

Brother Pain and his Crown.

Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them . . . and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.—Rev. xxi. 3.

"What a dreadful thing pain is," is a phrase that comes to me from all sides, and I am bound to use all my skill to hasten its departure.



And yet sometimes I hear a divine whisper which gives a kind of blessing to the groans of the sufferer, and I recognise, in the grip of the fiery fiend of agony, the gentle hand clasp of my dear "Brother Pain."

Ah, Brother Pain, Brother Pain, teach me your lesson gently and leave me not com-

fortless in the sharp hour of your first coming!

Teach me, oh Brother Pain, *in tua absentia*, to speak of thee justly and to tell of thy good deeds truly. May I, too, remember the same when thou comest to me thyself.

Grant, kindly Father-Mother, that when my stricken servants send in sad messages that the outposts are seized and that a locust host is rolling up in all the lust of conquest; and when the vantage ground is taken and hot bolts are pouring deadly carnage into the very citadel, and the howling savagery and butchery shut out all sounds of psalmody, that I may still rest in that perfect love that knows no fear.

The Benediction of Pain!

How can pain either be blessed or bring blessing? Surely such talk is mere hypocrisy—pain can only be spoken of as a curse and as bringing malediction!

Pain comes as a great Warner. Pain comes as a great Teacher. Pain is the Penalty of Cruelty. Pain comes as a Delusive Evil. Pain comes to crown the brow of all Saviours.

Pain the Warner, the Finger-post, the Guide, the kindly voice that warns and keeps us in the narrow path.

People are daily running towards the sloughs and morasses of physical and mental and spiritual destruction; and happy are those who are turned back in time by the sentry call of pain.

There is written on a great tomb in Jeypur: "I never saw a man lost on a straight road"; and it is to keep us on that straight road that Brother Pain places his soldiers at the corners of many a bye path in which men might get lost.

"Keep me in the straight Way" is our prayer, and Brother Pain not only says "Amen" to our prayers, but offers us his best help to enable us to fulfil our aspirations.

Were it not for the warning voice of pain, we should be always putting our fingers in the fire, and getting our best members destroyed by carelessness.

Blessed be pain which warns us off the danger-land and keeps us in the narrow way.

If I had the power to-morrow to destroy the barbed wire which lines the pathway to heaven and to give

every one the freedom to straggle hither and thither where they would, and to be lost how and when they listed, I should be a traitor to myself and to God if I were to do so.

It would be like removing the holly hedge which separates the cliff road from the great precipice, and like taking away the rails from round a baby's cot because their cramping chafes his little spirit.

Sad, indeed is the fate of those who have found a loop-hole in life's hedges where pain has not yet been set, and who find themselves far gone into the loneliness of the distant night ere they are conscious of their danger.

Blessed be thy guardian care, oh Brother Pain! May thy sharp sentinel challenge me roughly whenever I come to the wrong turning that leads to Sodom or that which, devious and pleasant to the eye, ends in the burning pits of Gomorrha.

Pain the Teacher.

We can picture to ourselves all sorts of ways in which the world could be carried on. We often think we could improve on the present method.

Perhaps we could, for some of us are wonderfully clever—in talking.

Of all the experiments that have been tried, however, by the clever people to make men improve and keep good on lines which they thought better than Kosmic ones, I have known none to succeed.

There are plenty of clever people left who are excellent at criticising God and His Methods, and there are plenty of men and women and children who are far from perfect yet, so that the clever people can still go on trying their brand new methods—and if only they would try their hand at a little practical character building on their own lives, they would do less harm to other people and certainly do more good to themselves than by resting satisfied as arm-chair critics of God.

For me, at any rate, I am bound to own that when I hurt my head every time I bump it against a wall, I learn in time to lose my childish longings to run full tilt against every obstruction I see.

Whether we like it or not, whether we approve of it or not, whether we think we could improve on it or not, we are bound to confess that pain is a potent schoolmaster.

I take it for granted that peace and joy and pleasure are things we all long for and aspire eventually to obtain.

We call the place "Heaven" where we shall at length get this exquisite, ideal life.

Why this is not heaven here is because there are a number of people who interfere with our rest, and who cut us off from our joy, and who spoil our pleasure.

They, perhaps, say the same about us, but we for our part are willing to confess that this world is a very good world, and that it is *the people in it* who make it so miserable.

That is to say—we think it is *the other people*, and the other people think it is through *us* that the trouble comes.

At any rate this thing is clear, that if we all went to Heaven as we are, we should soon say of Heaven, as we say of Earth, that "Heaven is all right, but it is *the people in it* who are so unsatisfactory."

Some people will have to change therefore before Heaven can be reached.

When we analyse the causes of people interfering with our joy and our peace and our pleasure, we find that all worries and all weariness arise from what are called "Vices"—lust, hatred, cupidity, selfishness and the like.

