

Opinions concerning vivisection and dissection in schools.

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American Humane Association.
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Publication/Creation

Chicago, 1895.

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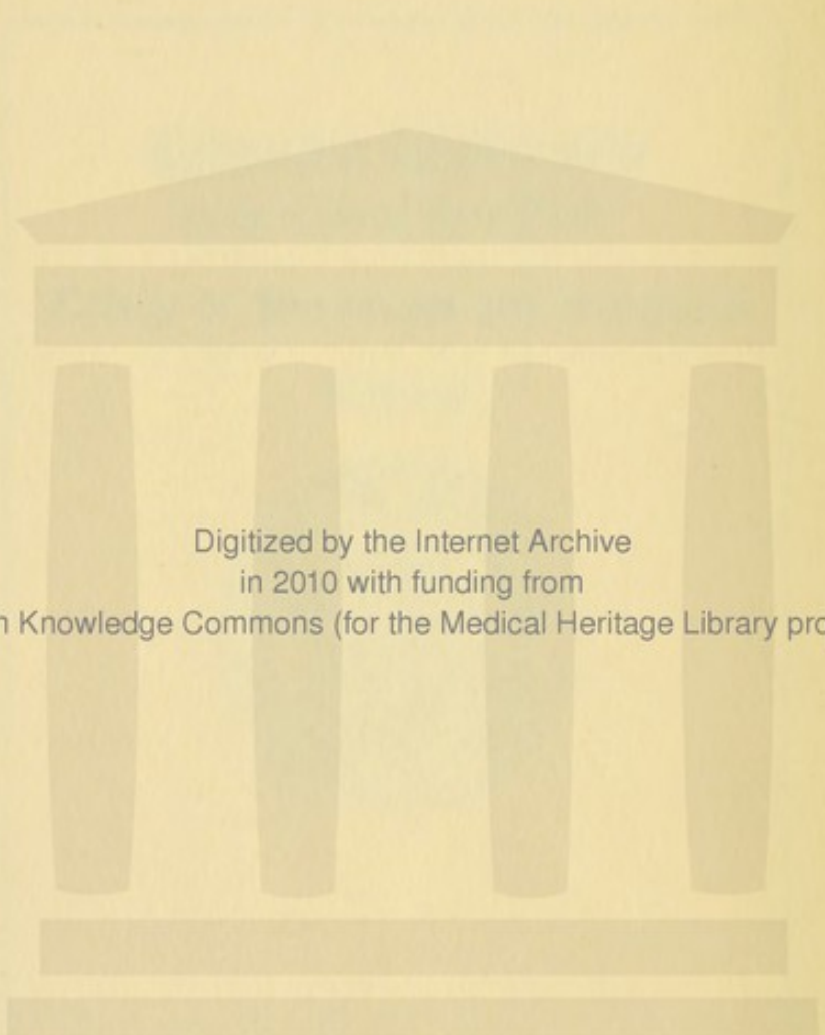
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OPINIONS

CONCERNING

VIVISECTION AND DISSECTION IN SCHOOLS

Selections from Report of
THE AMERICAN HUMANE ASSOCIATION,
Chicago, 1895.

Am 34

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SELECTIONS FROM THE REPORT. MAR

THE AMERICAN HUMANE ASSOCIATION, deeply impressed by the growing prevalence of vivisection as a method of study in our larger educational institutions, and regarding its introduction into public and private schools as both dangerous and unnecessary, recently sent circulars on this subject to a number of persons, whose opinions it deemed of value, and whose judgment it desired. The report of this inquiry embracing a considerable number of letters from all parts of Europe and America, has just been issued. For wider circulation it is thought best to print separately a few of these opinions in the present form.

The questions submitted were in substance, whether experiments involving the infliction of pain or death upon helpless creatures would tend to cultivate or to blunt the natural sensibilities of children assisting thereat; whether it was advisable to give children a belief in their irresponsible power over the lower forms of life, or cause them to be familiar with bloodshed and death; whether all that is necessary for children to know of physiology could not be taught by other means than experiments upon animals; and finally, whether in those cases where exposition of vital organs before advanced classes be deemed advisable, it would not be better to make such demonstration and exhibition upon organs obtained from the butcher, of creatures already killed for purposes of food, and not upon animals used as pets and associated with human affection.

The Association records the fact, that with but few exceptions, the writers agree with its expressed opinions

about such experimentation in our schools, and believe it is not only injurious and uncalled for by necessity, but that it so blunts the natural sensibilities as to operate to the moral detriment and deterioration of the character of the young.

