

## THE ETHICS OF ANTIVIVISECTION.

ANTIVIVISECTIONISTS profess to act up to a higher standard of ethics than the ordinary moral law accepted by the rest of mankind. When they cannot deny that knowledge useful for the relief of man and the cure and prevention of disease has been obtained by experiments on animals, they reply that this is no justification of that method of research. "The whole question of man's rights and duties towards the helpless animals given into his dominion by the Ruler of the Universe is," Mr. Stephen Coleridge told the Royal Commission on Vivisection, "a moral question, and has nothing to do with science." By parity of reasoning it might be held that the killing of animals for food and raiment, the infliction of acute suffering on them for personal adornment, and their mutilation for various purposes that have nothing to do with their own good, are moral questions that have nothing to do with any real or supposed benefit to man. In regard to these things, however, the ordinary antivivisectionist is usually content to accept the benefits without allowing inconvenient ethical scruples to interfere with his convenience.

It is far better, Mr. Coleridge said on the same occasion, to do without physiology than to be without pity. This, if it stood alone, would be a truism; but in the mouth of the antivivisectionist it means that a sentimental pity for animals should override all active pity for suffering human beings. It is not strange, therefore, that many antivivisectionists are not only hostile to the advance of knowledge by experimental research, but are by no means remarkable for good nature and consideration for the comfort and feelings of their fellow creatures. Miss Frances Power Cobbe made the strange boast that she loved animals by nature, and her own kind only by grace. We need only glance at their literature to see how they strive to wound not only the "wicked" vivisectionist, but those of their own side, if they happen to differ from them on some point of detail, or seem to threaten to displace them in the eyes of the public.

A fierce light is thrown on the manner in which some of the antivivisectionists apply the ethical principles on which they profess to take their stand by the following incident.

In a letter circulated in the press and reprinted in the *Zoophilist* of September, 1912, Mr. Stephen Coleridge gave an account of a visit he had himself paid to the Physiological Institute at University College. He said that he had frequently been taunted with refusing invitations to visit laboratories and see for himself how happy are the animals therein vivisected. He had never accepted such invitations, because, he said, he regarded them as similar to the invitation of a motorist to a policeman to drive in his car and observe that he never exceeded the speed limit. He did not imagine that animals would be in visible agony when he arrived by invitation. A surprise visit, however, he regarded as similar to a police trap on a straight piece of road, and that was the test he proposed to institute at University College Laboratory. The circumstances which led Mr. Coleridge to depart from his fixed policy of declining to see things for himself are set forth as follows:

On the 18th of October, 1911, I received a letter from a reputable source complaining of the dreadful sounds of the howling of dogs in suffering that were constantly to be heard in the neighbourhood of the laboratory attached to University College in Gower Street. Having first sent others to ascertain whether these complaints were well founded, and having received confirmation of them, I determined to visit the neighbourhood myself. Accompanied by Mr. Arthur Veasy, I went to some premises behind the college, and from the windows myself heard the dreadful cries of the dogs. The pitiful howlings seemed to me to indicate that the wretched animals were enduring miseries more poignant than the mere discomfort of confinement. With the desire and intention of ascertaining personally whether or not I was mistaken, and in order to give those responsible for the laboratory the opportunity of showing me that I was wrong in attributing these mournful cries to physical pain, I went over to the college with Mr. Veasy, and, with the assistance of two courteous students, was guided to the foot of the stairs, at the top of which was the door into the laboratory.

Mr. Coleridge goes on to say:

That there might be no subsequent dispute as to why I came and what I asked, I sent up my card with the following note, a copy of which I kept:

"February 21st, 1912. Mr. Stephen Coleridge requests permission to go over the laboratory of University College, registered under the Act 39, 40 Vic., cap. 77, for experiments on living animals."

Mr. Veasy and he awaited a reply at the landing next the door, a view of which they commanded. The rest is better told in his own words.

In a very few moments there emerged a person whom I deemed to be one of the twenty-one licensed vivisectionists who are attached to this laboratory, followed by four or five of his pupils. This person, a small man in a brown holland pinafore, appeared to be labouring under an access of violent excitement. I think he feared that I had come with the intention of making an entry by force, and was desperately determined to prevent it, assisted by his students, who were more stalwart and more composed than himself. He proceeded to display the manners and the temper of a vivisectionist. "How dare you come here, sir?" he vociferated several times, while I regarded him with amused patience. "You don't wish to show me over the laboratory?" I replied. "Certainly not!" he spluttered; "get out of this; get out!" "Would you like to know why I came?" I asked. "No," he cried; "I won't listen to you. Get out!" "By all means," I said; "I will get out, but I should like to know your name." "Starling is my name," he replied. "Ah!" said I, "I remember having the pleasure of seeing you in the witness-box in Mr. Bayliss's action."

