Mr. Jones, of the Manor Farm, had locked the hen-houses for the night, but was too drunk to remember to shut the pop-holes. 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.

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. It had been agreed that they should all meet in the big barn as soon as

Mr. Jones was safely out of the way. 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.

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. 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 tushes had never been cut. Before long the

other animals began to arrive and make themselves comfortable after their

different fashions. 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. 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. Clover was a stout motherly mare approaching

middle life, who had never quite got her figure back after her fourth foal.

Boxer was an enormous beast, nearly eighteen hands high, and as strong as

any two ordinary horses put together. 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. After the horses came Muriel,

the white goat, and Benjamin, the donkey. Benjamin was the oldest animal

on the farm, and the worst tempered. 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. Alone among the animals on the farm he

never laughed. 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.

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. 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. She took a place near the

front and began flirting her white mane, hoping to draw attention to the

red ribbons it was plaited with. 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.

All the animals were now present except Moses, the tame raven, who slept

on a perch behind the back door. When Major saw that they had all made

themselves comfortable and were waiting attentively, he cleared his throat

and began:

"Comrades, you have heard already about the strange dream that I had last

night. But I will come to the dream later. I have something else to say

first. I do not think, comrades, that I shall be with you for many months

longer, and before I die, I feel it my duty to pass on to you such wisdom

as I have acquired. I have had a long life, I have had much time for

thought as I lay alone in my stall, and I think I may say that I

understand the nature of life on this earth as well as any animal now

living. It is about this that I wish to speak to you.

"Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it:

our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. We are born, we are given

just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us

who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength;

and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are

slaughtered with hideous cruelty. No animal in England knows the meaning

of happiness or leisure after he is a year old. No animal in England is

free. The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth.

"But is this simply part of the order of nature? Is it because this land

of ours is so poor that it cannot afford a decent life to those who dwell

upon it? No, comrades, a thousand times no! The soil of England is

fertile, its climate is good, it is capable of affording food in abundance

to an enormously greater number of animals than now inhabit it. This

single farm of ours would support a dozen horses, twenty cows, hundreds of

sheep--and all of them living in a comfort and a dignity that are now

almost beyond our imagining. Why then do we continue in this miserable

condition? Because nearly the whole of the produce of our labour is stolen

from us by human beings. There, comrades, is the answer to all our

problems. It is summed up in a single word--Man. Man is the only real

enemy we have. Remove Man from the scene, and the root cause of hunger and

overwork is abolished for ever.

"Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not

give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, he

cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet he is lord of all the

animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that

will prevent them from starving, and the rest he keeps for himself. Our

labour tills the soil, our dung fertilises it, and yet there is not one of

us that owns more than his bare skin. You cows that I see before me, how

many thousands of gallons of milk have you given during this last year?

And what has happened to that milk which should have been breeding up

sturdy calves? Every drop of it has gone down the throats of our enemies.

And you hens, how many eggs have you laid in this last year, and how many

of those eggs ever hatched into chickens? The rest have all gone to market

to bring in money for Jones and his men. And you, Clover, where are those

four foals you bore, who should have been the support and pleasure of your

old age? Each was sold at a year old--you will never see one of them

again. In return for your four confinements and all your labour in the

fields, what have you ever had except your bare rations and a stall?

"And even the miserable lives we lead are not allowed to reach their

natural span. For myself I do not grumble, for I am one of the lucky ones.

I am twelve years old and have had over four hundred children. Such is the

natural life of a pig. But no animal escapes the cruel knife in the end.

You young porkers who are sitting in front of me, every one of you will

scream your lives out at the block within a year. To that horror we all

must come--cows, pigs, hens, sheep, everyone. Even the horses and the dogs

have no better fate. You, Boxer, the very day that those great muscles of

yours lose their power, Jones will sell you to the knacker, who will cut

your throat and boil you down for the foxhounds. As for the dogs, when

they grow old and toothless, Jones ties a brick round their necks and

drowns them in the nearest pond.

