

CAN ANIMALS REASON ?

FACTS ADDUCED TO PROVE THAT THEY CAN AND DO.

A PLEA FOR KINDNESS

In the Treatment and Care of Man's Dumb Servitors.

"Why every student of Veterinary medicine should study Psychology" was the title of the inaugural address by Mr. D. McEachran, F.R.C.V.S., at the meeting of the Society for the study of Comparative Psychology in connection with the Montreal Veterinary College. Principal McEachran spoke as follows.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—Your worthy president has invited me to say a few words to you to-night on this your first meeting for the present session, on the importance of the study of psychology in connection with the practice of your profession. "Psychology is the science of mind based upon the facts of consciousness." This science was first brought to public notice by Goclenius 1594, but it is only of very recent date that scientific men were bold enough to break down the barrier which would shut up the truth, and to come forward to declare that reasoning powers were not confined to man alone, but existed in degrees throughout the animal creation. Few men, I say, have been found bold enough to declare that reason and consciousness are attributes alike of mankind and the brute creation, and that the extraordinary evidences of intelligence which we are constantly witnessing are not due to instinct, but without doubt to that development of the mental faculties

which is nothing short of reasoning power, and which exists in different degrees, in different animals. As one of your teachers, I feel proud that my friend and colleague, Dr. Mills, has the honor of being the first to step out of the ranks of those who still attribute every evidence of reason to instinct; and in advance of his fellows he has founded this society, which, though it may have a small beginning, and may even be subject to the covert jeer and winking scoff from those whose narrow-minded and short-sighted intellects are incapable of grasping the importance of such a study, is sure to prosper. What more ennobling than the study of comparative psychology? Who can be cruel to the dumb companions of our earthly pilgrimage, after he has accustomed himself to look with interested attention on the evidences of reason and consciousness constantly exhibited by them? Who has studied the curious and intelligent actions of these dumb friends and has not been convinced that the difference between them and ourselves is one of degree only? I cannot do better here than quote for your edification from the late Dr. Chalmers, who in discussing the subject says:—

"The beasts of the field are not so many automata without sensation, and just so constructed as to give forth all the natural signs and expressions of it. Nature has not practised this universal deception upon our species.

"These poor animals just look, and tremble and give forth every indication of suffering as we do. Theirs is the distinct cry of pain—theirs is the unequivocal physiognomy of pain. They put on the same aspect of terror on the demonstration of a menaced blow. They exhibit the same distortion of agony after the infliction of it.