WM. T. HARRIS, A. M., LL. D., *Commissioner of Education, U. S.:*

"I am glad to learn of some movement against a practice too widely extended, of dissecting animals before the children in the elementary schools."

FREDERICK HARRISON, ESQ., *London, England:*

"I am surprised and shocked to learn that there can exist schools of any kind where young boys and girls are allowed to witness dissection of living animals under any circumstances whatsoever. . . .

But I should have thought that all persons of decent feeling and of practical experience of the young must be agreed on the depraving effect of accustoming boys and girls to see death inflicted, to witness organic operations, and to find that the ghastly incidents of the surgical and the dissecting table are part of their manuals of education. I can imagine nothing more certain to blunt their sense of humanity, and to surround their intellectual life with degrading association.

Those who are parents or moral teachers know how difficult it is to extirpate the love of cruelty to which so many children are prone. But for their teachers to familiarize them with cruelty as part of their training, is a strange perversion of the moral sense.

I care not whether the anæsthetics are adequate, or whether the dissection is of dead animals—*both are revolting and deeply demoralizing for children.* And the

enormity is increased where the animals dissected are the companions of our daily life.

Auguste Comte, who was a philosopher as well as a professor of science, taught us that the domestic brutes we train to our service, are in a sense admitted to our humanity. And he would not have the highest moral teachers of the young defile themselves with the dissection even of the dead. He thought this was incompatible with the profoundest sense of reverence for human life.

I write as a parent and teacher of long standing, who has followed courses of philosophy of many eminent men, and who has practical experience of biological experiments."

FROM HIS EMINENCE, CARDINAL GIBBONS, *Baltimore*.

"The best interests of children, in my judgment, require that they be not familiarized with the sight of blood, or death inhumanly inflicted. I am inclined to think that sufficient instruction could be imparted by use of illustrations and manikins."

PROF. GEO. W. ATHERTON, *State College, Pa.*:

"It seems to me that the practice of either vivisection or dissection in the presence of children of the usual school age is not only unnecessary, in the grade and amount of instruction that can be given in the public schools, but is altogether injurious and inadmissible. Its advantages at that stage of instruction, seem to me to be very slight, while the disadvantages and injurious results upon the habits of thought and feeling of the pupils seem to me so obvious that every right-thinking person must revolt against it."

REV. DR. LYMAN ABBOTT, *Pastor of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn, Editor of "The Outlook," New York City*:

. . . "I should think it very clear that not only vivisection but even the dissection of animals carried on

by or before children of public school age must do a great deal more harm than it can possibly do good."

REV. A. J. CHAPIN, D. D., *Omaha, Nebraska* :

"I believe the business of dissection, and especially of vivisection as practiced in the public schools of all grades, to be wholly unnecessary and wrong, and am glad to use any influence which I may possess against the demoralizing practice."

REV. J. E. C. WELLDON, D. D., *Head-Master Harrow School, England* :

"I should say such experiments will undoubtedly blunt the sensibilities of children."

REV. FREDERIC E. DEWHURST, *Indianapolis* :

"Keep the scalpel out of the hands of children, and give them Wordsworth and John Burroughs to read."

REV. DR. THOMAS A. NELSON, *Brooklyn, N. Y.* :

"The result of vivisection before the eyes and minds of immature school children does little more than gratify a morbid and cruel curiosity. It leaves behind a miserably small increment of knowledge to compensate for the irreparable injury to those finer instincts and sympathies which are the patent of our nobility as man, and which lift us above the level of that inferior life, so often needlessly tortured to gratify a simulated passion for knowledge."

REV. JAMES O. S. HUNTINGTON, *Holy Cross House, Westminster, Maryland* :

"History makes it quite clear that such experiments will tend to blunt the sensibilities. Education means not merely crowding facts into a child but making him more *humane*."

REV. CHARLES A. NORTHRUP, *Norwich, Conn.* :

"I am heartily in sympathy with the object you are seeking to attain, viz. : A public opinion averse to such methods of instruction."

NATHAN GREEN, LL. D., *Chancellor Cumberlandana University, Tennessee :*

"I am unalterably opposed to the dissection of animals, such as cats, dogs, etc., before children. The whole business of vivisection is of questionable propriety, and this practice before children for the purpose of instruction is simply barbarous."

PRES. GEO. WILLIAMSON SMITH, LL. D., *Trinity College, Hartford :*

"The killing of animals by and before children of public school age, under the plea of instruction in physiology, I am persuaded is unnecessary."

PRES. J. W. BISSELL, D. D., *Upper Iowa University :*

"I am fully in sympathy with your efforts to bring about a reformation in our present methods of teaching by vivisection and dissection."

