The Nineteenth Century defenders of vivisection.

Contributors

Coleridge, John Duke Coleridge, Baron, 1820-1894.
Royal College of Surgeons of England

Publication/Creation

[London] : [publisher not identified], [1882?]

Persistent URL

https://wellcomecollection.org/works/bcwqqrfc

Provider

Royal College of Surgeons

License and attribution

Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
https://wellcomecollection.org

6.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY DEFENDERS OF VIVISECTION.

In the papers of Sir James Paget, Mr. Owen, and Dr. Wilks, on the subject of Vivisection published in the *Nineteenth Century* for December, 1881, more than one reference is made to a Judge or Judges. No other Judge has spoken upon the subject, as far as I am aware; so that when a "Judge" or "law officer" is mentioned by three gentlemen amongst those opponents worthy at once of the contempt and anger which they express, or very imperfectly conceal towards them, I cannot help applying some of the censure to myself. I wish I could; partly because so to apply it may look like vanity, as if in this regard I thought myself worthy of the notice of such great people; but much more because the statements as to anything I have ever said or written are so entirely inaccurate, that I must conclude (want of apprehension in such distinguished men being out of the question), either that they have not read what they profess to notice, or that they feel confident no one will read any reply.

I recognise, as much as any man can recognise it, the duty of a Judge being in court and out of it a man *egregii altique silenti*. But there are occasions on which it is a duty to speak, and I think this is one. Sir James Paget says that, "The only competent judges in such a case are those in whom sentiment and intellectual power are fairly balanced, and who will dispassionately study the facts and compare the pain-giving and the utility of experiments on animals with those of any generally allowed or encouraged pursuit." Sir James Paget would deny, and I do not pretend to assert, that I am a "competent judge;" but I desire to state shortly and temperately, if I can, the reasons which lead me earnestly to support the Bill which Mr. Reid is about to submit to the House of Commons.

I should personally prefer in the abstract Regulation to Prohibition. I think it difficult to answer particular cases in which, without any unfair manipulation of circumstances, it may be shown, that total prohibition might or would stand in the way of justice, or even of humanity. But a practical matter cannot be thus dealt with. In the affairs of men it is hardly possible to lay down a general rule which will not produce hard cases. Probably no law was ever abolished which had not in its time done some good, for which, in particular instances, some defence could not be made. Probably no new law was ever enacted to which some exception could not be justly taken, and which did not in particular instances do some harm. Objections, as Dr. Arnold once said, do not bring us to the point; and nothing would ever be done if we waited till we had satisfied every possible objection to the doing of what we

propose. In all human action we have to choose and balance between opposing good and evil; and in any change of law to determine whether that which we propose, or that which exists, is *upon the whole* the best. On this principle I do not hesitate to support the absolute prohibition of what for shortness' sake, though with some verbal inaccuracy, I shall call, as others call it, vivisection.

The supporters of vivisection in this country are not themselves content with the present state of things. As far as I know the repulsive literature of the subject, no defender of the practice, except Sir James Paget (and perhaps I misunderstand even his last sentence), has said or implied that he is satisfied with the present law. The repeal of it is to be at once attempted; and it is contended that even those (to my mind reasonable) restraints which it imposes so injuriously hamper the practice of vivisection, that little or no good can result from it, if these restraints are continued. But it seems to follow that if the present law is admitted to be as bad for vivisectors as total abolition, and if the present law is reasonable, they, at least, can have no strong motive for resisting an enactment in form of that which they say exists already in substance.

