

The Bishop of Oxford and Prof. Ruskin on vivisection.

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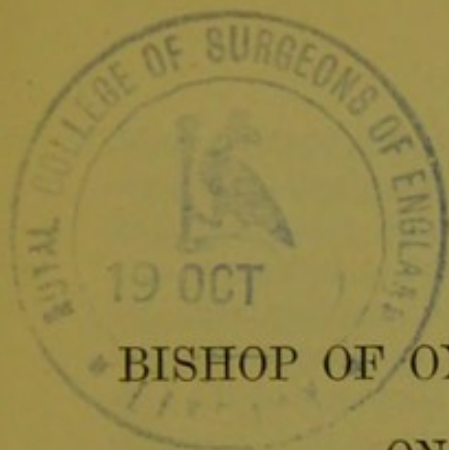


THE
BISHOP OF OXFORD
AND
PROF. RUSKIN
ON VIVISECTION.

STATIONER & PRINTER

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MINNEAPOLIS, MN



THE
BISHOP OF OXFORD AND PROF. RUSKIN
ON VIVISECTION.

At a Meeting held at Oxford on the 9th December, 1884, the following addresses were delivered by the Bishop and Professor Ruskin, respectively:—

His LORDSHIP said he would like to say chiefly one thing that he felt that this question which had more immediately brought them together was in fact part of a much larger question, which he thought would more and more come before them, and would call upon them to speak and think and act. He thought so for this reason, that those who maintained the right to torture living creatures were now in the habit of meeting their opponents with a sneer. Now a sneer was of course a very difficult thing to meet—proverbially so—but the difficulty became much less if they could reduce the sneer to some statement of principle upon which it was founded. The sneer with which they were met was that they had taken up what their opponents called a humanitarian crotchet. This was a thing of which he had no doubt all of them had heard, and the meaning of that sneer, if they came to inquire into it carefully, was something of this kind: That compassion for those who were suffering—whether men or creatures, for it was impossible to make a distinction—was an impractical feeling, that it stood in the way of very much which wise men had to do, that it was not such a feeling as men—whatever might be said of women—could take into account when they were resolving upon any course of action, or when they had made up their minds upon any course of action, and were going to carry it into effect: that compassion could not be reckoned amongst arguments, and must not be taken account of as an influence which should hinder any decided course which had approved itself to the judgment, or to the passion,

indeed, of persons who had to go through this working world. It was said that if once they listened to the pleadings of compassion they were doing an unreasonable thing, and they were listening to that which had no right to restrain or control the conduct of sensible, strong-minded, resolute men. He had said that compassion was allowed to influence women. These strong men did not object to the allowance of the feeling of compassion to one part, at all events, of their kind, but for themselves these wise and strong and resolute persons declared that compassion was a new element, an unpractical, foolish thing, which was not to interfere with anything they had determined to do. He thought he seemed to perceive behind that statement the assertion of might against right—but at all events of might—that the strong should rule. They could rule, and because they could rule therefore they were to put aside feelings which of themselves had nothing to do with strength, and were in fact given them by the Author of their being especially as a protection to the weak. (Applause.) The strong would not allow this protection to take effect, and he thought he seemed to hear the same kind of sneer which was now so common against their cause in far different connections. He thought he could recall the echo of it in all that he had read of the days when William Wilberforce secured liberty for the slave. He was ridiculed, sneered at, and utterly despised by the generation with which he began to plead, and over whom he ultimately prevailed. But how he and the rest fought their way against a perfect hailstorm of sneers and reproaches must be known to many to whom he was speaking. Long after that time, was it not even said by great jurists on the other side of the water that a slave had no rights which a white man was bound to respect, and they sneered at those wretched philanthropists who talked of the emancipation of slaves very much as persons sneered at Antivivisectionists now. (Hear, hear.) Coming down later, he had heard the same kind of sneer, in Parliament and out of it, when men were trying to rescue women and children from degradation and ruin. Humanitarian crochet had been the name given to true Christian effort to set free from such degradation and ruin those who could not help themselves. When poor factory children had been overworked, made to work through longer hours than their small frames could bear, the persons who tried to set them free were crotcheteers.

