

OUR DUMB ANIMALS.

Oh, whether they have souls or not,
Let this ne'er be by us forgot;
They all can feel, soul-turned or not.

In plow and harrow, tug and team,
The patient beasts hitched to the beam
Are ten times wiser than they seem.

Checked at the brae the thoroughbred
Turns round a dark eye rimmed with red,
And asks if he must go ahead.

Our friend, the ever-faithful hound,
Will follow us the world around,
Or dying at his post be found.

Our family pets—the great and small,
In house and home, in hut and hall,
To us it is they look for all.

Housed-up, afield, or on the farm,
If they but think we mean them harm,
The cows how easily we alarm.

And all the rest—the sheep and goat,
The little kid, the lively goat,
They all can feel! would we but note.

They shrink before the cruel blow,
They moan, they groan, they hripping go,
They cannot speak, they only know.

In barn and byre, in stall and sty,
There's still some soft beseeching eye
Appeals to our humanity.

—Moses Teggart.

PLAGUE OF DEVILFISH.

The English Channel Invaded by a Horde of Octopi.

A plague as horrid in its way as any of those from which the ancient Egyptians suffered has assailed the south coast of England.

Countless herds of octopi, the devil-fishes of Victor Hugo, have invaded the English Channel and have swarmed along the shores of Devon and Cornwall in tremendous numbers. Traveling about in marauding armies they have well nigh destroyed the local lobster and crab fisheries by devouring these crustaceans wholesale.

On the French side of the strait, especially in the Department of Finisterre, they are thrown up on the beaches by the sea after storms in such quantities that their loathsome bodies have been gathered up and removed by hundreds of cartloads to prevent them from endangering the public health by rotting.

Many of these creatures have a spread of six feet or more, the tentacles being three feet in length and covered with suckers as big as 50-cent pieces. But specimens have been seen very much greater in size, and individuals are known sometimes to attain a measurement of 16 feet from arm tip to arm tip. That the larger ones will readily attack human beings is well known, the sucking discs with which the arms provided holding the victim with an irresistible force. One fairly embraced by the animal there is small chance for the strongest man, unless he is lucky enough to have a big knife or a spear.

The most surprising point about the plague referred to is that the octopus has rarely been seen hitherto in British waters—so rarely, indeed, that during many years past specimens could be obtained for aquaria in England only at long intervals, and half a sovereign was frequently paid for a small one alive. It is very numerous in the Mediterranean, and ranges as far north as the south side of the English Channel, which is its extreme limit ordinarily.—London Daily Mail.

Some English Figures.

Ninety-eight thousand lunatics are at present in British asylums.

There are 140 hospitals in London. Offertories on Hospital Sunday average £35,000.

The United Kingdom has now 22,000 miles of railway—just double the mileage of 1861.

In 1840 the parliamentary grant for education was £10,642. It is now £8,000,000 a year.

England has 3,000 miles of canals, Ireland 600, Scotland 150. They carry 36,000,000 tons a year.

The total rental paid by British tenants is £49,000,000 a year, that by Scotch tenants £7,000,000.

English people consume each four tons of coal a year; Belgians just under three, Germans only 1½ tons. Although Britain's home-grown wheat would only make bread for her people for ten weeks, yet she grows potatoes to last her for over ten months.

Of the fish landed in Great Britain last year herring came second to haddock in value. The two between them were worth £4,140,000 out of a total of £9,850,000.

Less than one in one hundred British farms are over 500 acres in extent; 29 per cent. are between five and twenty acres, and nearly 23 per cent. below five acres.

Two pounds of tobacco per head of the population are imported yearly into Britain; but it is calculated that each smoker consumes, on an average, eight pounds in a year.

AROUND LONDON.

Primitive Appearance of the Farms and Farm Buildings.

The physical fact that London is surrounded by farms and woods and meadows and that its streets, terraces and rows of semi-detached houses do not extend to a distance of more than nine miles from its centre, is merely one aspect of the fact that London is not larger than it is. It is not, however, this physical fact alone which tends to render the aspect of our suburban country strange.

What is most striking in it is not the fact that it is country, but that in many directions it is a country of curiously primitive character. The villages have all the air of villages of the last century. There are old inns unchanged since the day of coaches. There are public houses with signs swinging in the public streets just as we see them represented in Hogarth's pictures. There are quaint, secluded dwellings, half cottage, half villa, which seem to belong to the time of Strawberry Hill.

There are farms and farm buildings, carelessly and picturesquely irregular, like those which George Eliot has described so well as characteristic of the England which existed before the railways and the first reform bill. And far more strikingly primitive are the looks and the demeanor of the people. The rural laborers within fourteen miles of London are as leisurely in their gait, and seem as strange to the hurry of modern life as the figures which encounter one slouching along a Shropshire lane or lifting their cider kegs in a remote Devonshire field.

In point of dress, indeed, the former are often quite primitive than the latter. It is in the country close to London that the smock frock has survived longest. Smock-frocked ploughmen only a few years ago might be seen among their furrows within a gunshot of the Alexandra Palace; while from one of the towers at Sydenham a man with a good telescope might detect to-day on the village green of Kent men and women who might be denizens of the "Sweet Auburn" of Goldsmith. In this fact there is, indeed, something striking—this persistence of traditional and local habit among all the changes so distinctive of modern progress, nor is it by any means exemplified among the poorer classes only.

In spite of the cosmopolitan spirit which rapid traveling generates, the spirit of locality is still strong, as is shown by the vitality of the innumerable local newspapers, which flourish in districts almost within sight of the metropolis. To readers of these journals the club flower show, fete and cricket club are far more important than any similar events in London. The clergyman, the doctor, the villa residents, the farmers, all revolve round the same local axis, and the rumor of London merely reaches them "like a tale of little meaning, though the words are strong."—London Saturday Review.

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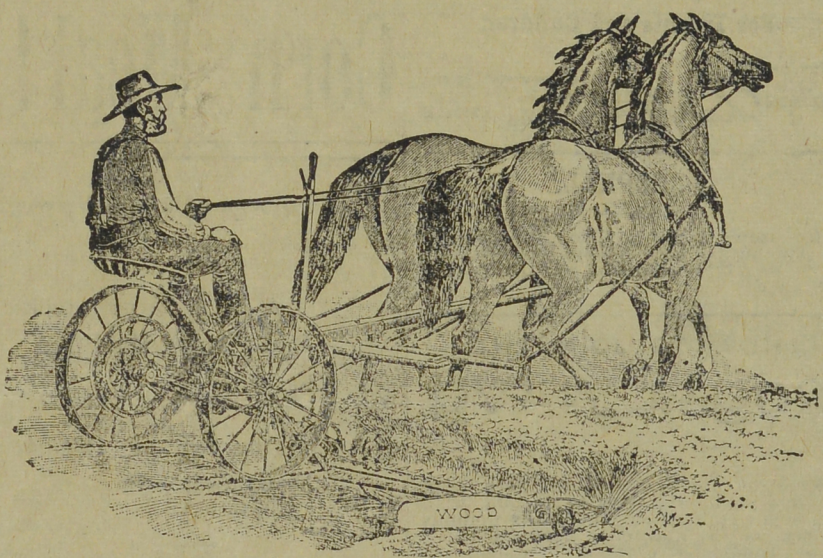
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