

of hold on goodness which we have witnessed. But in estimating the effect of a persistent cause, we must ask, not for the exceptional cases, but for the common effects. For one case where pain has produced selfishness I see a hundred where it has produced generosity. It is the inherited sin, and not the suffering, which deteriorates the nature.

Now, we do not forget that the process of making that is going on in the world is twofold. The individual is being made at the same time that the races of men and of all living things are being matured and developed.

It therefore ought to throw light on the question if we ask what has pain done for me personally? Physically it has been a warning note, telling where mischief lurked; mentally it has nerved to effort, it has strangely trained our spirits; it has in a wonderful way multiplied our capacity for sympathy, the very weakness of it has brought us into touch with God and man. We see in others what extraordinary beauties it reveals. In the Welsh railway accident last June, a party of ordinary Sunday-school trippers developed sudden heroism. A little boy of ten begged that his mother might not be told how badly he was hurt. A girl with a broken leg and fractured thigh said gently, "Go and see to others." A man enclosed in wreckage held a candle aloft for two hours while his comrades were being dug out.

As I have now been writing a curious thing has happened. A lovely delicate prismatic reflection from a piece of pottery became visible directly a shadow fell upon the sheet of paper. In the light it disappeared, but in the shadow there it lay, exquisite, enchanting.

As we turn from the individual to the masses our hearts fail, I know, and we cease to expect the same compensations or training or results. We think of the horses and mules in Spain and Italy tortured needlessly for centuries. We think with anguish of the sixty thousand massacred Armenians. Or we find ourselves in the midst of an Indian famine, the people suffering in millions, the earth and sky pitiless, the faces of old and young worn to the last point of endurance, patient but hopeless. What does pain do for all these? Can we believe that God cares?

Remember, He is not man, limited, soon exhausted with numbers. His capacity for caring, for realising units, is simply infinite. No idea of God is rational which limits His intellect and will; and this will we hold to be love—love which led Him to give Himself to face pain and humiliation, and be the greatest sufferer of all in permitting and enduring His creatures' pain.

In His life on earth, our Lord was against misery just as He was against sin, and He always removed it as soon as He could. People often merely told Him something was wrong, and knew that when it was in His hands it would sooner or later be set right.

This is our comfort with regard to the suffering of animals. He is against it; He would have us exert ourselves to end it. The animal creation suffers because it shares our nature and our lot. The compensations may some day be one of those surprises that far more than satisfy us.

"It is sooth that sin is the cause of all this pain, but all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well."*

"Truth for ever on a scaffold,
Wrong for ever on the throne;
Yet that scaffold sways the future,
And behind the dim unknown
Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own."†

* Mother Juliana of Norwich.
† Whittier.

There is no reason to think, from the point of view, that each one of those Armenian victims was not remembered and dealt with as you and I feel we have been dealt with in our sorrows. In every place where there was a massacre in Armenia, there has also been a revival of true spiritual religion. If the results of this Indian famine are to be in any degree a drawing together of races, an improvement of village life, especially by abolishing the fatal power of the money-lender, future generations will bless those who suffered and helped to bring deliverance. Great awakenings seem to ask great prices of pain. The slave-trade was not found an intolerable disgrace till its wrongs were endured and realised.

But there is perhaps a farther extension in the interdependence of creation. How do we know what the effect of the events in this world may be upon the rest of the universe?

The matter is shrouded in mystery. We are told of Job, an honest, brave, good man, who, for some cause utterly unaccountable to himself, suffered long and cruelly. In the end he opened his eyes upon the unseen, and was satisfied; but he never knew—what we know—that wonderful beings belonging to another sphere were looking on and being taught lessons, that they never would have learnt without watching that struggle, to be absolutely faithful in weakness and pain and loss.

How, then, shall we face the pain of the world? First with hope. Remember, the pain belongs to a condition of things that is passing away. He who rules is against the sin, but He is also heart and soul against the misery. He suffers more than we do in the long struggle of deliverance, but the end is sure. The promise is certain that the whole creation will be set free. Therefore let our hope never for one instant fail.