It was so at the beginning of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and many of them were old enough to remember it. No ridicule was too great to be poured upon the heads of those who thought that any consideration whatever was due to those dumb creatures around them. (Hear, hear.) He was not going to multiply instances, but to this very hour it had been so, that when men had tried to rescue the weak, to put down brutal sports, to restrain the liberty of wrong doing, they had been sneered at by the unthinking and the inconsiderate as persons who had taken up some poor contemptible sentiment, and were trying to elevate it into a rule of action. They had tried to elevate it into a rule of action, or rather they had recognised that it was a rule of action, and needed no elevation of theirs, for it was the highest and noblest of principles. They only asserted it, and maintained it, and defended it, and they desired in this particular case which their Society was connected with that the feeling of compassion, implanted by God in human hearts, should have its proper influence and sway, that it should have it there as well as in every department of human action in which it had already won its place. (Applause.) He stated at the beginning that he had only just this one thing to say, and he did not wish to add anything to it. He only desired to point out to them that what they were contending for was the great principle that ran through very large departments of human thought and action, and that what they were fighting for there, and in the meetings which would follow, was only that which they would have to fight for again and again in the face of a tendency which he watched with sadness everywhere to revert to earlier and more brutal methods against what he thought had been the glad and distinguishing mark of this generation—against the tendency to give all the weak their rights, and to introduce the principle of tender consideration into human feelings everywhere. Again and again in legislation and elsewhere they had asserted the force of these principles, and they were told now, again and again, that the age had become childish, that they had, as one had said, grand-fatherly legislation. The sneers were endless. They were to lay aside all those principles, all those feelings, and go straightforward to the point, whatever it was, which the strong man desired to make, either for his own convenience, his own passions, or his mere contempt of the sensationalism,

as he called it, which was to him nothing. If this were so, they were engaged in a very large enterprise indeed, and they and he would not see the end of it; but they might do their little part, and he believed that in protecting the poor helpless animals which were wronged by the practices they condemned they were contributing their part to a really great and important movement—the assertion of principles which underlay their whole conduct, and were indeed part of that Christian religion which they professed. (Applause.) His Lordship concluded by expressing his thanks to those who had given him the opportunity of taking part in that movement, and his earnest hope that the movement would grow and extend very much in the University and City. (Applause.)

X Professor RUSKIN said he had learnt much from the speakers, but there were one or two points which he should wish to refer to. It was not the question whether experiments taught them more or less of science. It was not the question whether animals had a right to this or that in the inferiority they were placed in to mankind. It was a question—What relation had they to God, what relation mankind had to God, and what was the true sense of feeling as taught to them by Christ the Physician. The primary head and front of all the offending against both the principle of mercy in men and the will of the Creator of these creatures was the ignoring of that will in higher matters, and these scientific pursuits were now defiantly, provokingly, insultingly separated from the science of religion; they were all carried on in defiance of what had hitherto been held to be compassion and pity, and of the great link which bound together the whole of creation from its maker to the lowest creature. For one secret discovered by the torture of a thousand animals, a thousand means of health, peace and happiness were lost, because the physician was continually infecting his students not with the common rabies of the dog but with the rabies of the man, infecting them with all kinds of base curiosity, infecting the whole society which he taught with a thirst for knowing things which God had concealed from them for his own good reason, and promoting amongst them passions of the same kind. No physician now dwelt in the least upon the effect of anger, upon the effect of avarice, upon the effect of science itself pursued without moral limit; and

the rabies of all defiance and contradiction to all the law of God had become the madness abroad which was without reason at all, and was setting itself against everything that was once holy, once pure, once revered among them. For his part, he thought they must not dwell upon minute questions as to whether this or that quantity of pain was inflicted. The question was that here in Oxford their object was to make their youths and maidens gentle, and it seemed to him that they might at least try to concentrate their efforts to prevent these subjects of science being brought into contact with the minds of the noblest youths and maidens who came there to be made gentlemen and ladies. Their noblest efforts and energies should be set upon protecting the weak and informing the ignorant of things which might lead them to happiness, peace, and light, and above all other things upon the relation existing between them and the lower creation in this life. He had always said that a gentleman was primarily distinguished by his fellowship with the nobler animals of creation, and the peasant chiefly by the kindness which he showed to every useful one. (Applause.)

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Those who sympathise with this object are entreated to afford the Society all the help in their power, by subscribing, and inducing others to subscribe, liberally to its funds; by obtaining signatures to Petitions to Parliament; and also by disseminating the publications of the Society, and especially its organ THE ZOOPHILIST, wherein the latest information respecting the Anti-vivisection agitation is to be found.

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