Is, then, the present law reasonable? It is the result of a most careful inquiry conducted by eminent men in 1875, men certainly neither weak sentimentalists nor ignorant and prejudiced humanitarians, men amongst whom are to be found Mr. Huxley and Mr. Erichsen, Mr. Hutton and Sir John Karslake. These men unanimously recommended legislation, and legislation, in some important respects, more stringent than Parliament thought fit to pass. They recommended it on a body of evidence at once interesting and terrible. Interesting indeed it is from the frank apathy to the sufferings of animals, however awful, avowed by some of the witnesses; for the noble humanity of some few; for the curious ingenuity with which others avoided the direct and verbal approval of horrible cruelties which yet they refused to condemn; and in some cases for the stern judgment passed upon men and practices, apparently now, after the lapse of six years, considered worthy of more lenient language. Terrible the evidence is for the details of torture, of mutilation, of life slowly destroyed in torment, or skilfully preserved for the infliction of the same or diversified agoniès, for days, for weeks, for months, in some cases for more than a year. I want not to be, if I can help it, what Mr. Simon calls a "mere screamer;" nay, if possible, to avoid that yet more fatal imputation upon an Englishman which Dr. Wilks brings against his opponents, that we "lack a sense of the ludicrous." I wish to use quiet language, but I must, nevertheless, at all hazards own that, sharing probably the lower and less sensitive organizations of the monkey, the cat, and the dog, I fail altogether to see the joke which he sees, in any attempt to stay these tortures; and further that to read of them, not in the language of

"paid scribes and hired agitators," but in the language of these humane and tender men who first inflict them and then describe them, makes me sick. True that the most exquisite and most prolonged tortures appear to have been inflicted out of England; true that, both before the Commission and since the Report, the broadest avowals of entire indifference to animal agony have come from foreign countries, or from foreigners in this. But our inferiority in this respect, the as yet unreasonable dislike of our medical classes to witnessing very painful experiments, are made the subject of earnest and repeated regret. It is hoped that we may be brought up to the foreign standard; that our insular prejudice may be purged away by degrees, and that in time we may feel the beauty and enter into the nobility of M. de Cyons' description of "the true vivisector." "He," says M. de Cyon, "must approach a difficult vivisection with the same joyful excitement, with the same delight, as the surgeon when he approaches a difficult operation from which he anticipates extraordinary consequences. He who shrinks from the section of a living animal, he who approaches a vivisection as an unpleasant necessity, may perhaps be able to repeat one or two particular vivisections, but will never become an artist in vivisection." *Principiis obsta.* I do not desire this result for my fellow-islanders. I think both that the Report of the Commission was at the time and has been since abundantly justified, and that the legislation founded on it did not go beyond very reasonable limits.

But that there exists a statute confining vivisection within reasonable limits, with which some people are dissatisfied, is not, it may be said, any ground for going beyond those limits, and prohibiting the practice altogether. By itself it is not. But the claims of the vivisectors have meanwhile become so large, the tone they take is so peremptory, the principles on which they base themselves are so alarming and (I think) so immoral, that I have become reluctantly convinced it is only by the strongest law, by absolutely forbidding the practice itself, that the grave mischief which follows from holding parley with these claims can be stayed or destroyed. Before the Commission, except by a witness or two of exceptional frankness or indiscretion, an apologetic tone was adopted, the duty of avoiding pain if possible was unreservedly at least in words admitted, of at least minimising suffering, of never inflicting it except in pursuit of some reasonably probable discovery, of not torturing animals simply to show manual skill, or to illustrate acknowledged and ascertained truths. All this sort of thing has somehow disappeared. I am not conscious of any distorting influence on my judgment; I have no anti-scientific bias; I read as far as I can a good deal on both sides with a desire, I think sincere, to arrive at a sound conclusion, and I deliberately say that it seems to me no man can read the Blue Book of 1875, and these papers of Sir James

Paget, Mr. Owen, and Dr. Wilks of 1881, without being conscious that, somehow or other, the whole atmosphere has changed. For example Magendie and his experiments are denounced before the Commission in language such as Robert Southey might have used, and did use, respecting them. Dr. Wilks's "world-famous Darwin" applies to experiments such as his what the Commission rightly call the "emphatic terms" "*detestation and abhorrence.*" Now in 1881 Sir James Paget speaks of them without a syllable of disapprobation, nay, I must say it seems to me, in a tone of absolute apology. What more cogent can be said? If here or elsewhere I seem to use language of blame or disrespect towards such a man as he is, a man whom in common with all the world I respect and admire with all my heart, it is only because in a grave matter I cannot help, after much reflection, being convinced that he is wrong. I admit the weight of his character; I recognise the moral force he brings to any side which he supports; and if I find that such a man as he cannot advocate his cause without what seems unfair reasoning, and an apparent disregard of or apology for hateful cruelty, it is the strongest possible argument to my mind that the cause itself should be done away with; for if even Sir James Paget cannot escape its evil influences, what will they not effect on the common run of men who have neither his head nor his heart to keep them right? I say, then, that the complete change of tone in the vivisectors, the open scoffing at laws of mercy which not so long ago were honoured at least in words, the broad claim that in pursuit of knowledge any cruelty may be inflicted on animals; these things not only startle me and shock my moral sense, but they convince me that a practice which, according to the contention of its best and ablest advocates, involves these claims, is one which it is no longer safe to tolerate.