"Is it not crystal clear, then, comrades, that all the evils of this life

of ours spring from the tyranny of human beings? Only get rid of Man, and

the produce of our labour would be our own. Almost overnight we could

become rich and free. What then must we do? Why, work night and day, body

and soul, for the overthrow of the human race! That is my message to you,

comrades: Rebellion! I do not know when that Rebellion will come, it might

be in a week or in a hundred years, but I know, as surely as I see this

straw beneath my feet, that sooner or later justice will be done. Fix your

eyes on that, comrades, throughout the short remainder of your lives! And

above all, pass on this message of mine to those who come after you, so

that future generations shall carry on the struggle until it is victorious.

"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."

At this moment there was a tremendous uproar. While Major was speaking

four large rats had crept out of their holes and were sitting on their

hindquarters, listening to him. 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. Major raised his trotter for silence.

"Comrades," he said, "here is a point that must be settled. The wild

creatures, such as rats and rabbits--are they our friends or our enemies?

Let us put it to the vote. I propose this question to the meeting: Are

rats comrades?"

The vote was taken at once, and it was agreed by an overwhelming majority

that rats were comrades. There were only four dissentients, the three dogs

and the cat, who was afterwards discovered to have voted on both sides.

Major continued:

"I have little more to say. I merely repeat, remember always your duty of

enmity towards Man and all his ways. Whatever goes upon two legs is an

enemy. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend. And

remember also that in fighting against Man, we must not come to resemble

him. Even when you have conquered him, do not adopt his vices. No animal

must ever live in a house, or sleep in a bed, or wear clothes, or drink

alcohol, or smoke tobacco, or touch money, or engage in trade. All the

habits of Man are evil. And, above all, no animal must ever tyrannise over

his own kind. Weak or strong, clever or simple, we are all brothers. No

animal must ever kill any other animal. All animals are equal.

"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'."

Old Major cleared his throat and began to sing. 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,

Hearken 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.

Riches more than mind can picture,

Wheat and barley, oats and hay,

Clover, beans, and mangel-wurzels

Shall be ours upon that day.

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,

Hearken well and spread my tidings

Of the golden future time.

The singing of this song threw the animals into the wildest excitement.

Almost before Major had reached the end, they had begun singing it for

themselves. 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. 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.

Unfortunately, the uproar awoke Mr. Jones, who sprang out of bed, making

sure that there was a fox in the yard. 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. The pellets buried themselves in the wall of the barn

and the meeting broke up hurriedly. Everyone fled to his own

sleeping-place. The birds jumped on to their perches, the animals settled

down in the straw, and the whole farm was asleep in a moment.

Three nights later old Major died peacefully in his sleep. His body was

buried at the foot of the orchard.

This was early in March. During the next three months there was much

secret activity. Major's speech had given to the more intelligent animals

on the farm a completely new outlook on life. They did not know when the

Rebellion predicted by Major would take place, they had no reason for

thinking that it would be within their own lifetime, but they saw clearly

that it was their duty to prepare for it. The work of teaching and

organising the others fell naturally upon the pigs, who were generally

recognised as being the cleverest of the animals. Pre-eminent among the

pigs were two young boars named Snowball and Napoleon, whom Mr. Jones was

breeding up for sale. Napoleon was a large, rather fierce-looking

Berkshire boar, the only Berkshire on the farm, not much of a talker, but

with a reputation for getting his own way. Snowball was a more vivacious

pig than Napoleon, quicker in speech and more inventive, but was not

considered to have the same depth of character. All the other male pigs on

the farm were porkers. The best known among them was a small fat pig named

Squealer, with very round cheeks, twinkling eyes, nimble movements, and a

shrill voice. He was a brilliant talker, and when he was arguing some

difficult point he had a way of skipping from side to side and whisking

his tail which was somehow very persuasive. The others said of Squealer

that he could turn black into white.

