

**Some facts as to the administration of the Act : (evidence before the Royal Commission).**

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**Some Facts as to the Administration of the Act.**

**(Evidence before the Royal Commission.)**

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BEFORE the Act of 1876 was passed, it is probable that some experiments were made, not in the laboratories of well-known institutions, but in private houses. Whether many experiments were thus made we do not know. On this point, Mr. Byrne, Principal Clerk in the Home Office, says. "If there were, which Q 303, 306 is a very doubtful point, any considerable number of experiments going on in private houses and other unknown places, I should think the effect of the Act has been to abolish them entirely. It is impossible to believe that in thirty years, if unlicensed experiments were taking place, the Home Office and the police would not have heard of it—not one instance of it. I wish to bring out that matter before the Commission; that, as we have never heard of any case, it is very fair proof that they do not occur, because somebody would be sure to denounce them if they did occur."

Mr. Thane, the Inspector under the Act, giving evidence on 7th November, 1906, says: "The only cases in which Q 356, 386 private premises are registered for the performance of experiments are the pharmaceutical laboratories of Messrs. Wellcome & Co. and of Messrs. Brady & Martin, Limited, and the tract of heather at Frimley." These "private premises" are used for the standardising of antitoxins and for the study of grouse disease. Also, experiments in unregistered places are allowed for the immediate study of outbreaks of infective disease among flocks and herds: that is to say, a few licensees are given a sort of roving commission to study outbreaks of infection in the only way in which they can be studied. Also, in three cases, within the last few years, leave was given for the study of "caisson disease," divers' disease, at unregistered places, viz., the premises of a firm of diving engineers, and the bridge works at Newcastle-on-Tyne.



With these exceptions, all experiments are made in places registered under the Act, and open to inspection. The list of registered places is of great interest, because it shows how much of the work is now a national service—a part of the Government's care for the national health. The Board of Agriculture has two laboratories; the Local Government Board makes experiments on animals; the Home Office, Q 342 indirectly, has been the occasion of "a good many experiments in connection with dangerous trades." The Metropolitan Asylums Board has five laboratories; Aberdeen, Cardiff, Colchester, Glasgow, Hamilton, Manchester, Wakefield, Worcester, have municipal laboratories of their own; in Liverpool, the University gives assistance to the municipality. These municipal laboratories are mainly for diagnosis: they are permanently at work and occupied, and the work is done by officials of the corporation or public body concerned. From these State laboratories, we come to the Lister Institute, the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, and the Royal Commission on Tuberculosis, which, though they are not State institutions, are doing the work of the State; and, since the work of the State is done wherever the subjects of the State are cared for, we come also to our Hospital laboratories: there is no break in the chain, whether the work is done by Hospital teachers or for the authorities at Whitehall.

Let us suppose that a man wants to obtain leave to make some experiments on animals. What steps must he take to that end? First, he will take advice how to proceed. Next, he will (1) procure the necessary form or forms of application; (2) get them signed by two members of that very small body of Presidents of learned Societies, and Professors of learned Sciences, who alone are qualified, under the Act, to sign such applications; (3) submit his application to the Home Office. The Home Office (4) sends it to the Association for the Advancement of Medicine by Research. The report from that Association is received and considered by the Home



Office, and the application is then (5) submitted to the Inspector, who considers the same, and (6) advises the Secretary of State on it; "frequently having to make, and making, further enquiries with regard to the proposals made, before he finally advises." (Mr. Byrne's evidence, Q.149-156).

We have plenty of evidence that applications are indeed examined and scrutinized before they are granted; and that many of them are subjected to very strict enquiry or revision or limitation. Nobody, who has ever had anything to do with the working of the Act, needs that evidence; still, there it is, "It very frequently happens," Mr. Byrne says, "that if the wording of the license, or the certificate, is somewhat indefinite and would allow of experiments being carried out which were not really necessary for the purpose of the investigation, the wording will be so altered as to confine it strictly to the inquiry. That often happens. . . . Every license which is applied for has to pass not only through three sets of eyes, but four sets of authorities, before it is granted. And the same, with a certificate. Every proposed investigation of a novel, important, or painful character is submitted to the Home Secretary personally by the Under Secretary." Again, the Home Office regularly exercises its power to annex conditions to a license. For instance, there is nothing in the Act about killing animals which are in pain after inoculation, or about antiseptic precautions, or about the use of anæsthetics for any subsequent operative procedure.

The idea that any medical student can get a license is utterly false. In 1888, one student was licensed, and in 1890 one; with a special arrangement that their work should be supervised. All "amateurs" are refused: for example, a clergyman, and a "gentleman of independent means who was pursuing bacteriology for the love of the thing," and the manager of a mine, who wished to test the effect of mine-gases on birds and small animals. In veterinary medicine, of course, licenses are granted to experts. The applicant must state

Q 157, 208,  
220

Q 6970



clearly, on his papers, the character and the purpose of the proposed experiments ; and, having obtained his license, he must record and report all his work, and must also send to the Home Office a copy of any published account of it. And, of course, he may be required to send an *interim* report ; and his work is open to inspection.

Q 89, 105

Inspection, according to the opponents of all experiments on animals, is a farce. It is impossible, they say, for three men to inspect so many places and so much work. But let us hear what the inspectors say on this question, whether the amount of inspection is sufficient.

“ I do not think you would get any advantage (by more inspectors and more inspection). I do not think that any abuses are going on that you would stop. It would be only a satisfaction to the public, perhaps—but that is the only advantage it would be . . . . But I should, of course, suggest that the Inspector's staff should grow with the increased work demanded of it. The subject is growing, and I think that additional inspection will soon be required. I have managed to keep abreast of it up to the present, but it is getting to be more than one man can manage.”

Q 1190, 1193  
1891, 1074

Mr. THANE, Inspector.

“ I think there is great safeguard. I think the inspection is essential to secure for the Home Office knowledge of what goes on ; and it keeps licensees informed as to what they should do, and, as I have said, it has prevented their stupidly contravening the law. If the character of the people is not such that they would not do wrong, I do not think that any amount of inspection—even staying there all day—would secure that they would behave themselves. I am quite satisfied with the amount of inspection. I think it is about the right amount.”

Q 603, 604

SIR JAMES RUSSELL, Assistant Inspector.

“ I think so. I do not think there are any abuses existing in Ireland. I do not think there is any concealment, or anything that a dozen more inspectors could find out.”

Q 967

SIR W. THORNLEY STOKER, Inspector for Ireland.

The duties of the Inspectors include, of course, a great quantity of office-work and correspondence.

In strange contrast with the above facts, the following statement is reported as made by Mr. Abiathar Wall, an opponent of all experiments on animals. “ A vivisector has a theory whereby he hopes to discover a cure for say, neuralgia of the little finger, and the Home Secretary promptly arms him with a license to torture as diabolically as he pleases and as many animals as he thinks fit.”