The pleasure of a sight which recalled this incident was probably not altogether unmixed, and the "amused patience" of Mr. Coleridge during the interview on the stairs did not leave him sufficiently cool to prevent his confusing the "small man in a brown holland pinafore" with Dr. Starling, who spoke to him and who was dressed in blue serge. There the interview ended. Mr. Coleridge concludes as follows:

I make the obvious and necessary and conclusive deduction from Professor Starling's conduct throughout this transaction that he feared to admit me to the laboratory because he knew what I should find there, and because if admitted instantly I should have come away from the spectacle armed with ocular demonstration that the dreadful cries which I had heard emanated from dogs whose dolorous clamour was caused by the wounds in their bodies inflicted on them under certificate B.

Mr. Coleridge professes to be shocked at a split infinitive—perhaps because the operation is performed without an anaesthetic. We suppose, therefore, the mixture of metaphors here must be set down to excitement. One would like to have seen him leave the laboratory "armed with ocular demonstration" of dreadful cries. The sentence reminds one of Bottom's question whether Theseus would like to see the epilogue or hear the Bergamask dance. Ocular demonstration of cries, however, is the kind of proof that seems to satisfy antivivisectionists. But how was it, if dreadful sounds of dogs in suffering were constantly to be heard, that Mr. Coleridge did not see them when he was actually on the threshold of the chamber of "torture"? It may be added that even if Mr. Coleridge had seen anaesthetized dogs with wounds in their bodies inflicted on them under certificate B, and had had "ocular demonstration" of cries, this would not have proved that the animals were suffering. If he would go into an operating theatre in any hospital he could scarcely fail to hear dolorous clamour from patients under the knife, who yet will tell him when they recover from the anaesthetic that they had felt nothing whatever. The "obvious and necessary and conclusive deduction" to be drawn from Professor Starling's conduct throughout the transaction, taking Mr. Coleridge's account as strictly accurate, is simply that a busy man objected to being disturbed by one who has reviled him for years and who, it was natural for him to assume, did not come with the intention of seeing impartially, but with the wish to find some semblance of justification for his unfounded charges. Can it be supposed that a man with a mind so biased as Mr. Coleridge could have gone to the laboratory with any other intention than to find fault? We say nothing of Mr. Coleridge's language further than to suggest that he might ponder in his heart the following words of a French writer: *Il est si facile d'être insolent! C'est un art qui demande peu d'étude, qu'on possède de naissance, et où les plus sots excellent, une musique qu'ils chantent d'inspiration, à livre ouvert.*

That Mr. Coleridge's description of what took place is grossly exaggerated is shown by a letter from Professor Bayliss, dated August 27th, 1912, which appeared in the *Yorkshire Post*. He says he happened to be passing

during the interview spoken of by Mr. Coleridge and heard the reason given to him why he was not shown over the laboratory. It was this: "You have done all in your power to hinder us in our work here, and you are requested to leave at once." In a further letter published in the same paper of September 2nd, Professor Bayliss says the time at which Mr. Coleridge appeared was by no means inopportune, as all the workers in the laboratory were at tea, and no experiments were being made. He goes on to say that: (1) Visitors capable of understanding what they saw would be admitted at any time without giving notice. (2) Any unprejudiced person would be welcomed. But, he asks, what would be gained by admitting people who had already made up their minds with respect to what they would see, and would see exactly what they wished to see? (3) He adds: "The falsity of Mr. Coleridge's description of University College laboratory was shown in the court of the Lord Chief Justice, and in consequence of this he had to pay damages of £2,000."

