

LIVING VS. DEAD

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Since Biology is the study of living things, it seems fitting that the living as well as the dead should find a place in a scientific workshop. Every laboratory worthy of the name has at least one aquarium but seldom is any other life found there.

Plenty of preserved specimens are found in the supply rooms and from them students may learn much regarding both the external and internal structure.

Where General Biology is taught the frog or the pig is frequently used. The latter is more valuable, though the frog is more frequently used. The reason is because of the heart of the pig. Should we dissect simply for dissection sake or should we do so the better to appreciate ourselves and our place in creation?

Why, may I ask, do most teachers rest satisfied with only lifeless material? The answer is obvious; they abhor the extra work necessitated by the presence of living animals who need care. The lifeless material needs only a place. Such living specimens as white rats, frogs, and birds need abodes where they can and will contentedly live. These need to be kept clean and that work falls to the teacher.

The teachers, therefore, protest against the housing of them in a laboratory; the students, on the contrary, enjoy them and can learn much concerning them. This first hand knowledge seems practical. Such a display enables students to compare animals with humans, teaching them to be grateful to their Creator for all they have which raises them to a higher level than the dumb animals before them. Man has been gifted with five senses, each of which, unless diseased, is keen. In the animal every sense is not equally keen. For instance, the white rats have been endowed with a keen sense of hearing and of smell but their sight is quite deficient. Watching such animals scent around for food ought to inspire any thinking student with gratitude that he is blessed with five senses equally keen and hence is superior to lower animals of the mammalian phylum.

Many, blinded by prejudice, are of the unchangeable opinion that animals are disease spreaders. Especially is the albino rat so condemned. Yes, rats are, but can not circumstances alter cases even in the brute creation? The common pest, the alley rat, lives among filth, eats filth, and seems contented only in filth. Usually, too, it is infested with fleas, the bite of which may prove disastrous to the human whom it may attack.

Is our tamed albino to be so catalogued? The white rat of the laboratory has or should have an abode that can be easily and daily cleaned. He favors cleanliness. He should be fed with proper food, including milk and lettuce. Rats that are given care will not wander far from their cage but will hover near to return to it when it is ready. Well-cared for rats are as playful as kittens when they are allowed to romp around the laboratory.

As teachers, it is our duty not only to present material but also to arouse interest in every possible way. Most educators will agree that the average student dreads the study of science. The secret of the teacher's success is in the manner of presentation.

What is there more interesting than life? Nothing, therefore, I hold that a well-equipped laboratory should have not only the essential preserved material that will tend to effective teaching but also live specimens. Proud should a teacher be who can proclaim that she has living in her laboratory one or more of each type of vertebrate.