I do not say that vivisection is useless, and I am sure I never have said so. I do not know enough of the history of science to venture on any such statement. Dr. Wilks indeed asserts that he has looked in vain "for any speech delivered" (*inter alios*) "by a judge who has not made inutility the staple of his argument;" but he is absolutely inaccurate, and I contradict him as flatly as is consistent with courtesy. I should think it as foolish and presumptuous in me to say so, as it is presumptuous (I had almost said foolish) in the gentleman whom Dr. Wilks calls "the venerable Owen," to say of "one of our highest law officers" (meaning, I imagine, me), "that he *purposely*" (the word is the venerable gentleman's) "obstructs the best mode of admitting the light which the law looks for in cases of suspected poisoning." Mr. Owen is an old man, but I am no longer young; and I take leave to say that no age is venerable if a man has not learned to abstain from unmannerly imputations of motive, and from indulgence in mere scolding and abuse of opponents of whom (I do not speak of myself) he can know nothing

but what is to their credit, and who at least at no time of their lives have ever been accused of endeavouring to crush a scientific adversary by means at once ungenerous and unfair. *Testa servat odorem;* but this is by the way. What I have said and do say is that very considerable men are not agreed as to the great utility of vivisection, or as to the value of the results which have followed from it. There are two sides to the question; which is the right one I do not pretend to say; but there are men of name, and statements which at least look authentic, upon both. There are certain stock cases, some of them very old, which reappear on every discussion; I have heard so often and so much of Mr. Spencer Wells's rabbits, that I will own to a suspicion that if the baked dogs, and mutilated cats, and gouged frogs, and nail-larded guinea-pigs, and brain-extracted monkeys, had resulted in anything worth hearing of, I should have heard of that too. But I do not say, and have never said, that vivisection is useless.

I must, however, be permitted to say how loose and vague are the notions of evidence which, as far as I know them, pervade the writings of men of science on this question. Sir James Paget once in my hearing, in the course of a very striking speech, not only with perfect candour admitted, but insisted on this defect. He said (and I think truly said) that men of science often (not, of course, always) arrive at conclusions on evidence which a lawyer would hardly admit to be evidence at all in a question of disputed fact. No fair man I think can fail to be struck with the uncertainty, a different point from inutility, of the conclusions to which vivisection has conducted those who practise it. The conclusions are doubted, are disputed, are contradicted, by the vivisectors themselves. So that it really is not experiment to verify or disprove theory, which one well-conducted and crucial experiment might do, but experiment *in vacuo*, experiment on the chance, experiment in pursuit of nothing in particular, but of anything which may turn up in the course of a hundred thousand vivisections, and during the course of a life devoted to them. This is the experiment for which liberty is claimed, and the unfettered pursuit of which we are called very hard names for objecting to. "Pseudo humanitarians," "ill-informed fanatics," "true pharisaical spirit," these are but specimens of the language—which the calm and serene men of science find it convenient to apply to their opponents. We may be wrong; but at least let our position be distinctly understood, and let the mode in which we are opposed be distinctly appreciated.

I deny altogether that it concludes the question to admit that vivisection enlarges knowledge. I do not doubt it does; but I deny that the pursuit of knowledge is in itself always lawful; still more do I deny that the gaining knowledge justifies all means of gaining it. To begin with, proportion is forgotten. Suppose it capable of proof that by putting to death with hideous torment 3,000 horses you could