PRES. EDWARD D. EATON, D. D., LL. D., *Beloit College, Beloit, Wis. :*

"I fully agree with the American Humane Society as to the needlessness and injurious tendencies of the vivisection and even the dissection of animals by and before children of public school age."

PROF. A. J. GRANGER, *Newton High School, Mass. :*

"As a teacher I should make my answer emphatic. There can be no reason for such experiments in our public schools."

PROF. ALFONSE N. VANDAELL, *Institute of Technology, Boston, Mass. :*

"I believe that physiology, properly so called, ought not to find a place in any school below the college grade. The elements of hygiene can and ought to be taught, although under present regulations, the study in my opinion is begun too early."

GEORGE A. BACON, A. M., of the firm of *Allyn & Bacon, Publishers, Boston, Mass.* :

"To my thinking there is absolutely no excuse for killing animals in order to teach anatomy or physiology in our schools. In the first place the practice in dissection which pupils get, amounts to nothing, and they are just as likely to come to wrong as to right conclusions, from their observation."

H. H. FREER, *Prof. Science and Art Teaching and Political Economy, Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa* :

"It is time to call a halt upon the infliction of pain on animals, or wantonly killing them for the purpose of teaching anatomy, physiology or hygiene to young children. All that children need to know on these subjects can be taught without resorting to processes that will blunt the sensibilities, deprave the taste and brutalize the whole nature of children."

The boy murderer, Pomeroy, was I believe, from early life accustomed to the scenes of the slaughter house, and his environment no doubt was responsible for his cruel and murderous tendencies."

JOHN E. KIMBALL, *Late Supt. Schools, Newton, Mass.* :

"The practice referred to is unnecessary, painful in the extreme to sensitive natures, cruel and demoralizing. In my experience as Superintendent of Schools, I have heard of instances of fainting and real suffering to susceptible children in connection with this very reprehensible practice. If there is one phase of culture outside the usual curriculum in our public schools which should be of constant care it is the habit of uniform kindness to the lower orders of animate creation, and this is not consistent with a practice which must blunt the sensibilities of all, if it does not in some cases tend to develop types of brutality, which from time to time shock society."

H. D. LLOYD, *Editor of "Chicago Tribune :"*

"Experiments involving infliction of pain or death tend to blunt, and therefore *to brutalize* children in their human relations.

I do not live up to the doctrine, but I believe that our physical as well as sympathetic evolution is moving to the point at which we will be as incapable of killing animals for food for the body as for food for the mind."

JAMES JEFFREY ROACH, *Editor "The Pilot," Boston, Mass. :*

"I consider the vivisection of animals for the ostensible instruction of children, to be cruel, useless and demoralizing in the extreme, and that everything necessary for the teaching of physiology could be as clearly and more humanely taught by the use of illustrations and manikins. . . .

It is not vitally important that children should know all about their own internal organs; it is absolutely important that they should be taught mercy, even to the lowest of living things."

REV. SAMUEL J. BARROWS, *Editor "The Christian Register," Boston, Mass. :*

"I believe it to be a serious mistake to encourage children to any irresponsible use of their power over the lower forms of life.

Children should be taught that might is not right, and that the same laws of love, mercy and justice which apply to human beings should be applied to the animal creation so far as possible.

It seems to me that it is an abuse of the name of education to familiarize children with the infliction upon animals of mortal wounds, etc., under the pretence of imparting scientific knowledge. An animal is not to be treated as a toy, which a child is encouraged to take apart just to see how it is put together.

The development of the spirit of love, mercy and justice is more important than to turn the school room into a butcher's shop or a dissecting room to gratify an intellectual curiosity.

Physiology should have its place in school instruction, but quite as important is the subject of ethics, which includes not only our duties to our fellow beings, but also our duties to animals."

DR. H. W. PIERSON, *Editor "Medical Advance," Chicago, Ill.:*

"Promiscuous vivisection is uncalled for and serves to gratify the baser elements in our nature, whether it be children or adults, and should be condemned by all. Individuals preparing for the special study of the subject of physiology will not have their finer senses blunted by study of the mechanism of the body in life. To all others this should be denied, by law, if necessary."

RICHARD HOWELL, *Editor "Bridgeport Herald," Bridgeport, Conn.:*

"There are those upon whom vivisection will have a horrifying effect, but there are many in whom the practice in public schools will develop an inordinate love to be cruel to dumb animals.

The plastic mind of the public school pupil is as sensitive to an impression as the dry plate of a photographer's outfit, and the impression which vivisection makes upon one of these young minds may develop frightful traits of character."

