

Selected Article.

The Immorality of the Anti-vivisection Movement.

BY DR. PAUL CARUS.

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 Shakyamuni. 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