find out the real nature of some feverish symptom, I should say without the least hesitation that it would be unlawful to torture the 3,000 horses. There is no proportion between the end and the means. Next, the moment you touch *man*, it is admitted that the formula breaks down; no one doubts that to cut up a hundred men and women would enlarge the bounds of knowledge as to the human frame more speedily and far more widely than to torture a thousand dogs or ten thousand cats. It is obvious; but it was admitted over and over again that experiments on animals were suggestive only, not conclusive, as to the human subject. Especially is this the case with poisons; some of the deadliest of which do not appreciably affect some animals, and as to all of which it is admitted that it is not safe to argue from their effects on animals to their effects on man. As to man himself, it was not so long ago that medical men met with a passion of disavowal, what they regarded as an imputation, viz. the suggestion that experiments were tried on patients in hospitals. I assume the disavowal to be true; but why, if all pursuit of knowledge is lawful, should the imputation be resented? The moment you come to distinguish between animals and man, you consent to limit the pursuit of knowledge by considerations not scientific but moral; and it is bad logic and a mere *petitio principii* to assume (which is the very point at issue), that these considerations avail for man but do not for animals. I hope that morals may always be too much for logic; it is permissible to express a fear that some day logic may be too much for morals.

An interesting illustration of this remark has just been given. Mr. Jonathan Hutchinson, the senior surgeon to the London Hospital, has recently been reported in the *British Medical Journal*, as avowing to his pupils that in fact a patient "in a miserable condition" had (1) not been cured, by a Dr. Tom Robinson, who had him under treatment and might easily have cured him, in order that the students at the hospital might be witnesses of the case; and (2) had been kept in the hospital "for a few days before using the magician's wand, in order that all might see that there was no natural tendency to amelioration." If this had been correct, it would certainly have been a curious and convincing proof of the reasonableness of the fear I have expressed that logic might now and then prove too much for morals; for if this is not experimenting upon a human subject, and putting him to needless suffering, in order to demonstrate an already known fact, I do not know what is. But Mr. Hutchinson says he has been, like Dr. Klein, misunderstood and misreported. There is no more to be said; but it is to be hoped that the practices of scientific men may not be so far misconstrued by their pupils who see them, it seems their language is misunderstood by those who hear it and report it.

It comes to this, that the *necessity* for vivisection, in order to at-

tain the ends proposed, is not admitted by many persons of knowledge and authority; that its *practical* utility in alleviating human suffering, though not denied, is on the same authority said to be much exaggerated by those who practise or defend it; that even if it be admitted to be a means of gaining scientific knowledge, such knowledge is unlawful knowledge if it is pursued by means which are immoral; and that a disregard of all proportion between means and ends often makes both alike unlawful and indefensible. Meanwhile, if we turn to the other side, the positive evil engendered by the practice appears to me to be frightful. I do not speak only of the sufferings of the tortured brutes. To dwell on these might be called "screaming," and I have said that the amount and intensity of these, as described by the vivisectors themselves, is absolutely sickening. In this world of pain and sorrow surely the highest of God's creatures should not wilfully increase a sum which seems too great already. I seem to hear those voices, and that wail, which the verse of Virgil, at once tender and majestic, has ascribed to infants, but which may come also from creatures hardly inferior to infants in intelligence, and not at all inferior to them in their capacity to suffer.

> "Continuò auditæ voces, vagitus et ingens,
> Infantumque animæ flentes in limine primo,
> Quos dulcis vitæ exsortes, et ab ubere raptos,
> Abstulit atra dies et funere mersit acerbo."

Far worse I think in result are the practice and the principles on which it is defended upon the defenders and advocates of both. I should have expected this *à priori*. Where the infliction of pain is the special object of the experiment, where the power to endure it is the thing to be measured; nay, where the sensitiveness to pain and the liability to mortal or non-mortal injury of this or that organ, or set of organs, or nerves, or muscles is the matter of investigation, I should expect to find that a man who was an habitual vivisector, "an artist in vivisection," as M. de Cyon calls him, was one by nature callous to the sufferings of animals, or who in the course of these experiments had become so. Surely experience shows the justice of the expectation. Who, not a vivisector, can read without a shudder these papers in the *Nineteenth Century*, and Mr. Simon's address to the Medical Congress in 1881, a shudder at the utter and absolute indifference displayed to the terrible and widespread suffering which the practice the writers are defending entails upon helpless and harmless creatures? Yet who are these writers? Chosen men; bright examples (we are told) of the scientific class, persons whose names alone are to be arguments in their favour. If these men write thus, and it is incredible that merely as men of common sense they should affect an indifference they do not feel, what will be the temper of mind of the ordinary coarse, rough man, the common human being, neither better nor worse than his neighbours, of whom the bulk of

