

MR. And then, after a few preliminary tries, the whole farm burst out into Beasts of England in tremendous unison. The cows lowed it, the dogs whined it, the sheep bleated it, the horses whinnied it, the ducks quacked it. They were so delighted with the song that they sang it right through five times in succession, and might have continued singing it all night if they had not been interrupted. The two horses had just lain down when a brood of ducklings, which had lost their mother, filed into the barn, cheeping feebly and wandering from side to side to find some place where they would not be trodden on. Clover made a sort of wall round them with her great foreleg, and the ducklings nestled down inside it and promptly fell asleep. The hens perched themselves on the window-sills, the pigeons fluttered up to the rafters, the sheep and cows lay down behind the pigs and began to chew the cud. The two cart-horses, Boxer and Clover, came in together, walking very slowly and setting down their vast hairy hoofs with great care lest there should be some small animal concealed in the straw. If asked why, he would say that he saw nothing to laugh at. Nevertheless, without openly admitting it, he was devoted to Boxer; the two of them usually spent their Sundays together in the small paddock beyond the orchard, grazing side by side and never speaking. "And remember, comrades, your resolution must never falter. No argument must lead you astray. Never listen when they tell you that Man and the animals have a common interest, that the prosperity of the one is the prosperity of the others. It is all lies. Man serves the interests of no creature except himself. And among us animals let there be perfect unity, perfect comradeship in the struggle. All men are enemies. All animals are comrades." "And now, comrades, I will tell you about my dream of last night. I cannot describe that dream to you. It was a dream of the earth as it will be when Man has vanished. But it reminded me of something that I had long forgotten. Many years ago, when I was a little pig, my mother and the other sows used to sing an old song of which they knew only the tune and the first three words. I had known that tune in my infancy, but it had long since passed out of my mind. Last night, however, it came back to me in my dream. And what is more, the words of the song also came back—words, I am certain, which were sung by the animals of long ago and have been lost to memory for generations. I will sing you that song now, comrades. I am old and my voice is hoarse, but when I have taught you the tune, you can sing it better for yourselves. It is called Beasts of England. "Riches more than mind can picture, Wheat and barley, oats and hay, Clover, beans, and mangel-wurzels Shall be ours upon that day. Last of all came the cat, who looked round, as usual, for the warmest place, and finally squeezed herself in between Boxer and Clover; there she purred contentedly throughout Major's speech without listening to a word of what he was saying. Clover was a stout motherly mare approaching middle life, who had never quite got her figure back after her fourth foal. A white stripe down his nose gave him a somewhat stupid appearance, and in fact he was not of first-rate intelligence, but he was universally respected for his steadiness of character and tremendous powers of work. At the last moment Mollie, the foolish, pretty white mare who drew Mr. Jones's trap, came mincing daintily in, chewing at a lump of sugar. As he had said, his voice was hoarse, but he sang well enough, and it was a stirring tune something between Clementine and La Cucaracha. The words ran: Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland, Beasts of every land and clime, Harken to my joyful tidings Of the golden future time. Soon or late the day is coming, Tyrant Man shall be o'erthrown, And the fruitful fields of England Shall be trod by beasts alone. Rings shall vanish from our noses, And the harness from our

back, Bit and spur shall rust forever, Cruel whips no more shall crack. With the ring of light from his lantern dancing from side to side, he lurched across the yard, kicked off his boots at the back door, drew himself a last glass of beer from the barrel in the scullery, and made his way up to bed, where Mrs. Jones was already snoring. At one end of the big barn, on a sort of raised platform, Major was already ensconced on his bed of straw, under a lantern which hung from a beam. Bright will shine the fields of England, Purer shall its waters be, Sweeter yet shall blow its breezes On the day that sets us free. For that day we all must labour Though we die before it break; Cows and horses, geese and turkeys, All must toil for freedom's sake. Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland, Beasts of every land and clime, Harken well and spread my tidings Of the golden future time. He was twelve years old and had lately grown rather stout, but he was still a majestic-looking pig, with a wise and benevolent appearance in spite of the fact that his tusks had never been cut. First came the three dogs, Bluebell, Jessie, and Pincher, and then the pigs, who settled down in the straw immediately in front of the platform. He seldom talked, and when he did, it was usually to make some cynical remark—for instance, he would say that God had given him a tail to keep the flies off, but that he would sooner have had no tail and no flies. All the animals were now present except Moses, the tame raven, who slept on a perch behind the back door. JONES, of the Manor Farm, had locked the hen-houses for the night, but was too drunk to remember to shut the popholes. As soon as the light in the bedroom went out there was a stirring and a fluttering all through the farm buildings. Word had gone round during the day that old Major, the prize Middle White boar, had had a strange dream on the previous night and wished to communicate it to the other animals. Old Major (so he was always called, though the name under which he had been exhibited was Willingdon Beauty) was so highly regarded on the farm that everyone was quite ready to lose an hour's sleep in order to hear what he had to say. She took a place near the front and began flitting her white mane, hoping to draw attention to the red ribbons it was plaited with. While Major was speaking four large rats had crept out of their holes and were sitting on their hindquarters, listening to him. Unfortunately, the uproar awoke Mr. Jones, who sprang out of bed, making sure that there was a fox in the yard. After the horses came Muriel, the white goat, and Benjamin, the donkey. At this moment there was a tremendous uproar. The dogs had suddenly caught sight of them, and it was only by a swift dash for their holes that the rats saved their lives. The wild creatures, such as rats and rabbits—are they our friends or our enemies? The pellets buried themselves in the wall of the barn and the meeting broke up hurriedly. The birds jumped on to their perches, the animals settled down in the straw, and the whole farm was asleep in a moment. Before long the other animals began to arrive and make themselves comfortable after their different fashions. Boxer was an enormous beast, nearly eighteen hands high, and as strong as any two ordinary horses put together. Benjamin was the oldest animal on the farm, and the worst tempered. Major raised his trotter for silence. "Comrades," he said, "here is a point that must be settled. The singing of this song threw the animals into the wildest excitement. Even the stupidest of them had already picked up the tune and a few of the words, and as for the clever ones, such as the pigs and dogs, they had the entire song by heart within a few minutes. He seized the gun which always stood in a corner of his bedroom, and let fly a charge of number 6 shot into the darkness. Everyone fled to his own sleeping-place. It had been agreed that they should all meet in the big barn as soon as Mr. Jones was safely out of the

way. Alone among the animals on the farm he never laughed. Let us put it to the vote. Old Major cleared his throat and began to sing. Almost before Major had reached the end, they had begun singing it for themselves.