

THE IMMORALITY OF THE ANTI-VIVISECTION MOVEMENT.

BY THE EDITOR.

COMPASSION with the suffering is a virtue ; indeed it is that virtue which in itself constitutes humaneness and which, wherever absent, changes a man into a brute, a wild beast of prey. Let us therefore by all means foster this gentlest of all virtues, which is the main jewel in the crowns of the two greatest religious leaders of the world—Jesus the Nazarene, and Gautama the Shâkyamuni. But compassion should not be allowed to grow rank ; compassion is a sentiment, and he who yields to sentiments without subjecting their exercise to criticism and discrimination, ceases to be a man of moral responsibility and degenerates into a creature of instinct. Compassion as a blind instinct is unquestionably a nobler fault than wrath, but as a passion it is a fault, it is sentimentalism, and its influence can become the more baneful the less its deficiencies are anticipated. Thus an untruth in the mouth of the erring who honestly believe it to be a truth may be more dangerous than an ethical falsehood pronounced by a liar.

The anti-vivisection movement, as it is carried on, is in this sense guilty of immorality, and we deem it our duty to state our views of the subject openly and frankly. We do not doubt that the anti-vivisectionists are noble men and women ensouled with the noblest of all virtues, compassion for the suffering, but they lack upon the whole the most essential of all virtues, which is thought, discrimination, discretion, consideration of consequences, a surveying of the situation and a weighing of the implications of the question as well as the results to which it leads.

Not to be misunderstood, the writer of this article states at once that he sanctions all those aspirations which tend to alleviate suffering of all kinds, in man and in animals, not excluding even

the insects and the vermin which molest our life. He would condemn all contrivances and traps which involve unnecessary pain or produce suffering; but for that reason he would not demand that we should not resist those creatures, be they small or great, that are pestiferous and obnoxious. There is no merit in sparing the life either of a tiger or a louse; but it is a vice to take delight in torturing a wild beast caught, and also in prolonging the death-struggle of a fly. It is our moral duty to resist evil, but we should not resist evil with evil. Let us combat evil and all the creatures representing evil in an honest and square fight, but having conquered them, let us not delight in their destruction, for even the meanest and most wretched creatures deserve our compassion; they are the products of circumstances and cannot help being such as they are. Being evil, they deserve destruction, but he who finds pleasure in serving as their executioner becomes vicious in exactly the same degree that he yields to the passion of hatred and vindictiveness.

Mark well that whenever a murderer is condemned to die, that the law must condemn him and not the judge. The judge only pronounces the judgment, and the executioner is an instrument of the law, not a murderer. A judge who hates the criminal is in his heart guilty of an offence similar to that for which the criminal is condemned. A true judge has a sorrowful heart, and great is his responsibility.

The two greatest religious leaders of mankind, Buddha and Christ, have taught us to have compassion, but neither the one nor the other prescribed to avoid once and for all the infliction of any suffering. On the contrary, they taught that suffering is unavoidable. Buddha did not say that salvation is obtained by yielding unreservedly to the sentiment of compassion; he taught salvation by enlightenment. The bodhi, or enlightenment, is higher even than compassion which implies that the compassion which we must exercise towards all suffering beings is subject to the discrimination afforded by the light of the bodhi. And Christ's mission is mainly a lesson of sacrifice which means that salvation is obtained through suffering. There is no sentimentalism in either case.

Among the Buddhist Jataka tales is the story of the sacrifice which the Bodhisat accomplishes in his incarnation as a hare for the sake of keeping by his flesh a starving Brahman alive who was engaged in religious contemplations. The story illustrates that it is the higher life which must be enhanced, not life in general. Life in itself is not sacred; it becomes sacred only when devoted to the

acquisition of a nobler, fuller, better phase of life. We therefore demur when in another Jataka tale we are informed that a Brahman gave himself up for food to a starving tiger.¹

Morality consists, religiously speaking, in doing the will of God ; or simply, in performing the duties of life ; that is to say, in achieving that which according to the nature of the universe in which we live raises us higher, renders us nobler, and extends the sphere of our power.

The word "we," in this connexion, does not mean our corporeal individuality ; it means that spiritual part of ourselves which constitutes our personal character as it lives and grows in the evolution of mankind. It means that peculiar form of endeavor in us which we have received from the past, both by inheritance and acquisition ; that part of ourselves which does not die at the dissolution of our body but continues after us,—in a word, it means our soul, and morality is what promotes growth of soul. Thus the characteristic and most essential feature of morality is not the increase of the happiness of our fleeting individuality, of our self, the temporary abode of our soul ; but it is the extension of our good will to all that is good, based upon the acquisition of a clearer and ever clearer insight—a heartfelt insight—into the nature of the interrelations of all things, especially of all living beings.