REV. E. B. GRAHAM, *Editor "Midland," Chicago, Ill.:*

"Children should not be allowed to see game shot by cruel sportsmen, or domestic fowls killed even for food; and much less should they become familiar with cruelty in the interests of education."

DR. M. L. HOLBROOK, *Editor "Herald of Health," N. Y.:*

"I do not think the slightest good in practice ever

comes to children from the experiments alluded to. They are unnecessary. Study animals alive acting naturally, and some good can be learned. Studying them in the throes of pain cannot help teach hygiene."

CLIFFORD W. BARNES, *Chicago, Ill.* :

"Having studied physiology and hygiene by the use of illustrations and manikins, and having afterwards studied in a medical college and had experiments in vivisection, I can speak with assurance when I say that no child in the public schools needs to resort to experimentation on living creatures in order to obtain a perfectly satisfactory and sufficient knowledge of the essentials of physiology."

MISS ALICE M. LONGFELLOW, *Cambridge* :

"It would seem to me of far greater value to lay stress upon the importance of observing and understanding, instead of taking away the essential element of its beauty and interest. It seems to be poor humanity and poor science to think either is served by destruction instead of by preservation."

PROF. J. H. ALLEN, *Cambridge, Mass.* :

. . . "It is shocking and unpardonable that anything approaching or resembling vivisection should be permitted, except in professional schools, and then only under the greatest precautions as to anæsthetics. . . . For all that can be profitably taught to the ordinary pupil, plates and models are preferable on every account."

PROF. BÄR, *University of Göttingen, Germany* :

. . . "I agree fully with the American Humane Association in the opinion, that not only vivisection but even dissection of animals, killed by and before children of public school age will inevitably operate to the moral injury of the young,"

RT. REV. THOMAS A. STARKEY, *Bishop of Newark*:

"In my judgment it is of the greatest importance that all children, boys especially, be taught carefully and with painstaking, humanity to animals. It is more than important, it is vitally necessary. Children are apt to be thoughtless; boys are often so to the verge of cruelty. Any exhibition therefore which is deliberately prepared, and with such experiments as you describe, must in my opinion, have the effect of encouraging this native insensibility. We may easily pay too dear for knowledge, and whatever benefits may accrue in the way of added knowledge from such methods of instruction as those you refer to, is dearly purchased by the loss of so great an element in Christian character as humanity, the chivalric feeling of the strong for the helpless and weak."

RT. REV. W. C. DOANE, LL. D., *Bishop of Albany, N. Y.*:

"I do not believe the effect upon children of witnessing experiments upon living animals can possibly be good. It must either shock their sensibilities if they are what they ought to be, or tend to encourage them in cruelty if they have that unnatural strain in them."

RT. REV. N. S. RULISON, *Assistant Bishop Central Pennsylvania*:

"In my judgment vivisection and the killing of animals by and before children attending the public schools, and also the dissection of animals under similar circumstances are practices which cannot be really necessary, and which most inevitably blunt the sensibilities and corrupt the character of the young."

RT. REV. JOHN WILLIAMS, LL. D., *Bishop of Connecticut*:

"Without entering especially into particulars, I am quite ready to say that in my view, any and all vivisection and killing of animals before children of public school age, and also their dissection, cannot but be most injurious to such children and ought to be entirely discouraged."

RT. REV. THOMAS M. CLARK, *Bishop of Rhode Island*:

"I was not aware that any such atrocity existed, as the introduction of vivisection into our ordinary schools, and I think that it ought to be forbidden by law.

If physiology cannot be taught our children by the use of manikins and illustrations, it will be well not to teach it at all."

REV. DR. MORGAN DIX, D. C. L., *Rector of Trinity Church, New York*:

. . . The system of education of the young appears to need a fundamental reform, and it is perhaps fortunate that fads of this kind should be introduced as rapidly as possible, in order that the need of such a general and rational overhauling in the interests of much abused childhood may become more thoroughly evident to the general view.

It is not necessary that the average boy or girl should be made an expert in anatomy, physiology or biology. Such studies are only appropriate for those intended for the degrees in surgery and medicine. I feel certain that all that is necessary for the time can be accomplished by models and illustrations and that there can be no need of a display of ether, knives, blood, wounds and death. Upon the whole, I confess to amazement at the infatuation of those, whoever they may be, who have introduced, or deem it wise to introduce, such methods into an already overloaded system of education, and I deprecate with all earnestness the mischief likely to ensue from so wide a departure from the principles and modes of sober common sense and useful teaching.

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