Though this may be the first time Mr. Coleridge has sought to have "ocular demonstration" of the cries of suffering animals, it is not the first time that he has endeavoured to harrow the feelings of the public by descriptions supplied by other people of the howlings of dogs supposed to be in the hands of vivisectors. In his evidence before the Royal Commission he stated that he had received a letter from some undergraduates of Keble College, Oxford, in which they said that, living directly opposite the laboratory, they heard screams of vivisected animals. Mr. Coleridge did "the obvious thing a gentleman ought to do." He wrote at once to the professor, told

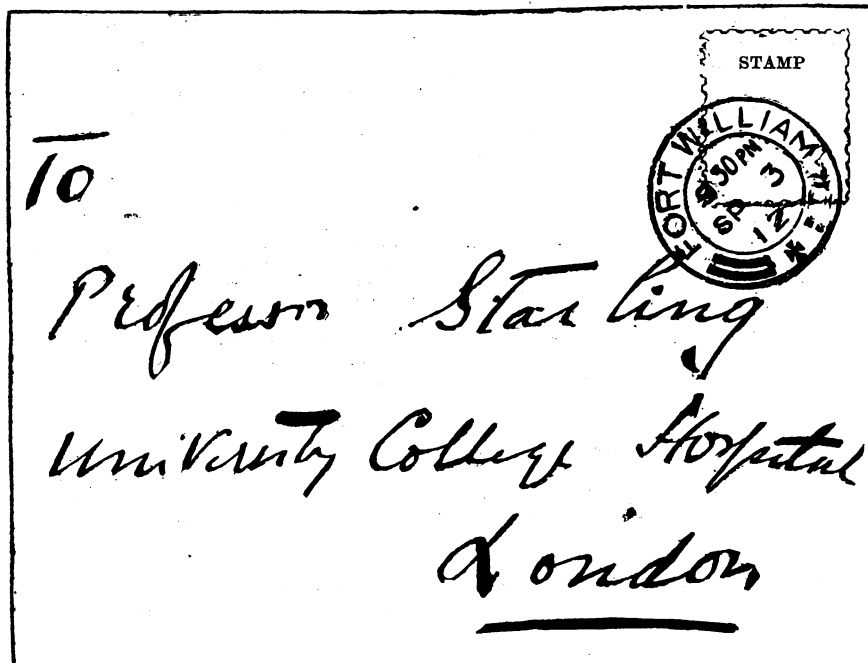
him the information he had received, and asked for his explanation. The answer was that the head of the laboratory gave the lie to the six gentlemen at once. Mr. Coleridge's comment is that "all he could say was that in a court of justice the six witnesses would go against the one." The Commission was not impressed by the testimony of Mr. Coleridge's six witnesses, however, and it was elicited from him that after he had received a further letter from his informant saying that the professor was a liar, he had left the matter there. "That," he said, "was a flat contradiction. It was no use carrying the matter further." We think it would have been of great use, for it would have given him another and better opportunity of doing the obvious thing a gentleman ought to do. That is to say, instead of leaving on record a story—as it stands unaltered in the reprint of his evidence published by his society in 1907—based on nothing but the imagination of some undergraduates, ignorant of science and knowing nothing of laboratories, he would have frankly withdrawn the charge and expressed his regret at having been made the medium of a false accusation. If he does not know the facts which he might have discovered by carrying the matter further, we have much pleasure in bringing them to his knowledge. The undergraduates apologized, and withdrew the statements made in their communication to Mr. Coleridge; what they heard was

not howls of dogs under the vivisector's knife, but the yelps of a litter of young puppies at play, which were kept not for experiment, but because a laboratory guard dog had borne them. Mr. Coleridge cannot divest himself of the responsibility of having by his speeches and publications contributed to bring about a state of mind which could lead a set of young men at once to assume, merely because the sounds happened to proceed from the backyard of a laboratory for physiological research, that the noise produced by a batch of puppies during their youthful gambols was in reality due to the piteous howls of dogs writhing under the vivisector's knife.

It may not be amiss to recall that on a previous occasion Mr. Coleridge made a violent attack on University College. At the annual meeting of the National Antivivisection Society held on May 1st, 1903, he tickled the ears of the groundlings at St. James's Hall with the following delectable piece of rhetoric:

Within the walls of University College there was a laboratory licensed for vivisection, and into its dark portals there passed a never ending procession of helpless dumb creatures. Dogs, lost or stolen from their homes, where they had known nothing but love and affection, followed one another down that Via Dolorosa into a scene of nameless horror, where man degraded his race and his manhood, and brought on that University

a smirch that time itself would never erase. Within the precincts of the college and close to this Pit of Tophet was a school dedicated to one of the purest and loftiest of human studies—that of the fine arts. Between this place of peace and the place of torment, the dividing wall was slight, and into the serene and silent school of the beautiful rose distinctly from the vivisectors' den the shrieks and piteous cries of the dogs in their agony. Surely in this world Heaven and Hell were never brought so near together! But the love of beauty never yet failed to keep the soul alive, and



through the Slade School students had the inarticulate sobs and moans of these wretched creatures reached the ears of those less pitiless than their tormentors. Thus through him had the piteous cries reached the thousands in this hall, and he trusted they would reach a million ears through the press. There might be some few persons so hard to convince that even the shrieks heard in the Slade School might not be sufficient, and they might say that until he could produce the testimony of an eye-witness they would not believe. He had come prepared even for them.

