

## ARTICLE II.

## THE ECONOMY OF PAIN.

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*[Concluded from page 487.]*

## FOR HUMAN INFLICTION OF PAIN, THE ONLY CURATIVE TREATMENT IS MORAL.

ALTHOUGH the cases in which we can directly trace individual pain to personal misconduct may be only the minority, yet it appears from the foregoing remarks that there may be an indefinitely large class of sufferings which have their antecedents in the ever-accumulating total of human misconduct at large. And here should be specially noticed the vast amount of gratuitous suffering caused to men by men, with a more or less clear foresight of the consequences. Of wide-spread sufferings caused by purely human agency, destructive wars may be taken as the standing type, although slave-hunting and all the desolating tyrannies of savagery should also be noted. These, again, often concur with natural agencies of destruction, as seen in the famines and pestilences often arising from war. Now of this gratuitous infliction by man on man, the known remedial agencies are exclusively moral. Such are the purifying of the passions, the setting before men worthier or less immoral objects, the development of the affections, the growth of the moral sense, and the stimulus given to some of these by various religions, but to all these means by Christianity above all religions. Now the fact that for so large a class of sufferings only moral remedies are possible, is a further strong confirmation of the moral aspect and disciplinary uses which we have ascribed to pain. Nay more, the fact that even wars have often concentrated and called out the higher energies of a nation or

race, and thus given them a moral elevation which they had not before, is a testimony to the same thing.

EXCEPTIONAL CHARACTER OF SUFFERERS WHOSE PAIN IS  
INTENSE.

And we may now turn to consider, by way of contrast to some foregoing strictures on supposed emendations of the moral scheme, the results of the distribution of pain, unequal and not calculable beforehand, nor individually to be accounted for afterwards—in short, promiscuous, as regards antecedents and especially moral deserts, as we in fact find it to be. Just as the results of an equal pain-tax all round, whether light or heavy, were found to be either absurd to the verge of the ludicrous, or else a serious *propaganda* of selfishness and isolation; so, on the other hand, the concentration of pain in comparatively rare cases, but with massive proportions and impressive tenacity, enforces attention to the derangement, whether physical or moral, of which it forms a permanent evidence. And further, the absence of any obvious reason in many cases why the individual afflicted should be thus selected to suffer, stamps such cases with a mystery which makes them ineffably impressive. Pain is indeed measured out in every degree of either intensity or duration, up to the maximum at which it absorbs all the interests of life, shortens the life which it thus usurps and burdens, and becomes a superior and dominating power under the stress of which all slighter things, all the mere conventions of life, give way. Every one is compelled to be in earnest in the presence of such pain. Its intense reality sobers or scares away all superficial triflers. It leads to nothing, and seems to be an end in itself, and thus to stand in awful possession of the whole area of being. The man seems to live for pain, and the more unaccountable his doom the more overwhelming the spectacle. This gives to every such sufferer in proportion to the heaviness of his burden a character exceptional and in his own social circle emphatically unique. His passiveness fixes their minds

more than the activities of others, and lifts him into a higher sphere while yet among them and taxing their services, and something of awe mingles with the compassion with which he is regarded.

Most of the remarks in this and various preceding sections apply not only to pain itself, but to the morbid mischief which pain attests. The inequality of distribution with all its consequences, applies to this mischief as much as to pain, its outward symbol in sensation. And so some following sections, in which the vicarious character of pain is noticed, should be taken to include the same character in that mischief, often inward and subtle, and in itself unimpressive, however real, but which through pain becomes expressive. Both alike are in fact the complex attestation of that moral corruption in the race with which the next sections following deal. Only the limitations of my subject lead me to fasten exclusively on the translation of the morbid energy through the nerves and their centres into pain; but for which the severest affliction would be a mere dumb-show of inarticulate endurance.