the medical profession, like the bulk of every other profession, is made up? What is the effect of the familiarity with cruelty in other cases; what was it in the Slave States? What was it in the days of slavery and gladiators in Rome? What was it in England a hundred years ago? What is it now in places and amongst persons where and amongst whom cruelty and brutality is not the exception but the rule? Natural laws are not suspended in the case of vivisectors; and I will mention an instance within my own experience which I am sure cannot offend, because I am certain the person cannot be known. Some time since I met in society a very eminent man, a man of very high character, and for whom, in common with most men, I have a very great respect. He is certainly not an habitual vivisector, but I believe he has occasionally vivisected. I left his company shocked and disturbed to a degree difficult to express; not from any particular thing he said, or any particular experiment he described, for he said little on the subject, and I think described nothing; but from the assumption that underlay his conversation, that we had no duties to the lower creatures when science was in question, and that the animal world was to a man of science like clay to the potter, or marble to the sculptor, to be crushed or carved at his will with no more reference to pain in animals than if they were clay or marble. Yet this was a most gifted man, a man but for the taint of vivisection every way admirable, but a man whom that taint had made (I feel sure in his case, owing to the blessed inconsistency of humanity, to the animal world only) cruel and heartless.

This is a question not to be decided by an array of names. I know that great men are not all on one side about it. But we have great men, and those surely not weak or effeminate, on ours. In the single volume written by Sir Arthur Helps, entitled *Animals and their Masters*, there will be found a collection of authorities on this point, as well as others cognate to it, which may well bring to a pause these gentlemen, venerable and otherwise, who are so smart upon us with their sneers and sarcasms. I will not quote Montaigne, though a man less sentimental never lived; for he is old, and may be said to write only in the general. But what is to be said of Jeremy Bentham? "The question is," says he, "not, can they reason, or can they speak, but can they suffer?" What of Voltaire, who has passage after passage of trenchant scorn for the vivisectors of the faithful dog? What of Sir Arthur Helps himself, who "has a perfect horror of vivisection; the very word makes his flesh creep"? But why multiply examples? It is not true that fools and women and children are on one side, and wise men on the other. It is not true that we are Pharisees, or fanatics and shams. We know what we are about, and we think that Parliament will be moved, if it is moved at all, not by calling names, but by facts and arguments.

Now what besides this somewhat ostentatious contempt is the argument of these gentlemen? So far as it depends upon their

frequent assertions of the practical value of vivisection, I have said already that I will not dispute with them as to the fact. A lawyer ought at any rate to know the folly of encountering an expert without the knowledge necessary for success in the conflict. I deny the practical conclusion sought to be drawn from it upon grounds of another sort which appear to me to be of overwhelming force, but which I will not repeat. There is, then, another line of argument which I am positively mortified to have to notice; it seems to me alike unworthy of the subject and of the men who use it. In substance it is this: it is hypocrisy, it is inconsistency, it is folly to attack vivisection, which, if it be cruel, is not more cruel than some, is not so cruel as many, sports or practices which all men follow, which you yourselves, the anti-vivisectors, either do not dare attack, or do not condemn. Then there is the inevitable Hudibras about "sins we have no mind to;" the equally inevitable Sydney Smith (distorted as inevitably from the context which made it sense), that all prohibitory acts contain principles of persecution; and so, because nature is cruel, because men are cruel, because there are hypocrites in the world, because the principle of prohibition may in some cases contain the principle of persecution—what then? why something which, *consistently with all this argument*, may be horribly cruel and utterly useless, is to be let alone. As argument, nothing can be feebler; but are these statements fair? I think certainly not. It is true that there is much cruelty in the world as to which some men are careless, but a great many more are ignorant, and which, if they knew more or thought more, they would not permit. I do not believe that the gentle ladies and refined gentlemen who subject their horses to cruel pain, day by day or year by year, by means of gag-bits and bearing-reins, have ever seriously thought, or perhaps really know, what they are doing. They have not read Sir Francis Head, or Sir Arthur Helps, or Mr. Flower; they have not thought about it; they are in bondage to their coachmen. A man, a woman, who deliberately tortures a noble animal as we see hundreds, perhaps thousands, carelessly and ignorantly tortured day by day in London, is, I freely admit, open to the taunts of Mr. Owen and Dr. Wilks.

