

## **John Kitching, On Cruelty to Animals (1874)**

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# ON CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

*To the Editor of "The Friend."*

12th MONTH, 1874.

DEAR FRIEND,—

I think a few lines in "*The Friend*" on the above subject may do service in the cause of humanity to animals, and I therefore ask the favour of a short space devoted to it in your columns. I never heard of a "Friend" committing an act of gross cruelty to a horse, or any other animal: but I doubt whether, as a Society, we are sufficiently alive to the needless sufferings of animals in the performance of their services to us, or their management for the supply of our food. In both these relations animals undergo tortures which might be greatly mitigated if more care and thought were employed in their treatment. The want of thought is undoubtedly the origin of much of the cruelty inflicted on the brute creation: whilst another prolific source of it is, an imperfect appreciation of what causes suffering. On one occasion, when remonstrating with a London cabman for using his whip too freely, I received the answer, "Oh, sir! he likes a little whip on first setting off." This poor ignorant man would think differently, were a whip applied to his own weary limbs on setting out each morning.

No person having any sympathy with animals can go to the sea-side, or any watering-place where donkeys are employed, without being kept in constant pain at witnessing the barbarities inflicted upon them. Young boys are employed to cudgel them without mercy, whilst they are bearing riders often too heavy for their strength. Even when driving them home after the sufferings of the day, or to the meagre pastures where the poor beasts spend the night, these boys exert themselves to inflict as many and as heavy blows on them as they can. The indifference with which these atrocities are viewed by the bulk of the visitors is astonishing. Some of them, indeed, enjoy the opportunity of giving a heavy blow extra to a poor laden donkey. The last time I was at Scarborough, I saw a party of children pleasantly enjoying a ride on the sands. Some young men were rapidly walking in the same direction, when one of them turned out of his path, went stealthily behind one of the donkeys, and with a thick walking-stick gave it a tremendous blow which sent the poor beast reeling sideways, the blow resounding far and wide. This was pure wantonness, and enjoyed as a good joke. A stern and severe rebuke from the writer made the joke of short duration. All this reckless cruelty in boys and men appears to show strongly the need there is for all who teach in Sunday-schools, Mission-schools, and every place where instruction is given to the young, to inculcate lessons of mercy and kindness to the dumb creation.

Of the treatment which cab and hack-horses receive at watering-places it is not my intention to speak, further than to say it is mostly disgraceful. Cruelty to the horses is almost universal, knowing no bounds as to place, and no limits as to the classes who inflict it. There are multitudes of people who would shrink from subjecting that noble animal to the coarser species of cruelty, but who yet permit it to be tortured by their grooms and coachmen more severely than by the lash of the whip. The instrument used in this torture is the bearing-rein. The old bearing-rein, which went directly from the mouth to the hook in the saddle of the harness, was bad enough, and when put on tight it is the source of untold misery to the animal. But it had this good property, that every one could see it. Another kind, often called the gag bearing-rein, has now taken its place, especially in carriage-horses, and is not so conspicuous. This rein goes from the mouth through a ring under the junction of the head and neck, and thence to the saddle. When used tight, as it mostly is, the head of the horse is raised to an unnatural height, and kept immovably there. In this constrained position the muscles which support the head become wearied, and, giving way from exhaustion, the head is apt to fall, and its weight coming upon the bit, which is often a twisted one, the mouth is stretched and pained. When running, the effects of this condition of the horse are not seen. When standing the horse becomes restless, throwing up its neck for temporary relief from the pressure on its mouth, and to gain, if possible a change of position for its cramped and aching neck. This restlessness, which arises simply from physical pain, is often punished by the coachman with strokes of the whip upon the horse's neck to make him still, so that one torture is enforced by the infliction of another. The chief reason assigned for the use of this rein is, that it adds beauty to the attitude and appearance of the horse. I have talked to multitudes of grooms and drivers about the cruelty of this usage, and their general excuse is, that it makes the horse look better. These men are generally ignorant, unfeeling, and inaccessible to argument. Their masters are content to let the grooms have their own way, and so it comes to pass that for this false pride in the appearance of their carriage-horses, men of all stations, even those who stand high in the religious world, sanction or encourage the torture of their horses. An almost ludicrous illustration of these remarks occurred to me a short time ago. I observed a horse with a gag bearing-rein waiting in a very restless state opposite a shop door. A man presently ran out and loosed the bearing-rein from the saddle. As I looked on the man said, "He will never stand still with that rein on." It was gratifying to find that Lord Wharnccliffe recently, at a public meeting at Sheffield, strongly condemned the use of the bearing-rein.

The objects I have in view in addressing these remarks to you are twofold; first, to draw the attention of your readers to this subject; and, secondly, to encourage the teachers of schools, especially Mission-schools, Sunday-schools, &c., to give instruction to their pupils on humanity to the dumb creation, and to recommend to them the publications of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. "*The Animal World*" (price 2d.) comes out monthly. It is always beautifully embellished with engravings, and contains a fund of interesting reading for young persons. The Society also publishes tracts, which may be circulated with advantage amongst those who have the care of horses, donkeys, cattle, &c. Every town which subscribes £100 a-year to the Society is entitled to the constant presence of an officer, whose duty it is to prosecute persons guilty of unusual cruelty to any animals.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN KITCHING, M.D.

Heworth, York, 19—11—1874.

GEORGE SETTEN, PRINTER, EXMOUTH.



# ON CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

By the Author of "The Friend."

LONDON: 1801.

It is a common saying, that "the heart is the seat of the affections." It is true, that the heart is the seat of the affections; but it is also the seat of the passions. The passions are the strong feelings which impel us to action, and which often lead us to do wrong. The affections are the gentle feelings which lead us to do right. The heart is the seat of both; and it is the duty of every man to cultivate the affections, and to subdue the passions.

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