

**STATEMENT OF THE SOCIETY FOR
THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS
LIABLE TO VIVISECTION: ON THE
REPORT OF THE ROYAL
COMMISSION ON VIVISECTION**

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VARIOUS

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PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS
LIABLE TO VIVISECTION,
1, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W. (Corner of Tothill Street).

1875.

SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS LIABLE TO VIVISECTION.

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. The Offices of the Society have been removed from 13, Granville Place (temporarily lent by Dr. Hoggan), to 1, Victoria Street, Westminster (corner of Tothill Street), within a few hundred yards of the Houses of Parliament.

By a Resolution of the Committee, the Subscription for Membership of the Society has been fixed at 10s., but it is hoped that larger Donations will be generally given. It is respectfully requested that all Contributions may be paid either at the Office of the Society as above (P. O. Orders made payable to the Clerk, Mr. William Jackson), or (Cheques only) to the Bankers of the Society, Messrs. Goslings and Sharpe, 19, Fleet Street, E.C.

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A Royal Commission was issued on the 22nd of June, 1875, of the following noblemen and gentlemen :

VISCOUNT CARDWELL,
LORD WINMARLEIGH,
RT. HON. W. E. FORSTER,
SIR JOHN BURGESS KARSLAKE,
Prof. THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY,
JOHN ERIC ERICHSEN, Esq.
RICHARD HOLT HUTTON, Esq.

The Commission was ordered :

"To inquire into the practice of subjecting live animals to experiments for scientific purposes, and to consider and report what measures, if any, it may be desirable to take in respect of any such practice."

The Report of the Commissioners, drawn up in accordance with the above command, is dated 8th January, 1876.

STATEMENT.

THE COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS LIABLE TO VIVISECTION have perused the REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON VIVISECTION, and proceed, according to their original undertaking, to offer to the Society an analysis of its leading contents. They are of opinion that the purport of the Report has been in some respects seriously misconstrued by the public, in consequence of certain imperfect accounts which first obtained circulation.

After receiving an immense mass of evidence, the Royal Commissioners have arrived unanimously at the conclusion, that the impetus given of recent years to practical physiological investigations, together with other reasons, justifies the public call for attention to the mode in which they are pursued. They remark :

“ We find that until a comparatively recent period physiology had been for some time past but little cultivated in this country, but that there has been of late years a great movement in advance. . . . It is the expectation of those most conversant with the subject that physiological investigations will more and more take place in connection with public institutions, and that an organized system of instruction in physiology will speedily become an important feature in scientific education. It is evident therefore that the number of experiments at present performed upon living animals can by no means be regarded as the limit of the number which we are called upon to include in our consideration, but that, on the contrary, we must assume that the experimental method is being rapidly developed.”

In considering the Recommendations to be submitted to the Queen, the Commission inquires whether Vivisections can be altogether prohibited. Its decision is :

“That such an enactment must inevitably lead, either to a general evasion of the law, or to an universal flight of medical and physiological investigators and students from the United Kingdom to foreign schools and laboratories, and that by this means the general treatment of animals in experiments would certainly not be altered for the better.”

Nor do they consider that, if possible, legislative prohibition would be reasonable. They refer to the benefits which medicine and surgery have received from discoveries made by such means, and draw from them the deduction, that whether we look to the possibility of cure, or to the probability of prevention of disease, they cannot recommend their total prohibition. Nevertheless, some legislative action on the subject appears necessary. They quote the opinion of Sir William Fergusson, Bart.—

“If the public really knew what was actually going on in this country at this time, they would expect an interference on the part of the Crown and Parliament, just as much as with reference to the dissecting of dead bodies years ago (1040);

and add the judgments—on the whole, in favour of some legislative measure—of many eminent surgeons and physiologists : Dr. Burdon Sanderson, Dr. Michael Foster, Dr. Gamgee, Sir Thomas Watson, Sir George Burrows, Sir James Paget, Dr. Haughton, and Professor Rolleston. The objections to legislation on the subject, they remark, proceed principally from persons who, like Mr. Lister, appear to consider that any interference of the law implies an imputation of cruelty against the gentlemen engaged in such investigations.

Independently of authority in favour of legislative interference, the Commission has felt itself called upon to recommend it “by reason of the thing.”

"It is manifest that the practice (of Vivisection) is from its nature liable to great abuse. . . . It is not to be doubted that inhumanity may be found in many persons of high position as physiologists. . . . That very severe experiments are constantly performed cannot be doubted by those who read the documentary evidence which has been laid before us, and the testimony of Dr. Walker and other witnesses, who speak from personal knowledge of the sufferings which, they say, have been often unnecessarily inflicted in the name of Science.* Dr. Anthony, who resides in the neighbourhood of Birmingham, told us that he is acquainted with instances of many men who carry on experiments in private houses from mere curiosity. . . . We have had some evidence that cases have arisen in which the unpractised student has taken upon himself in his private lodgings to expose animals to torture without anæsthetics." †

"Evidence of this nature," the Commission judiciously observes, "is not easily obtained," ‡ and proceeds to add :

"Besides the cases in which inhumanity exists, we are satisfied that there are others in which carelessness and indifference prevail to an extent sufficient to form a ground for legislative interference. . . . We have been much struck by the consideration that severe experiments have been engaged in for the purpose of establishing results which have been considered inadequate to justify that severity by persons of very competent authority. . . . It is, moreover, much to be regretted that a feeling of suspicion and even of abhorrence should have been permitted to grow up among a large and very estimable portion of the public against those who are devoted to the improvement of medicine and the advancement of science."

After reviewing these arguments, the Commissioners conclude, among other points, that "the infliction of severe and protracted agony is in any case to be avoided, and that the abuse of the practice (of Vivisection) by inhuman or unskilful persons—in short, the infliction upon animals of any unnece-

* See Appendix A. (Abuses.)

† See Appendix B. (Conduct of Students.)

‡ See Appendix C. (Difficulty of obtaining Evidence.)