So again I should suppose that the vast majority of persons who have white veal brought into their houses have never seen, as I have seen, a calf still living hung up in a butcher's shop. If they had, and if they knew the process by which veal is made white, I think better of my countrymen than to believe that they would bear to see it at their tables. Most men do not reflect; nay, most men do not know these things. If they do, and the knowledge makes no difference in their practice, I leave them to the tender mercies of the gentlemen of the *Nineteenth Century*.

As to the mutilation of horses and bulls I do not know how they manage in other countries, but I am quite sure that in this it is, if these animals are to be kept in numbers at all, a matter of sheer

necessity. If cruelty which can be prevented is used, it is wrong; and I at least do not defend it. Nor am I prepared to say that there is not much in our ordinary habits towards these and other animals which needs amending. But I think that Mr. Owen must be hard driven indeed if he can sincerely speak of mutilations "to enhance the charms of vocal music especially of the sacred kind," as things which his adversaries are interested, or are in consequence bound, to defend. I never heard of such a practice obtaining at any time in this country; and I imagine that his venerable age has led him for the moment to forget how long it is since it was tolerated even in the dominions of the Pope. Surely a man must be at his wits' end before he could gravely put forward such an argument as this in defence of a claim to vivisect by wholesale. If he is joking, I am sorry to say the humour has escaped me.

But sport? Well I am not ashamed to say that there are some sports which appear to me so cruel and so unmanly, that I wonder very much how any one can pleasure in them. Although in youth devoted to some kinds of manly exercise which inflicted pain only on myself, and not quite unskilled in them, I own that at no time has the slaughter of pigeons out of cages, or of half-tame pheasants driven in thousands by beaters across the muzzles of guns, or some other forms of fashionable amusement in which the whole point is the wholesale destruction of terrified and unresisting creatures, ever appeared to me to be very distinguishable from duck-hunting, or cat-baiting, or the slaughter of cocks and hens in a poultry-yard. A fox, an otter, a stag (a wild one), die game; there is skill, there is courage, sometimes there is even danger at the end or in the course of the hunt which explain the enthusiasm of those devoted to it; and which make even one not devoted to it doubt whether Dr. Johnson was quite as wise as usual in saying "that it was only the paucity of human pleasures which persuaded us ever to call hunting one of them." But a hare! Certainly if to hunt down with hounds and horses one poor timid, trembling creature be manly, I am content on this matter to be unmanly all my life.

I do not defend everything that is done in sport. One I knew, a brave and high-spirited man, a keen and successful sportsman, gave it up in the prime of life because he could not face the cruelty. Another, almost the manliest man I ever came across, one of the best shots and finest riders in England, with whom I had many talks on these matters, did not give it up, for it had become a second nature to him, but laid down and enforced a set of rules for his shooting parties which, as he said, at least "reduced pain to a minimum." These men may have been exceptions, but, depend on it, they were not alone. Yet I do not doubt that there is pain in sport; I do not question there is cruelty; if ever the general sentiment of mankind awakes to it I believe that either the cruelty will be indefinitely lessened, as it might be, or the sport itself put down, as bull-baiting

has been in England, tried in vain in France, in spite of the patronage of an Empress. I should think, however, that Sir James Paget greatly overstates the pains of animals like the otters, which die fighting in hot blood. Moreover, at the worst as a rule they die quickly, and they and their pains end together. The slow torture, the exquisite agony, the suffering inflicted with scientific accuracy up to the point at which the frame can bear it without death, these things are unknown to sport. At least and at lowest sportsmen do not intend them.