And when we own up, we have to admit that traces of these vices exist even in ourselves.

The only difference being that in *other* people we call them vices; in ourselves we call them *weaknesses* or perhaps *temptations*.

Whatever we *call* them, they have to be purged away before Heaven is possible.

How can this be done? Brother Pain is a great teacher. I am tempted and fall and suffer pain. Again I am tempted, and again I fall, and again I suffer more pain.

After a while I learn that pain follows this particular indulgence.

After a while the memory of the pain becomes so fixed in my consciousness that I lose even my wish for the pleasure. That which was once a temptation too great to conquer is now well within the power of control.

Nay, at times the memory of the pain has burnt itself so deeply in, that what was once a temptation is a temptation now no longer, and the man walks harmless and unallured amongst those meretricious attractions which once used to draw him away from his ideals.

Thus it is that as men grow older they grow less criminal.

The statistics of crime prove most powerfully the influence of Brother Pain for good.

However vicious may have been our inclinations in our heyday of youth, we "sober down" to more virtuous habits after years of buffetings for every transgression that we commit, from the stern myrmidons of our Brother Pain.

Oh, Brother Pain, blessed Brother, how faithfully dost thou teach men that it is better to be good than evil.

There are many of us who want to be good. There are many who seem unable to learn virtue from any other schoolmaster than pain.

Blessed be pain which never fails to teach that goodness brings its own reward by proving how hard is the pathway of transgressors.

Hail to thee, great Master! Deal gently with our ignorance; be kindly to our weakness, but, and if all softer methods fail, sting us with the fiery talons of thy wrath, so only that thou leave us not to die in the outer courts of destruction.

The Purging Flame. Isaiah saw the vision and grasped its meaning and then taught us for all time the mystery of Brother Pain who can burn out our evil passions and sear the very stump so thoroughly that we shall never more be tempted by the things which now are leading us astray.

Isaiah had lips which had been fouled by words of insincerity and which were subject to the temptations of weak humanity, and when the beautiful message of God was given to him to proclaim, he felt his own unworthiness, he knew that his lips were unfit to speak the holy name of God, and upon his soul there rushed in like a tide the consciousness of his own temptations.

"Woe is me" said poor Isaiah, "for I am undone,

because I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

Then came Brother Pain the purifier, and Isaiah watched him flying in his beauteous garb of holy seraphim unto the altar of blazing coals, and his soul shrank from the coming ordeal.

And Brother Pain took the live coal from off the altar with tongs, and bore it burning and fiery and searing in its heat and pressed it against the lips of the prophet.

And with a childlike faith he bore his agony and endured his cross, and when the fulness of the burning was accomplished and the function of the pain fulfilled he heard the explanation of the mystery of his sufferings.

"So," said the great Elder Brother, "this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged!"

Oh, beautiful Brother Pain, I would pray thee to come into my life also and to bring the blazing coal from the altar and to sear out my foul spots and burn away my corruptions.

Unto me, then, perchance at the close of my sufferings and of my torments there shall come the gracious words of pardon:

"Thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin is purged."

Pain the Penalty of Cruelty.

Pain is a scientific necessity. So long as pain be wantonly inflicted, so long must pain be suffered.

The dominion of pain as pain will never be terminated and the transformation of Brother Pain into Brother Joy will never be accomplished so long as wanton cruelty is perpetuated.

Here am I, a weak human creature going on my knees and whining and begging God to spare me pain.

Here am I, an arrogant little tin god, going out with scalpel and gun and knife, and claiming that, as lord of creation, I have the right to inflict what pain I please upon my lower fellow creatures.

And yet there is ever before me that beautiful parable of the Master.

There was a servant who fell on his knees and prayed his Master to forgive him his debt because he could not pay. And his Master forgave him.

And this servant went and played the tyrant to his fellow servant and seized him by the throat and shook him and swore that since he owed the money, the poor wretch should pay it.

"I am," he said, "the creditor. You are the debtor. You owe me the money. It is only just and right that you should pay it. Pay it therefore you shall."

But his lord thought differently.

"The mercy," he argued, "which I have shown to you, should have been an example for you to follow. I forgave you a large debt because you asked me. Why, then, did you stand on your rights? Why did you not forgive your debtor his little debt when he pitifully besought you?"

And he delivered the little tyrant over to Brother Pain that he might learn that the most beautiful of all Charters of Rights is the Right to give up your rights at the bidding of Mercy.

Teach me, kindly Father, the deep lesson of this parable of the Master.

Unto the sons of men hast thou granted a pardon. In thine infinite power Thou hadst the right of life and death, of spiritual torture and eternal damnation over them; but Thy loving mercy gave them joy and rest, instead of pain and agony, offered them freedom in place of prison, nurture in place of neglect, liberty in place of bondage, sonship in place of servitude, and heaven in place of hell.

