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Original Communications.

VIVISECTION.

BY MR. C. M. FOSTER.

(Read before the Toronto School of Medicine Medical Society,
16th Feb., 1883.)

Mr. President and Gentlemen:—Vivisection is not a subject which should require a lengthy or detailed introduction in a meeting like the present.

I propose to take up the subject simply in so far as it bears upon the practical details of our profession; my object being to show how intimate is the relation between experimental observations and practical medicine and surgery. That object will be fully accomplished if I am able to bring before you facts which will prove conclusively the position I have taken, viz., that vivisection forms one of the great foundations upon which rest the facts of the practical medicine and surgery of to-day. And, further, that the future of this, the greatest and noblest of the sciences, must depend greatly upon this method of research.

The relations which such methods of observation bear to the varied and numerous clinical details of hospital and private practice, whether surgical or medical, I take to be of considerable importance to every student of medicine, be he the experienced practitioner or the still unfledged "M.D."

Objections have been raised from time to time to the term Vivisection, as being not sufficiently comprehensive for the requirements of so wide a field of research. That which has been offered as a substitute, viz.,

"experimental physiology," may be accepted, I think, as fully meeting these requirements.

By it I do not include the performance of operations, simple and otherwise, upon living animals solely for the purpose of giving manual dexterity to the operator. This may, to a certain limited extent, and applied to special cases, be justifiable, but certainly not to the extent practised by the Alexandrian School, which numbered among its more illustrious members, Erasistratus and Herophilus; and still later in France, by Brachet, Magendie, and others.

Vivisection embraces operations upon living animals, made with the view of increasing our physiological knowledge, and establishing upon a firmer foundation every physiological principle which remains in any uncertainty. It also embraces experiments made for the purpose of ascertaining the action of drugs upon the different systems of the animal economy. In fact, any experiment which can in any way help us on to the ultimate object of Vivisection, viz., the saving and prolonging of human and animal life, and the alleviation of suffering, may be included under this title.

This broad field has formed, in years past, the battle-ground of repeated conflicts between light and darkness, science and ignorance; and in the future we may expect still more vigorous efforts on the part of the profession, to turn the tide of unreasoning popular prejudice, bearing in its foremost ranks some of the most prominent members of the legal profession, who,