Then Mr. Coleridge quoted the testimony of his eye-witnesses, which we will not repeat, as it had the effect of landing him in the law courts, where he was mulcted in heavy damages. But we wish to call special attention to another part of the same speech. After professing that he "desired to observe the amenities of gentlemanlike debate," he went on to say that

so certain was he of the deep and abiding humanity of the British race that he felt sure that did they know what he knew went on in these dens of infamy, they would not wait for supine legislation; they would not wait for the second readings or third readings of bills in Parliament; but they would go in their irresistible thousands; they would set free the victims from their cages; they would smash to atoms the horrible instruments of torture; and they would leave every laboratory in the kingdom a heap of ruins.

It must charitably be supposed that Mr. Coleridge was on this occasion, to use Disraeli's phrase, "intoxicated by

Amy Lamire  
Apr 3 413

Sir

Having heard that  
you refused admittance  
to The Hon Stephen Colridge  
I write to say I  
consider you are absolute  
blattinguard.  
The Crisis from the  
fortuned dogs are then  
continually complained  
of & I intend to under  
take the Motion & every

Person of Position &  
influence on my side  
to England.  
I sincerely trust &  
confidently shall  
believe that your  
doubtless will be  
one of the most amazing  
ever known & that  
in the next world

an incarnate friend  
I hope you may  
meet with your  
death sooner than

You think.

In my opinion it is  
not wrong to kill a  
man who tortures  
animals a fraction  
as you do

R Y C M. N.  
|||

You will receive  
the same torturing  
agonies you give to  
dogs.

It shows pretty well  
what you do to  
the poor creatures  
as you are to a friend  
of anyone seeing  
the laboratory. I  
look upon you as

the exuberance of his own verbosity." None the less, he must be held responsible for an incitement to violence and destruction of property which, addressed to the kind of audience he had gathered to hear him, might very easily have led to the perpetration of unlawful acts.

That his appeals to fanaticism might possibly lead to even more serious results is shown by a letter received by Professor Starling since the publication of Mr. Coleridge's account of his visit to the Institute of Physiology at University College. Professor Starling receives communications of the kind very frequently. The following, therefore, may be taken as a sample of the kind of feeling the vituperations of Mr. Coleridge may be capable of exciting:

[Copy.]

Argyllshire,  
N.B.  
September 3rd.

Sir,

Having heard that you refused admittance to The Hon. Stephen Coleridge, I write to say I consider you an absolute blackguard.

The cries from the tortured dogs are being continually complained of, and I intend to make this known to many People of Position and influence on my return to England.

I sincerely trust and confidently think and believe that your deathbed will be one of the most agonizing ever known, and that in the next world you will receive the same torturing agonies you give to dogs.

It shows pretty well what you do to the poor creatures as you are so afraid of anyone seeing the laboratory. I look upon you as an incarnate fiend and hope you may meet with your death sooner than you think.

In my opinion it is not wrong to kill a man who tortures animals as fiendishly as you do.

R.F.C. M.P. [? M.D.]

The last sentence may be taken as representing the ethics of antivivisectionism in their extreme form. The letter, which from the handwriting would seem to have been written by a woman, is signed with initials and with a description doubly underlined, which may be M.P. or M.D. Possibly the ambiguity was not unintentional. We cannot find the name of any member of Parliament with the initials "R. F. C." The letter is reproduced in facsimile by photography, and it is perhaps possible that the writer may be identified. It is, indeed, intolerable that men who are seeking to enlarge the bounds of human knowledge and to discover means of relieving human suffering should be subjected to this form of persecution. Foolish as it is, it represents a state of mind which might very well become dangerous. Possibly some of our readers may remember that some years ago an attempt was made to organize the destruction of vivisectors by prayer. The document was published in the JOURNAL of January 23rd, 1909. The text need not be given again, but one significant passage may be quoted. The writer, M. Cowan, stated that she had thought of prayer as a means of "removing" vivisectors. She thought first of experimenting on Dr. Starling, but, strange as such a scruple may seem, it seemed to her unfair to give such a stab in the dark without first letting it be known what was intended.