And then man rises up from the stool of pardon and turns round upon the lowly cringing creation to whom he is as a god, and with a loud and arrogant voice selfishly points to himself and says:—

"My stomach calls for your dead bodies, go and kill yourselves that I may eat you up."

"My nerves and muscles want exercise and tone, go and dance the dance of death before me that I may shoot you as you gambol."

"My illnesses want your vitality to heal them, go and lie in the vivisector's hell that by your diseases and manglings I may escape the penalties of my misdeeds."

"Though you cry to me with ten thousand pitiful tongues I will not hear you. My stomach likes your cooked-up bodies and my stomach has no ears to hear with, and its bowels are not those of compassion."

"You may sob from byre and bleat from shippon, you may groan from cattleship and mourn from lonely stalls, you may bellow from abattoir and shriek from blood-stained slaughter-house, you may agonize and die in your thousands and in your tens of thousands, but I will not hear you."

"My stomach likes the flavour of savoury meat and I should miss it if I didn't have it, so, cost what it may in blood and agony, I like my meat and I intend to have it!"

And while the meat was in their mouths the wrath of God was kindled against them and ten thousand died of a murrain at Kibroth Hataaveh!

And to-day and yet again to-day the wrath of God is kindled against those who cry for mercy but will show none, and into the prison-house of Brother Pain he delivers them to learn the lesson of self-sacrifice.

They are those who will eat a beefsteak though the poor ox suffered ever so, but who will for all time abstain from beef if they find it gives them indigestion!

Brother Pain, potent indeed are thy powers to sway men, whether they will it or not.



Butchery, Blood sports, Vivisection, these are three great habits of Cruelty whereby man forgets to grant that mercy which himself implores.

Of these the greatest of all is Butchery, because it is so supremely and personally selfish.

Until man has learnt those lessons of self-sacrifice and mercy, which God is ever teaching, there will be no end to the dominion of Brother Pain.

If I inflict pain selfishly and wantonly upon the lower creation to which I am as God, then will my prayers for ease from pain remain unheard, and the great Lord whose servant I am must needs hand me over to the prison house of Brother Pain to learn my lessons.

So long as pain is being wantonly inflicted—however we may shut our eyes that they do not see the sad sights of slaughter, and close our ears that they do not hear the dire sounds of butchery—so long will pain have to be suffered!



The Passing of Pain. It is no wanton sport of God that the world of human life is fraught all through with pain and suffering. It is a grim scientific necessity laid down for the welfare of the race, and is as inexorable as Fate.

But when the Golden Age has come, and when man has gone back to the beautiful garden of God, wherein God fed him on the fruits of the garden, there will be a scientific reason why pain should lessen and why the punitive work of Brother Pain should draw near its ending.

In the Book of the Revelation of St. John this is foreshadowed—"There shall be no more pain"—and their food shall be the fruit of the twelve trees of the garden of God!

Ah, Brother Pain, Brother Pain, teach us to be merciful towards our little brothers of the field and the farm "that we may bring no pain into their realm, nor wantonly break the golden bowls of life, but may help every gentle creature to live in gracious fulfilment of its own life's mystery."

It is not necessary for health or happiness to eat their dead bodies. Let us, then, spare them their torture agony, and let us, then, for Mercy's sake take instead "the kindly fruits of the earth," and our own pain shall be lessened.

It is not necessary for enjoyment or development that we use our little gentle brothers and dainty sisters of lower form as living targets to mangle and to kill.

Let us, then, abstain from all blood sports over gentle creatures, for the sake of the Holy Saints of God who have set us the example, and we, too, shall lose our day of terror and of blood.

It is not necessary for our health or for the victory over disease that we should dissect and inoculate and torture unto the uttermost those sweet cousins of ours in fur and feathers whose only protection is their cloak of innocence and their only defence the panoply of helplessness.

Let us, then, abstain from vivisection for the sake of the gentle Jesus who was born into the manger of an animal and whose earthly life was made possible by the kindly hospitality and self-given food of the mother cow.

The Christian has for far too long hammered in the heads of those mild-eyed kine whose ancestors gave life and home and shelter to the infant Jesus.

The Hindoo for countless ages has elected to go short himself rather than grudge a handful of food to the sacred cow—sacred because it is to him a type of motherhood and creatorship—a giver of milk from itself—a giver of food to the hungry and of life to him who is dying of want.

And so when man has learned that the harvest of Cruelty sown is pain reaped, he will no longer sow his seed of Cruelty.

When man has learned to do towards the creation below him what he asks God to do to him, then, indeed, will the whip of Brother Pain fall from his hand, and the prison gates of his realm will be thrown open for ever, and the whole dungeon depths of his woe will be swept away, and the grim castles of his power will be razed to the ground . . . and the field of Ardath shall grow up there and the rose garden of Sharon shall cast its fragrance over what has now become the fair land of Brother Joy.