If we call the conditions of being to which we must accommodate ourselves, in other words the ultimate authority of conduct (of whatever nature it may be) "God," and if we define the recognition of these conditions of existence as the essence of religious "truth," (which are two popular terms that can easily be understood), then we say that morality is an endeavor to find the truth and live according to its behests, or briefly, it is conformity to God.

Immorality is all that which antagonises morality, and there can be no question about it that self-indulgence is the main,—nay, the sole cause of going astray. Self-indulgence is yielding to passions, and passions are sentiments of high tension.

Self-indulgence may either be from ignorance, in which case it appears excusable without, however, escaping thereby its evil con-

¹ There is, however, a possible interpretation of this Jataka tale, which would justify its moral. First, we must recognise that the tigress, according to the story, is starving with her cubs ; and the Brahman sees in her the mother sacrificing herself for her children. Secondly, the Jatakas are written in the spirit and style of fables. As the lion represents a king, and not a beast of prey, so the tigress must be regarded as the widow of a noble Kshatrya family. When the Brahman gives himself up for food, the meaning is simply that he sacrifices himself for her ; he assists her and keeps her starving progeny alive by means that are ruinous to himself, and this is expressed in the usual fable style. If we take fables literally, we will find them all nonsensical and ridiculous.

sequences, or it may be consciously willed. All the wild beasts and creatures lower than man suffer from ignorance by blindly following their appetites, and wherever they exhibit moral qualities, they rather happen to strike the right than choose it deliberately. Man alone possesses the prerogative of either being a consciously-willed evil-doer or becoming a truly ethical man—a morally enlightened being.

Now we ought to bear in mind that the moral man should never yield without previous deliberation to a sentiment or passion of any kind, not even to the gentlest and noblest, such as charity, compassion, love. Be full of charity, compassion, and love, but do not yield at once to every gentle motion of your heart, for your charity may be misplaced and your love may do more harm than good.

A noble zeal for truth was the original motive that begot the Inquisition ; and a genuinely charitable spirit has pampered pauperism in Italy and other good Christian countries.

Therefore we must beware of yielding to sentiment, for every kind of yielding to sentiment is self-indulgence and will be productive of good by haphazard only in the same way that an animal may perform a moral deed if his disposition at a certain moment happens to be excited in the right way.

The anti-vivisection movement we cannot help regarding as such thoughtless yielding to sentiment. The sentiment is noble and evinces a gentle disposition of the heart, but whether it is moral, whether it is right, whether it leads mankind upward is another question ; and it appears to us that it cannot stand a careful weighing of all the pros and cons. Before the tribunal of ethics it stands condemned as much as all those other sentimental aspirations, indiscriminate alms-giving, the burning of the bodies of heretics for the sake of saving their souls, and showing mercy to the tiger because he ought to have a chance of reforming and might learn to eat cabbage and grass like a lamb.

This life is a struggle and only the courageous will conquer. Courageous is he who does not fear to leave his body on the battlefield in order that his aspirations, his cause, his soul may be victorious. But shall we be courageous only so far as our own individuality is concerned ; must not the leader in battle have courage for the whole army. Indeed, he must. Victory is gained only by sacrifices, by the wounds of the gallant, by the death of the brave.

Count Moltke had his own sons in the ranks of the German army, and he was a man of the gentlest disposition, kind, compas-

sionate, and taking pity even upon the sufferings of a dog. Yet for a great purpose he was determined to make any sacrifice that was necessary to achieve it, and he said that "a whole regiment of soldiers had fulfilled its purpose if at a critical moment they were all slaughtered for the sake of delaying the enemy ten minutes."

Where the fate of a nation is at stake, the individual must be ready to lay down his life, and it is the duty of those who are appointed to watch over the weal of the nation to stake the lives of the present generation for the sake of a nobler and higher unfoldment of the future.

As to vivisection, we all know that it is not a pleasant duty of the physiologist, but it is an indispensable task that must be done for the sake of investigation. It falls within the same category with all sacrifices. Should science neglect to search for light in this most important domain, the domain of life, its representatives would be guilty of a gross neglect of duty. They would be like generals who would retreat before the enemy, because the enemy's bullets endanger the lives of their soldiers. They would be like an officer in the fire department who, inspired by the idea of not causing pain to anybody, would recall his men from the burning building when they ought to rescue its inmates, because the firemen might blister their hands.

Vivisection may truly have, and frequently will have, the tendency of blunting the sentiments of the vivisector; but so does dissection. Shall we surrender dissection as an obligatory part of medical instruction lest the moral sense of the student be shocked? There are a few quack schools of medicine in this country which undertake to educate physicians, but their degrees should not be recognised, for they leave their graduates ignorant on one, perhaps on several, most important subjects. It is true enough that the human body in its wretched nakedness is subjected on the dissection-table to most undignified treatment, which is liable to make the student vulgar and rude; but for that reason we cannot abandon dissection. The right thing to do is to teach the student the moral aspect of dissection and put him on his guard against the demoralising influence of the dissection table. Do not cut him off from one of the best sources of information, but strengthen his moral nerve that he can bear the view of the Medusa without having his heart petrified by the sight of her terribly ugly features.

