is terrible in its overwhelming weight of numbers.

I do not minimise the dread pangs of those poor creatures who suffer beneath the vivisectors' scalpel. I do not forget that while the beneficent pall of a painless sleep falls upon the greater number, there are yet many who endure their torture unsoothed and unpitied.

I do not forget that while the pin-prick is a real description of many of the experiments that take place, yet the after effect upon many an animal is one of lingering suffering, painful, helpless, hopeless—a pain that prays for death and ends in death at last.

I forget none of these things, and yet I see the vivi-sector standing in life's market place and saying, " It is true that those mangled bodies and those festering limbs are the result of *my* handiwork, *but who slew all these? Who Slew all these?* "

And, as he asks, there comes a mingled wail of sadness from east and west, from north and south, from busy town and sleepy village, the cries of pain-racked creatures whose voices go up to the sky.

"You sit in your seats of soft ease, your raiment of costly furs mantles you round, you gather from every land for the luxury of your feast and then you chastise me with the scorpion whip of your tongue for my deeds of cruelty and pain," says the vivisector.

" I admit your accusation, my work is as bad as you say it is, my pursuits degrade and demoralise those who practise them, but though I bring pain, lingering pain and death, mangled death, to my thousands, who is it that brings death, painful brutal death, to these tens of thousands ? *Who slays all these?*

And the sorrowing answer comes back, from slaughter house and abattoir, from cattle ship and railway truck, from over-driven herds and footsore flocks, from maimed and torn, from the prison chamber of the living and from the mad struggles of the dying, the answer comes back the same.

"It is not Science that has slain us, it is not Necessity that has brought this calamity upon us, it is not Famine, nor the exigencies of War that have filled our cup of sorrow to overflowing; it is not by the command of God, nor by the duress of man that the butcher plies his deadly knife and the living throats are gashed with the cruel steel—it is to satisfy mere Pleasure, selfish Pleasure, Stomach Pleasure that these woes hang heavy upon us.

" We agonise and die, simply because some woman likes the ' taste of our cooked body, or some man is accustomed to the flavour of our devilled organs.

" We agonize and die simply because our bodies have a certain smell and a certain taste which people have become accustomed to, and like, and would miss, if it were taken from them."

It is a smell and a taste, it is selfish pleasure, it is thoughtless habit which slays all these.

But the time is coming and is close at hand when the sermon of the preacher shall be stopped, when the voice of the talker shall be stilled, when they who now rail at the cruelties of others shall then the rather set an example of self abstinence from their own cruelties.

The time shall come when experiments on animals in the name of science shall be as impossible as experiments on human criminals are now, and this, not by the power of a law easy to be evaded and impossible to enforce by means of inspectors themselves opposed to it, but by a force of public opinion engendered by those to whom *all* gentle life is beautiful and to whom *all* pain is abhorrent.

The time is at hand when it can no more be said that *you* may *not* torture for the demands of Science, but that I *may* torture for the pleasure of my palate.

We need whole men and whole women who can show by a little personal self-sacrifice the reality of their convictions, and against whom no enemy can cast back the damning question in their teeth, " I have tortured and slain my hundreds, but as to these thousands and tens of thousands— *who slew all these?* Let these be our answer. Remove your own mote, even though it be but a mote, that you may discern clearly, ere you set up as oculists to the eyes of humanity."

The answer sometimes reaches me " God has given man the right to take away the life of an animal."

That may be. I do not for the moment dispute it. But this does not include the right to *torture* animals, and I say in all solemnity that from my personal presence in the slaughterhouses of the land I know only too well that, if I understand aright the meaning of the words torture and agony, the gentle and intelligent animals who are done to death to tickle the appetite of the connoisseurs suffer both.

I do not say they *all* do, I do not say that *every* animal that is vivisected suffers pain, but I do say that there is no control, no security that can make these things impossible, and that so long as torture and agony exist in this unnecessary and degrading trade so long it becomes a sin for every awakened humane soul to participate in it and to publicly bless it.

Cruelty is a crime whether done in the name of a humane science for the relief of suffering humanity or done in the name of a selfish appetite for the comforting of a depraved stomach.

I well remember an event which rises to my mind whenever the terrible tale of animal suffering is told. My mother had a young bullock on our farm and she used to feed it. It knew her voice and looked for her coming and gently moored when it heard her step. Its time of departure came, and full of fat it was driven off to the town on a market day.

My mother was in the town on that afternoon and as she stood looking in at a shop window there came by a drove of cattle driven by rough men and barking dogs. She turned round, and suddenly from out of the drove there was one which thrust its way to her. It was her own bullock, with tired aching feet, with sore and beaten sides, with wild and frightened eyes—this poor creature, who up to that morning had known nothing but kindness and gentleness, recognised its mistress, its friend.

It was pitiful to see it. "At last," it seemed to say, "I have found my friend once more, and I will not leave her; oh, do not give me back into the hands of these dreadful men again." And it stood before her moaning plaintively, and she put out her hand and stroked its poor feverish parched nose. And the men came up and tried to drive it away, but it would not move; and the dogs yapped up round it and bit at its heels, and it would not move; and then with sticks the drovers came and flogged it on—and so it went, dumbly moaning, to its hard doom. And my mother said that when the money was later paid for the bullock, it seemed like receiving the "price of blood."

The pathos of the world of butchery is infinitely pathetic to those who are willing to descend into the valley of the shadow of suffering and pain and death. And all this suffering is for human luxury and for human pleasure !