May the coming of Brother Joy be hastened.



The Overcoming of Pain.

What seems to be pain is often but the shadow of suffering and not the thing itself.

When I operate upon some internal structure I find that it is the cutting through the skin which causes the acute sensation.

Pain is largely a physiological sensation of the skin and of the extremities, and he who lives on the surface of himself feels the most pain.

To those who live high up in their supreme self there is no pain.

Who has not heard of the blessed martyrs embracing the stake and singing sweet hymns of praise to God the while that their flesh was roasting and their limbs were crackling with the heat. To them there was no agony, and the face of Brother Pain was as the bright face of an angel.

Stand beside the swinging hooks of an Indian fakir and hear him chanting his sacred shâster to Ram the Creator while the iron is eating into his flesh.

From West to farthest East the same message is found—that men may live in their higher self whereunto pain may never come.

Live in your finger-tips, and every cold wind freezes you and every sun-ray scorches.

Live in your deep central citadel and all the blasts of Creation may blow their cheeks out, but you will be safe from their fury. All the fires of Hell may play against you, but you will walk like Daniel amid the flames and be unhurt.

Live in your superficial self, where things are unreal and where the petty cares of life loom large, as if they were of importance, and you will ever feel the grip of pain and the heartache of his dominion.

But take your passport and leave this land. Retire into the sweet solemn chamber of the sacred self, climb up into the sanctuary of the highest within, and pain hath no dominion there.

Practice daily drawing away from the allurements of the members and from the attractions of the bodily sensations.

Here alone is the realm of pain. Strive to get deeper down and higher up and nearer and still nearer to the centre; and by so far as you succeed in entering the sweet paradise of the blessed Sanctuary of the Soul, by so far will you be withdrawn from the power of pain.

To those who will there will be no pain.

The Crown of Suffering.

And, lastly, the Crown of the blessed Saviour comes in through the mystery of pain.

If I would take up the rôle of a humble follower of the great Master, I, too, must consciously bear the pain of others.

The world is full of groanings and of sighings which cannot be uttered. The chambers of death are charnel-houses of agony.

With a fearful shuddering we hear of the long-drawn sufferings of some poor soul, and we pitifully thank God that we are spared such torture.

But to those who will, there is the privilege offered of entering the sad prison gates and bearing some of the stripes.

The sacred law has been proclaimed on earth. The soul that sins shall suffer.

The sacred remedy has been sent down from Heaven; The soul that wills to win the seats of God must bear some of the sufferings that others have merited.

Think of the hallowed joys of motherhood, one long trailing glory of the sacrifice of the self that others may suffer less.

The child puts its hand in the fire.

The law of Nature demands that it shall suffer pain.

The law of God allows that this pain may be borne in part by a voluntary and innocent victim.

The mother holds the child upon her breast, and all the live-long night she tramps the floor with clapping, crooning lullaby.

Had the child been left alone it would have suffered more, but now the mother stills its cries and lessens its sad pain by her own suffering.

Oh, Brother Pain, thrice blessed. Gate-keeper of Paradise. Let me clasp thy rugged cheeks and press thy hallowed thorns upon my brow, for in thee and through thee do I enter the hidden gateway of Heaven.

Joy, holy joy, is mine, which none can take away, when I go down to the damned and put my tongue upon the burning flame, so that some poor broken soul may have a moment's respite from his torture.

Joy, holy joy, is mine, which none can diminish, when I take upon my own shoulders the burden which is breaking the back of some sin-stained brother.

The Cross was once the emblem of thy curse, but it has now been sanctified. Let me clasp it to my bosom and realize its benediction.

Not my pain, for that is worthless to count.

But let me take up the pain of others and let me clasp thy knees, dear Brother Pain, when thou art pouring out thy chastening vials upon some other sinner, and let me suffer a little for others as thy Master and mine has suffered much for me.

So shall I see him whom my soul loveth—and He shall teach me the mystery of why the face of dear Brother Pain has so long been wreathed in sorrow, and why his crown has been minished all these long ages.

Though I know not now, yet am I content to trust, for I know in whom I have believed, and I know that in His hands the sharpest of pain's arrows has its ministration of good.

Joshua Oldfield.

This article, with additions, is being reprinted as an artistic gift book. Price Sixpence.

A Petition.

Give us the fond and wholesome joys
Of home and friends and tender ties;
Yet if too much of sweetness cloy,
And pleasure unmolested dies,
Give us our meed of pain and woe—
The soul needs shade at times to grow.
Make us content with what we have,
But discontent with what we are.
The boat that's anchored in the sand
Goes not beyond the harbour bar.
Give us the courage to break free
And find what we can do, and be.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox.