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THE SPECTATOR.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

THE VIVISECTION DEBATE.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—The reports in the morning papers of my speech on Vivisection were so much condensed, that I do not complain of your blaming me for omitting from my definition of cruelty a qualification on which I really dwelt at some length. Having defined cruelty as "the infliction of unnecessary pain," I went on to say that pain might be unnecessary in *two* ways. One of these was, when the object for which the pain was inflicted was one which did not justify the infliction of any pain; the other was, when, though the object justified pain, yet the amount of pain was greater than was necessary for the attaining of the object. Thus limited, I still think my definition of cruelty a perfectly sound one; I venture to think it preferable to your own.

You define cruelty to be the infliction upon another creature of a degree of suffering such as we would not endure for ourselves, or permit the infliction of upon another of our own race, for the purpose in question. Now, my objection to this definition, when you attempt to apply it to the case of animals is,—that it is at once too wide and too narrow. It is too wide, because it includes the pain of being killed for food. For as none of us, I presume, would consent to endure pain, or see it inflicted on others of our race for this purpose, it follows from your definition that to kill an animal for food is cruelty.

On the other hand, your definition is too narrow, for it takes no note of all those cases in which we are, or ought to be, willing to endure exquisite pain of mind or body, in order to save others from it. Human life is full of instances of such vicarious suffering. Why, then, according to your definition, is such suffering, when inflicted on an animal, cruel? True, the animal is not, as the man is, an assenting party to the suffering; but as this applies equally to the case of killing for food, this objection could only consistently be urged by a vegetarian.

I have, moreover, this further objection to your definition,—that it is practically more cruel than mine. For, as it makes the test of cruelty to lie altogether in the willingness of the person inflicting pain to suffer the like for a like purpose, it would prove that the tortures inflicted on his prisoner by a Red Indian, or on a heretic by an Inquisitor, are not cruel, inasmuch as those who inflicted them would doubtless have been ready (many of them proved so) to bear the same pain in each case, "for the purpose in question,"—i.e., in the one case, for the maintenance of a tribal custom; in the other, for the maintenance of the Faith. In short, your subjective test of cruelty would leave the gentler and more sensitive natures at the mercy always of the harder and fiercer ones, every man being justified by it in inflicting pain upon others in proportion to his own insensibility to it, or in proportion to the fanaticism which might enable him to despise it, "for the purpose in question."

Let me add a word as to your distinction between "killing" and "torture," which is one largely insisted upon in this Vivisection controversy. It seems to me to be quite irrelevant, for it rests upon two assumptions, neither of which is capable of proof. One is that killing is never accompanied by torture; the other, that Vivisection always is so accompanied.

Now, granting, as I do, and as you candidly do also, the difficulty of defining torture, I maintain that there is no definition of it that you can frame which will include the pain of Vivisection, and will exclude the pain of killing for food. If torture mean merely exquisite or prolonged pain, I am certain that there is torture attending many kinds of killing, both for food, and for commerce. The bird or rabbit that we wound in shooting; the rat we poison to protect our food; the whale we harpoon and spear to death, through long hours of agony, in order that we may have train-oil and whalebone, suffer as much, I suspect, and for as long a time, as if they were vivisected. On the other hand, if the test of torture be—what I think you make it—the "moral relations" between the operator and the animal, then I fail to see how it is torture to inflict pain upon an animal in order to cure a man of a disease, and not torture to inflict it in order to cure him of hunger; or how the inflictor is "a mere instrument of anguish" in the one case, and not in the other. On the other hand, taking into account the requirements of the Vivisection Act as regards the use of anæsthetics, and the subsequent killing of the animal, I am certain that there is less either of pain or of torture *now*

necessarily connected with Vivisection in this country, than there is with killing for food, commerce, and convenience.

As regards the general purport of my speech, I have only to say that it was spoken in defence of an Act which greatly restricts Vivisection, and which I declared myself not only willing, but anxious to amend, if it can be proved insufficient for its true purpose,—the prevention of cruelty to animals. All such cruelty I abhor as deeply as my critics can do. I am not, I trust, what some of them are good enough to tell me that I am, "a fool," "a brute," "a savage," "an incarnate devil," one "over whose damnation no recording angel will ever shed a tear." Controversial amenities of this kind make me thankful that your subjective test of cruelty is not yet legal, otherwise, I might fare badly in the hands of my hysterical correspondents. Meanwhile, happily for me, abuse is not torture, any more than screaming is argument.—I am, Sir, &c.,

W. C. PETERBOROUGH.

The Palace, Peterborough, July 21st.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Will you allow a warm admirer of your admirable article on the Bishop of Peterborough's definition of cruelty to append to the thanks it calls forth, a protest against an assumption which seems to lie at the root of the doctrine it assails? It appears to be taken for granted among the supporters of Vivisection that the right to kill involves the right to torture, as the greater includes the less. I am sure many persons must have been led to feel this self-evident, merely because, while it is constantly assumed, no argument has ever been brought forward to prove it. Yet if people's attention were stimulated by the most remote chance of any personal application, they would see that the infliction of pain and the removal of life are two perfectly heterogeneous actions, each of which must stand on its own merits. It appears to me, indeed, quite impossible to illustrate this difference from any other; no two things, as far as our knowledge goes, are as incomparable as death and pain. Death, whatever else it is, is surely the end of sensation. Pain is the most intense sensation. Life cannot, I suppose, be ended violently without some pain, and that amount of pain any one who has a right to end life has a right to inflict. This is the nearest point we can get to this common opinion. Beyond it, the notion is so utterly without foundation, that it would not have lasted for a day, had it concerned creatures able to speak in their own defence.

For, in fact, it is never brought forward, except in the case of creatures unable to speak in their own defence. Nobody has ever proposed that a criminal condemned to death should be given over to eminent physiologists for their experimental researches. He has injured humanity, he might be the means of benefiting humanity; while the knowledge which his frame is capable of revealing, is much more appropriate to the needs of humanity than any which can be derived from the study of the creatures we use for this purpose. Yet the most atrocious criminal would become the object of universal sympathy were he subjected to even trifling pain, for the most certain and important physiological benefit to his kind. Can there be a more absolute confutation of the common theory of our relation to brutes that the right to destroy life is the right to inflict pain? It is felt, when the worst of men are in question, that in certain directions an individual has claims which the benefit of all successive generations cannot overbalance. You must not embitter the death of a Cæsar Borgia, that you may lengthen and ameliorate the lives of a Socrates, a Fénelon, a Howard. You must not condemn a single human being to moments of anguish, that you may procure years of health and ease for millions. This is no sentimental morality. It is no less the feeling of the ignorant many than it is the conviction of the thoughtful few, and might, I believe, be justified as fully to the cultivated intellect as it is echoed by the response of untaught instinct. But let no one pretend to share it who supposes he has established our right to torture animals, when he points to the general concession that we have a right to kill them. The distinction between the concession and the claim of such a one, I presume, would be based on the theory that an immoral being cannot forfeit the rights which an unmoral being cannot possess. That is a wide question, on which I do not enter. I wish only to point out that no one should find it "difficult," in the words of the *Times*, "to declare that it is right that animals should die in order that man may feed, and deny at the same time that it is right that animals should suffer in order that man may be

relieved;" unless he is prepared to see, in the condemnation of a human fellow-creature to the gallows, a possible surrender of his sentient frame to the investigations of men of science.—I am, Sir, &c.,

JULIA WEDGWOOD.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Will you permit me to make a few remarks touching certain fallacious statements made by the advocates of Vivisection in the late debate in the House of Lords,—statements which were heard by the tongue-tied friends of the animals with sentiments akin to their own when operated upon under curare?

I shall not discuss the Bishop of Peterborough's argument, which will, no doubt, be treated by abler hands, and of which the chief illustration has been regularly exhibited at nearly every public meeting on the subject during the last year,—partly, I think, because it refers to almost the only result of their thousands of experiments to which the vivisectionists and their friends can even pretend to point with satisfaction; and partly, also, it would appear, because the operation in question cannot be freely discussed before a mixed audience, and a reference to it soon reduces the more modest opponents of vivisection to silence.

A second speaker in the debate, with whom I do not desire to deal, is Lord Aberdare, who seems to have considered that his new office of President of the Jermyn-Street Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, made it his duty to come forward as the active opponent of a measure intended to prevent the most heinous of all forms of cruelty. I leave it to the subscribers to the R.S.P.C.A. (many of whom have given their money to that Society expressly in the belief that it would be used in the Anti-vivisection cause), to connect in their minds the present inaction of that great and rich Society on this burning question, with this remarkable speech and vote of their President, and then draw their own conclusions as to the Society which it may be most desirable to support in the interest of Vivisectionable animals. A third speaker in the debate, Lord Cardwell, may be answered in a few words. His principal point was, that Lord Shaftesbury's remarks concerning curare were superfluous, since experiments under that drug were "forbidden by the existing Act, under any pretence." Lord Cardwell has forgotten that the Act, in its present miserably mutilated state, *does* license the use of curare under certain "pretences;" and he has never taken the trouble to glance at the Returns of licences for 1878, or he would there have found three sets of experiments registered as having actually taken place under curare, under the sanction of the inspector. (See "Return" for 1878, p. 4.) It was, of course, however, to the use of this hateful drug, in those foreign laboratories whence our students draw their examples and "inspiration," that Lord Shaftesbury referred, when he denounced it as one of the sham anaesthetics of physiologists, which lull the feelings of the public, not the nerves of the victims. How far justified he was in describing its employment as so common, may be seen by reference to Claude Bernard's posthumous work just published, "*Leçons de Physiologie Opératoire*," p. 168,—a book containing engravings of operations on living dogs enough to freeze the blood in any non-vivisectioning heart. "Il est peu d'observations," says Bernard, "où l'on ne commence par avertir le lecteur que l'on a agi sur un chien curarisé," &c. And this is quietly noted as a not regrettable fact by the same physiologist, who wrote in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (September 1st, 1864), that the condition of an animal under curare "is accompanied by the most atrocious sufferings which the imagination of man can conceive!" Truly, one would almost think it was of this diabolic drug the prophet spoke,—"The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel!"

Such are the candid admissions made by vivisectionists in their scientific lectures to the young men who are studying their truly "dismal science." If any of the noble lords who took part in last Tuesday's debate, or those others who were able meanwhile to pursue cheerfully their pleasant little gossip in knots on the benches of the House, were to spend but half-an-hour in reading these books, or glancing over the engravings of tortures, and of hundreds of ingenious instruments of torture wherewith they are illustrated, they would, I hope, find it impossible another year to pursue the tenor of their way. But it is much easier for a Peer, temporal or spiritual, to allow himself to be button-holed and crammed for a few minutes after dinner by a pleasant-spoken physiologist, than to devote an hour to poring over volumes which, like Cyon's "Atlas," or Paul Bert's, or Schiff's, or Bernard's "*Leçons*," or Dr. Burdon Sanderson's

"Handbook," make the heart sick and the head dizzy with the abyss of agony they unveil.

These books lie ready to be consulted every day freely within five hundred yards of the Houses of Parliament, at 1 Victoria Street, the office of the Society for Protection of Animals from Vivisection,—a Society which, far from seeking to work secretly, as Lord Beauchamp, with a needless and unfounded sneer at it, alleged, is endeavouring, with great cost and labour, to open the eyes of the British nation to the nature of a practice which only needs to be seen in its true blackness, to be suppressed by the concentrated indignation and disgust of mankind.—I am, Sir, &c.,

FRANCES POWER COBBE.

THE ORNAMENTS RUBRIC.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—Allow me to make two observations on your article of the 19th inst., headed "The Episcopal Victory."

English Bishops have their faults, possibly among them, as you seem to imply, may be too great a regard for public opinion; but that the Bishops of the Southern Province, headed by the Primate, should condescend to a ruse—for I can call it by no other name—in order to induce the Lower House of Convocation to accept what they had deliberately rejected, I, for one, am unwilling to believe.

If it is intended, after an understanding to the contrary deliberately proffered and accepted, to get rid of the Ornaments' Rubric by a side-wind, I leave it to you, Sir, and to your lay readers, to judge how such a transaction would be appraised by ordinary lay society, at least in regard to matters which did not touch religious questions.—I am, Sir, &c.,

Athenæum, July 23rd.

CHARLES L. WOOD.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."]

SIR,—There is much truth in your remarks on the strict legal force of the new Ornaments Rubric, and on the lack of statesmanship exhibited by the Lower House of Convocation in its hasty conclusions. But I think you under-estimate the force of the reasons which induce the Ritualist School, as a whole, which is not at all blind to the existing state of the controversy, to acquiesce in the arrangement, at least provisionally. First of all, the Bishops, by suffering the Bishop of Lincoln to act as their spokesman, have publicly committed themselves to that interpretation of the new Rubric which the President of the E.C.U. puts upon it; and are pledged in honour to maintain it. Undoubtedly, the Civil Courts need not, and most probably would not, take notice of any such understanding, which does not appear definitely in the wording of the new Rubric and might contrive to misinterpret the law, as they have done already on several occasions. But to enable them to do so, the Bishops must be consenting parties to prosecutions for wearing the vestments, &c.; and the moment any Bishop does so consent, he breaks his pledge, upsets the understanding arrived at, and unless repudiated by his colleagues, exasperates the Lower House of Convocation with the sting of having been artfully tricked into a false position, and thereby excites the resentment of by far the largest and most influential section of the clergy, who are very fairly represented by the Proctors, and by some at least of the official members of Convocation. The storm that would arise in consequence cannot be safely faced in a crisis like the present, with Disestablishment knocking at the doors; and the Bishops, whatever else they may believe, are quite sure that Disestablishment will not suit them.

Next, Ritualism, if a clerical movement alone, would have no chance for a moment. Its real strength is in the large and rapidly-growing body of lay sympathy. A breach of the compact would largely swell this body, and give it a substantial grievance, not to be wisely risked just now.

Lastly, acceptance of this new arrangement, much as there is to be said against it, and in favour of a Fabian policy till events work themselves clear of the present state of flux and change, proves before the world that the Ritualists do not want, and never have wanted, to force unwelcome ceremonies on reluctant clerks and congregations, but merely ask for liberty to obey the law themselves; and further, that they are not mere stiff-necked opponents of authority, who must have everything their own way, but reasonable men, perfectly willing to obey their ecclesiastical superiors, so long as these latter govern fairly and according to law, and not with capricious autocracy. In my