The present number of *The Open Court* contains an article by Peter Rosegger on the subject which ought to be read by every medical student in the country. Peter Rosegger proposes as an

antidote for the demoralising influence of the dissecting-room the following prayer, to be spoken by the dissector whenever he begins the ghastly work—so indispensable in the study of medicine :

“Thou dear, fortunate dead man! While the most of thy kind must be given over to the earth straightway, thou art chosen to be useful to men even in death! Through thy remains, before they turn to ashes, the flames of knowledge and intelligence will be kindled, of power and performance for the common weal, so that from thee, thou dead body, new life shall pass into the limbs of the sick. Thou art chosen to contribute to the welfare of humanity. I honor thee!”

The anti-vivisection movement might be excusable if there were any valid arguments to prove that vivisection is useless. But the very opposite is the case. Innumerable discoveries of the most beneficent kind have been made through experiments on animals.

An anti-vivisectionist writes that he would rather die than purchase the prolongation of his life with the sacrifice of an innocent animal. That sentiment seems noble and generous. But should we not be ready to kill a million rabbits if we can thereby save the life of one child attacked with diphtheria? Now the question is not one child against a million rabbits; but many millions of children of all the generations to come against a few hundred rabbits; and consider that not man alone but the whole animal creation, too, is the gainer by every progress of science.

It is not our intention to enter here into a detailed discussion of the anti-vivisection movement, but suffice it to say that many publications of the anti-vivisectionists are guilty of gross exaggerations as to the number of the victims of vivisection and the cruelties to which the dissected animals are exposed. The truth is that all the great scientists who are famous as clever vivisectors are as considerate as possible and avoid all unnecessary suffering. It is of course not exactly impossible that there are among the minor lights of science men ruthless enough to delight in the cruelty of their work, but it is very improbable. I believe that it is painful to vivisectors to be reminded of the fact that their subject is a living being; but whenever they think of it, they cannot help being touched by a sentiment of compassion.

Every compassion is a pain. While the anti-vivisectionist weakly indulges in his sentiment and thoughtlessly yields to the impulse of removing it, the investigator knows that the victim is sacrificed for a great purpose, and he can say to the rabbit on the table before him: “Blessed art thou, poor creature; thou art distinguished among thy comrades and glorious is the destiny for which thou hast been chosen. While most other animals die of direful

diseases, frequently under terrible pains, thou shalt give thy life for science; for the sake of revealing the mysteries of existence and for the purpose of giving us instruction as to how some of the ills that flesh is heir to may be cured. Blessed art thou; for thy death helps to build up life, and the preservation of lives of many noble men and women will in part be due to thee. In them and with them thou wilt gain an immortality of a noble kind, which in the same way is otherwise not granted to the brute creation."

There is a great field for the humane societies¹ and they can do a noble work by elevating mankind and refining its sentiments, and also by protecting the dumb creation against the cruelty of savage masters. We are with them in all these worthy endeavors with heart and soul. In addition they may set their face against any kind of vivisection performed by those not called upon, but when they begin to meddle with science and forbid the physiologist to investigate life in the living animal, it is time to pronounce the *quousque*.

Vivisection, *if strictly kept within the limits of its important purpose*, is a moral obligation; and he who would hinder the physiologist in the performance of his duties makes himself guilty of immoral conduct; but any cruelty to animals, viz., every lack of respect for life, every thoughtless or wilful infliction of pain, every delight taken in torturing, injuring, or destroying sentient beings, is a crime that should be denounced and reprimanded and, if necessary, checked by the power of law.

¹ We Americans are greatly plagued with flies in summer and most houses are protected by fly-paper. It would be a good work if the humane societies, taking pity on the poor little captives whose feet are caught in the tanglefoot glue, would provide us with other means to dispose of these small, but troublesome and disease-spreading enemies.

There is a fly-trap used in Germany which is made of glass and looks very much like a broad water caraffe with neck and stopper, standing on three short legs. Its bottom is open at the middle, and the walls of the orifice rise so as to form a circular basin, which is filled with alcohol. A little granulated sugar is placed underneath to attract the flies who never fail to come, and as they always fly upwards after having partaken of their sweet repast, they pass at once into the glass trap above where they are slowly but pleasantly affected by the smell of alcohol until in a state of perfect intoxication they lose control of their limbs and fall into the liquid at the bottom in which they drown without struggle. The only objection to this innovation would be the indignation of our temperance societies when they see that we lend our help to make our fellow creatures drunk.