

WILDER (B.G.)

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THE TWO KINDS OF VIVISECTION— SENTISECTION AND CALLISECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE MEDICAL RECORD.

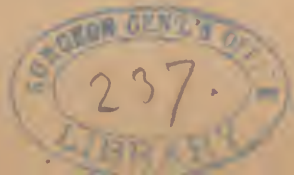
SIR:—Is it not time for the distinct verbal recognition of the difference between painful and painless experimentation upon animals?

All well-informed persons are aware that the vast majority of vivisections, in this country at least, are performed under the influence of anesthetics; but the enthusiastic zoölaters, who desire to abolish the objective method of teaching physiology, practically ignore this fact and dwell chiefly upon the comparatively infrequent operations which are attended with pain.

Having read the arguments upon both sides and had some correspondence with leaders of the anti-vivisection movement, I have been led to think that the discussion may be simplified, and a right conclusion sooner reached, if we adopt new terms corresponding to the two kinds of experimentation.

To use words with no warrant of ideas may be foolish, but it is not necessarily a mark of wisdom to refrain from the employment of terms which have a real significance.

Let us consider an analogous case. Aside from color and size, the *cat* and the *leopard* are almost identical, and are commonly regarded as two species of one genus. Suppose a community to be unacquainted with the cat, but to have suffered from the depredations of the leopard, which they call *felis*. Now, suppose some domestic cats to be introduced and to multiply as is their wont. In the first place, for a time at least, it is probable that the same name, *felis*, would be applied to the smaller animal, with perhaps a qualifying word. In the second place, should there be certain persons, both devoid of interest in the cats and filled with pity for the mice devoured by them, is it not likely that they would endeavor to include the cats under any ban which might be pronounced against the leopards? Would they not be apt to succeed, especially with the more ignorant and impressionable members of the community, so long as they could assert without contradiction that the "mouse-eater" was only a *felis* upon a smaller scale? Would not even the reputa-



tion of the leopards suffer by reason of the multitude of the cats thus associated with them? In short, would full justice be done to either animal until their differences of disposition should be admitted to outweigh their likeness of form and structure, and be recognized by the use of distinctive names?

In like manner there are those who ignorantly or wilfully persuade themselves and others that all experiments upon animals are painful because some of them are now, and most of them were in former times; also, that painful experiments are common because vivisection in some form is generally practised. It is all *vivisection*, and as such it is "cruel, revolting, or brutalizing."

Having waited long in the hope that some candid discussion of the whole subject might contain the needed terms, I venture to suggest that painful vivisection be known as *sentisection*, and painless vivisection as *callisection*. The etymology of the former word is obvious; the distinctive element of the latter is the Latin *callus*, which, in a derived sense, may denote a nervous condition unrecognized, strictly speaking, by the ancients.

Some idea of the relative numbers of callisectionists and sentisectionists may be gained from the fact that I have been teaching physiology in a university for twelve years, and for half that time in a medical school; yet I have never performed a sentisection, unless under that head should be included the drowning of cats, and the application of water at the temperature of 60 C. (140 F.), with the view to ascertain whether such treatment would be likely to succeed with human beings.

I think that even elementary physiological instruction is incomplete without callisection, but that sentisection should be the unwelcome prerogative of the very few whose natural and acquired powers of body and mind qualify them above others to determine what experiments should be done, to perform them properly, and to wisely interpret the results. Such men, deserving alike of the highest honor and the deepest pity, should exercise their solemn office not only unrestrained by law, but upheld by the general sentiment of the profession and the public.

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