It was therefore finally decided to make earnest prayer, giving much thought to the subject, that the Almighty, if the prayer were in accord with His will, would promptly remove the man most likely to cause future suffering to innocent subjects by his experiments. About a fortnight later one of our most distinguished medical scientists dropped, and the newspapers were lamenting the loss to science of this vivisector and the discoveries he was just about to make.

We do not know who this victim of homicidal prayer may have been, but it obviously was not Professor Starling. The idea was not original, for it is recorded in the life of Dr. Anna Kingsford that she used to boast of the vivisectors whom she had done to death by the power of her will. The poor lady had to confess that she had found Pasteur too tough a subject, and we have not heard of any special mortality among vivisectors as a result of M. Cowan's prayer. This kind of folly can only excite a smile, but the letter here reproduced in facsimile is in a different category, for its last sentence must mean, if it means anything, that the assassination of a vivisector would, according to the code of ethics held by this particular follower of Mr. Coleridge, be a justifiable act. Such an expression of opinion by a person who conceals her name and address has no importance except as evidence of the state of mind which may be produced by the inflammatory appeals

of antivivisection agitators. It may safely be assumed that the people who read and are moved by these appeals do not make any investigation into the truth of the allegations upon which such appeals rest, and it is therefore all the more incumbent on those who make such allegations to make sure that their facts are correct, and that the deductions are "obvious and conclusive and necessary," and not wholly erroneous and superfluous.

Mr. Coleridge dissociated himself from M. Cowan's prayer league; will he also publicly express his disapproval of R. F. C.'s code of ethics? It may seem absurd to take serious notice of such threats as the letter contains, but we cannot forget that a Belgian newspaper once published a direct incitement to murder Pasteur. The terms of the letter would appear to show the effect which Mr. Coleridge's rhetorical appeals may have on an excitable mind, and that we are afflicted at the present time with many persons who are prepared to translate hasty words into rash deeds there is abundant evidence. We invite Mr. Coleridge to consider whether he would not be well advised in future first of all to ascertain the facts, and then to state them without exaggeration. Should he and other antivivisectors then find that they do not supply material for prolonging their agitation, that will be the fault of the facts.

It may be asked, Was Mr. Coleridge, then, mistaken in thinking that he heard the howls of dogs? Not necessarily. But he was certainly mistaken in believing that they proceeded from animals undergoing "torture." We have ourselves heard the most appalling shrieks emanating—if we may borrow a word from Mr. Coleridge's elegant vocabulary—from a terrier frenzied with the lust of blood owing to the neighbourhood of some mice he could not reach. Most workers in laboratories within the precincts of which dogs are allowed to ramble have had similar experiences. We recommend Mr. Coleridge not to rush into print again with descriptions of "dolorous clamour" caused by wounds inflicted under certificate B till he has had "ocular demonstration" that the dreadful cries do not emanate from untouched dogs protesting that they are debarred from following the instinct of "Nature red in tooth and claw."

## ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

### TYPHUS FEVER.

IN May, 1813, typhus fever was much in men's minds. As has so often happened, it came not alone, but was accompanied by famine and war; these three grim forms stood menacingly over Central Europe in the spring months of the year. In 1812 there had been the rush of a great wave of armed men from west to east across the Continent. More than half a million soldiers, constituting *la grande armée* of Napoleon, poured over the territory held by the Confederation of the Rhine, and, gathering numbers, flowed on with slackening speed into Russia, to break against the walls of Moscow and to stream back again over Poland and Prussia from east to west in feeble, shattered wavelets. It was General Typhus, allied with Generals Famine and Frost, who had come to Russia's aid, had scattered these invading thousands, and had sent them back as bands of disease-stricken stragglers, dying by hundreds on the way, across Germany, and carrying the pestilence wherever they went. In May, 1813, a second great eastward flow was in progress; it was now France with some Westphalian, Bavarian, and Saxon contingents, which was opposed to Russia in alliance with Prussia and later with Austria too, and this wave broke into spray in the terrible three days' battle of Leipzig—without exaggeration termed the "Battle of the Nations"—in which there was a total loss of not less than 120,000 men (October 16th to 19th, 1813). To quote from the *Cambridge Modern History* (vol. ix, p. 541), Napoleon "brought back to France only about 70,000 men, of whom 30,000 soon afterwards fell victims to typhus, and many others wasted away; within little more than a year two French armies, amounting together to nearly a million of men, had perished." Exactly how much of this mortality and disablement was due to typhus fever cannot, of course, be determined, but there can be no doubt at all that both in the campaign of 1812 and in that of 1813 this malady was terribly fatal.

To the medical men of the beginning of the nineteenth