These are the deductions which I think a fair man would make from Sir James Paget's or Mr. Owen's facts. But grant them all, and what do they come to as an argument? I have already peremptorily denied that we defend or are indifferent to cruelty anywhere; and are we not to try to prevent one sort of cruelty which we can reach because there is much that we cannot? One can hardly suppose these gentlemen are in earnest. We are not to forbid larceny because there are many forms of dishonesty which the law cannot restrain; nor injury to life or limb from bodily violence because existence can be made miserable and life shortened by taunting, by temper, by a thousand means known to ingenious malignity and familiar to us all, which yet evade the law; not to punish rape because seduction, which may be more wicked, is dispunishable; not certain frauds and cheats, because a multitude of other frauds and cheats escape us. I waste time over such argument. Of two things, one—vivisection is right, and then there is an end of the matter; or, it is wrong. If it is wrong and can be prevented, it is none the less wrong, and ought none the less to be prevented, because other things are also wrong, but cannot be prevented, or cannot be prevented now. One thing at a time.

There is a sort of argument or mode of influence employed persistently on this question on which it is fit that I should say a word. The writers with whom I have been dealing, not content with the contumely they pour upon our "mature ignorance," "crude sentiments," and "pretences," are never tired of celebrating the moral and intellectual virtues of the men who agree with them. One man is "venerable," another "world famous," two more "most illustrious," and so forth. "The air broke into a mist with bells," says Mr. Browning; and it is well if the walls of our city do not tumble down and our own senses forsake us, with the blare of the trumpets which announce the arrival of each foe upon the field. But besides being surely a trifle weak, this trumpeting is nothing to the purpose. Why should a venerable osteologist, a world-famed naturalist, or a couple of most illustrious physicians, be any better judges than a man of average intellect, average education, and average fairness, when the question is what is the limit (it being I think certain that there *is* one) between lawful and unlawful knowledge, and lawful and unlawful means of gaining it; and what is the moral effect necessarily, or probably, according to the common facts of human nature, of a

certain course of practice? When the Factory Acts and the Mining Acts were passed, Parliament did not question the doctrines of the venerable Adam Smith, or the world-famous Mill, or the most illustrious Ricardo, but it decided that notwithstanding their doctrines, certain morally mischievous things, which could be prevented, should be.

I own I am not much moved by this appeal to authority. I remember the time when it was difficult even among cultivated men to get a hearing for the North, in the American civil war; and when the sympathies of society went with slavery. As far as I know the Church of England never raised a finger, and very few of its bishops ever raised a voice, to put down our own slave trade, or set free our own slaves. Sir Arthur Helps tells us, in the book already mentioned, that he never heard a single sermon, out of many hundreds he had attended, in which the duty of kindness to dumb animals had ever been alluded to. Yet amongst these preachers, or amongst the maintainers of slavery and the slave trade, were to be found I doubt not many who were venerable, some illustrious, a few world-famous.

Further, I have heard that the great Roman Communion holds that we have no duties to the animal creation; that it has been given to us in absolute subjection; that it is a Pagan view to hold otherwise; and that some clergymen sometimes deliberately bully animals before their pupils to show their despotic authority over them. I do not assert this; the name and known opinions of Cardinal Manning seem to show that at least it has never been so decided; but I have heard it on respectable evidence. If it be so, we must, with due responsibility, think and act for ourselves without authority, or, if need be, against it. But there is one authority, conclusive, no doubt, only to those who admit it, conclusive only to those who believe that they can read it, to which in conclusion I dare appeal. When a bishop in the Southern States had been defending slavery, he was asked what he thought our Lord would have said, what looks He who turned and looked upon St. Peter would have cast upon a slave mart in New Orleans, where husband was torn from wife, child from parent, and beautiful girls, with scarce a tinge of colour in them, were sold into prostitution. The answer of the bishop is not known, but I will venture on a kindred question. What would our Lord have said, what looks would He have bent, upon a chamber filled with "the unoffending creatures which He loves," dying under torture deliberately and intentionally inflicted, or kept alive to endure further torment, in pursuit of knowledge? Men must answer this question according to their consciences; and for any man to make himself in such a matter a rule for any other would be, I know, unspeakable presumption. But to any one who recognises the authority of our Lord, and who persuades himself that he sees which way that authority inclines, the mind of Christ must be the guide of life. "Shouldest thou not have had compassion upon these, even as I had pity on thee?" So He seems to me to say, and I shall act accordingly.

COLERIDGE.