These three had elaborated old Major's teachings into a complete system of

thought, to which they gave the name of Animalism. Several nights a week,

after Mr. Jones was asleep, they held secret meetings in the barn and

expounded the principles of Animalism to the others. At the beginning they

met with much stupidity and apathy. Some of the animals talked of the duty

of loyalty to Mr. Jones, whom they referred to as "Master," or made

elementary remarks such as "Mr. Jones feeds us. If he were gone, we should

starve to death." Others asked such questions as "Why should we care what

happens after we are dead?" or "If this Rebellion is to happen anyway,

what difference does it make whether we work for it or not?", and the pigs

had great difficulty in making them see that this was contrary to the

spirit of Animalism. The stupidest questions of all were asked by Mollie,

the white mare. The very first question she asked Snowball was: "Will

there still be sugar after the Rebellion?"

"No," said Snowball firmly. "We have no means of making sugar on this

farm. Besides, you do not need sugar. You will have all the oats and hay

you want."

"And shall I still be allowed to wear ribbons in my mane?" asked Mollie.

"Comrade," said Snowball, "those ribbons that you are so devoted to are

the badge of slavery. Can you not understand that liberty is worth more

than ribbons?"

Mollie agreed, but she did not sound very convinced.

The pigs had an even harder struggle to counteract the lies put about by

Moses, the tame raven. Moses, who was Mr. Jones's especial pet, was a spy

and a tale-bearer, but he was also a clever talker. He claimed to know of

the existence of a mysterious country called Sugarcandy Mountain, to which

all animals went when they died. It was situated somewhere up in the sky,

a little distance beyond the clouds, Moses said. In Sugarcandy Mountain it

was Sunday seven days a week, clover was in season all the year round, and

lump sugar and linseed cake grew on the hedges. The animals hated Moses

because he told tales and did no work, but some of them believed in

Sugarcandy Mountain, and the pigs had to argue very hard to persuade them

that there was no such place.

Their most faithful disciples were the two cart-horses, Boxer and Clover.

These two had great difficulty in thinking anything out for themselves,

but having once accepted the pigs as their teachers, they absorbed

everything that they were told, and passed it on to the other animals by

simple arguments. They were unfailing in their attendance at the secret

meetings in the barn, and led the singing of 'Beasts of England', with which

the meetings always ended.

Now, as it turned out, the Rebellion was achieved much earlier and more

easily than anyone had expected. In past years Mr. Jones, although a hard

master, had been a capable farmer, but of late he had fallen on evil days.

He had become much disheartened after losing money in a lawsuit, and had

taken to drinking more than was good for him. For whole days at a time he

would lounge in his Windsor chair in the kitchen, reading the newspapers,

drinking, and occasionally feeding Moses on crusts of bread soaked in

beer. His men were idle and dishonest, the fields were full of weeds, the

buildings wanted roofing, the hedges were neglected, and the animals were

underfed.

June came and the hay was almost ready for cutting. On Midsummer's Eve,

which was a Saturday, Mr. Jones went into Willingdon and got so drunk at

the Red Lion that he did not come back till midday on Sunday. The men had

milked the cows in the early morning and then had gone out rabbiting,

without bothering to feed the animals. When Mr. Jones got back he

immediately went to sleep on the drawing-room sofa with the News of the

World over his face, so that when evening came, the animals were still

unfed. At last they could stand it no longer. One of the cows broke in the

door of the store-shed with her horn and all the animals began to help

themselves from the bins. It was just then that Mr. Jones woke up. The

next moment he and his four men were in the store-shed with whips in their

hands, lashing out in all directions. This was more than the hungry

animals could bear. With one accord, though nothing of the kind had been

planned beforehand, they flung themselves upon their tormentors. Jones and

his men suddenly found themselves being butted and kicked from all sides.

The situation was quite out of their control. They had never seen animals

behave like this before, and this sudden uprising of creatures whom they

were used to thrashing and maltreating just as they chose, frightened them

almost out of their wits. After only a moment or two they gave up trying

to defend themselves and took to their heels. A minute later all five of

them were in full flight down the cart-track that led to the main road,

with the animals pursuing them in triumph.