But then we must face it too with willingness—a willingness that can freely trust that infinite power of caring for each living unit of creation. Here, as elsewhere, the path of obedience is the path of insight. A world such as this without suffering would become far more hopelessly sad than anything we have yet seen. "What should we sinful creatures be, if there were no pain?" asks an old saint. We must be willing to meet all our own share of disappointment, and all the possible troubles of those we love, trusting not in any present deliverance, but only in the depths of the character of Him who is over all.

That was a beautiful story of the two sisters. The strong, capable, younger one was suddenly disabled by an accident and taken to a hospital; the weak, incapable invalid was left at home alone. My friend found the younger sister constantly repeating to herself the 23rd Psalm, altering the pronouns to suit it to her sister; "The Lord is her shepherd, therefore she can lack nothing. He shall feed her in a green pasture, and lead her forth beside the waters of comfort."

There is scarcely a more perfect instance of the way in which such trust has been justified than that recorded in the last entry of Captain Allen Gardiner's diary. He had gone in 1850 on a mission to the heathen inhabitants of Patagonia. After a year's labour, among immense difficulties, he and his five companions were starved to death at Spanish Harbour. Their remains were found some time after, and pencil notes in a journal. The last ran thus: "Great and marvellous are the loving-kindnesses of my gracious God unto me. He has preserved me hitherto, and for four days, although without bodily food, without any feelings of hunger or thirst."

And then—and this is a very noteworthy point—we must face the pain of the world with a resolute choice and determination not

to spend our lives doubting. "Whenever we stand in front of a mystery which we cannot read, whether of nature, history or experience, we have to choose whether we will still believe in Christ and through Him in the Father, shutting our eyes to every contradiction; or whether we will believe in the contradiction and shut our eyes to the face of Christ. One or the other we must put our trust in, one or the other we must ignore. . . . Shall we trust in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, His Father and our Father? or shall we trust in the powers of Doubt, Denial and Darkness,—the riddles of nature, of history and of experience?"

We do not suppose that belief is in itself a matter of will—it is primarily a matter of reasonable evidence; but when we have to balance the reasons for and against the trust in an Unseen righteous Person, we are wise to give immense weight to the truth that the one solution that lies like a clear sky behind the mystery and conflict, is that of a Father who is patiently restoring an immense and complicated living creation.

This bracing of the soul has a most definite effect. Miss Frances Power Cobbe tells in her autobiography how as a girl she lost all hope in an unseen holy Being, and was filled with despair; when one day the thought stirred within her, could she not rise up, live actively up to the right, and good she still held to, so that if there were a God, He would approve? From that time she prayed again, and faith in God returned. "Act as though you believed," came as a voice from the unseen to another, known to many of us here, who, hearing it, obeyed and found assurance.

And lastly, set to work. Plunge into the flames and save some one. Run into the waves and throw a rope to the wreck. Brooding over the mysteries of suffering and doing nothing demoralises our whole nature.

Professor Rendel Harris, who said that he went reluctantly to see if he could help the Armenians in their awful distress, told us that he went a pessimist and returned an optimist. As soon as we begin to try to clear away the injustice and misery and wrong, we begin to understand, to hope, to glow with the warm touch of responding hope and love; and to our astonishment, we gradually see that after all joy and light and colour are the predominating things, and not sorrow and darkness and gloom.

For that is the truth. Life, and not death, is what wins and conquers and endures:

"The poet king is great and glad."*

Sick people and sad people turn instinctively to the cheerful, bright friend, and not to the mournful one.

We, who are weak and strained with effort, are far too apt to concentrate our attention on the griefs and wrongs that are crying for redress, and we let ourselves forget that happiness is the evident intention of creation. An observant happy person can add in a hundred little ways daily to the comfort and welfare of the living things he comes near. Do not let the shadow of brooding gloom come over you: "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." One who knew the end of suffering said, with assurance: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Yes, and that means that "sorrow is the very stuff joy is made of."

A day will come when we shall thank God that He laid our lot and that of all the beings we long to help, in this still young world of strife and mystery, of happiness and of growth, and, as Dr. Vaughan calls it, of opportunity and wonder.

* E. B. Browning.