#### THE MYSTERY OF EVIL IN MAN A KEY TO THE MYSTERY OF PAIN.

And here comes in the sense of human corruption amidst the spectacle of human suffering. However much and however necessarily professional attendants may become fixed upon their offices of ministry, and therefore so absorbed in attention and action that they have little scope for reflection, yet it seems certain that by such contemplation of woe, bewildering though it be, reflection is promoted. The apparent prostration of all the energies of life and subversion of its uses lead to the thought that there must be some higher use behind. The conviction comes naturally to all minds not tainted by pessimistic views, that there must be, inexplicable as the paradox seems, a *reason why* such suffering should be. And having exhausted the reasons for pain in the physical and mental spheres, we must seek our "reason why" for this apparent surplus in the moral sphere.

Suppose, then, an answer were attempted to be given in the moral sphere—"the 'reason why' is to stimulate our otherwise defective sympathies, and to uphold the principle of altruism." Now, I think this answer, however it might approve itself to our feelings, would give scant satisfaction to our reason; since by concentrating sympathies on the extraordinary and the exceptional, it would lead us to reserve them for such cases; and, instead of promoting "altruism" as a general principle, would tend rather to narrow its range. I am not saying that the answer would be untrue, but that it would be insufficient—not ample enough, by reason of the reserve and narrowing tendency by which it would be attended. Nor would the weight of the answer be much mended, if to it were added as a reason, the development of patience and fortitude in the sufferer; unless, indeed, there were any special reason to think him exceptionally defective in those virtues. But if we once are filled with a sense of default and delinquency wide as human nature itself, and assume that the vindication of this is the "reason why" for our paradoxical spectacle of pain, we seem to have a *dignus vindice nodus*. For evil in man is a fact of overwhelming power, leaving a taint in human nature everywhere, and needing a *fortiori* something overwhelming to enforce it as a lesson, because the acknowledgment of it is feeble in proportion as its diffusion is wide. Human vices shock us only when enormous, or when turned against ourselves. But this inbred corruption, the protoplasm out of which they are all moulded, because diffused everywhere, strikes no contrast and challenges no observation, and therefore needs an abiding witness. And as a witness on this behalf nothing is so powerful as otherwise unaccountable pain. Thus the mystery of evil is a key to the mystery of pain in man.

PAIN ATTESTS MAN'S MORAL CORRUPTION MORE POWERFULLY  
WHEN UNITED WITH MORAL EXCELLENCY IN THE  
SUFFERER.

And as a witness to this corruption is of all others most needed, so no witness so intensely and emphatically impressive

can be given as this of pain, often amounting to a life-long decay, and often allotted, not only apart from all moral desert but apparently against it. Take the case of "Sister Dora," dying of cancer after a life spent to gray-hairs in the most self-devoted service to the pains of others; or that of the Spanish priest Damien who lived for and among the lepers in their island, until his own life was gnawed away by the loathsome *scabies* to the victims of which he ministered. If there be a corruption which is shared, in however variable degrees, by *all*, and is the root of all the wickedness which embitters humanity, then on any who share that humanity may fall the lot of bearing witness to the common bane. If that common bane be an admitted fact, the incidence of the attesting pain, wherever it may fall, cannot be misplaced, if it fall on any in whom the fact is found. And it is evident that the more emphatic the testimony given, the more signally it serves this all-important branch of the moral economy. Now, what can make such testimony so awfully emphatic as a character of self-devoted heroism previously established in the sufferer? It seems to proclaim the need of the most impressive of all possible attestations, as a cogent and indefeasible necessity, when even lives of such priceless value are not exempt from the tax of that sacrifice. Such hero-victims have their burden to bear, not because they deserve it most, but because they can bear it best, *i. e.*, most effectively for the purpose. That burden is a testimony, and it is no strain on language to call them martyrs. On the contrary, if that universal bane be denied, and human beings viewed as started without such let or hindrance in the race of "altruism," it becomes enormously difficult to account for the *non*-exemption of those whose "altruism" already reaches the highest degree known to humanity.

WHOLESOME RESULTS OF THE ALLOTMENT OF PAIN AS WE  
SEE IT.

It was shown that to make moral desert regulative of pain would annul probation—indeed that to couple the two would

tend to mankind's attempting to stamp out vice and pain together (page 479), in which case neither vice nor pain could have its proper remedial treatment and its due share in that probation. And it may be added that vice would thus tend to be lost in pain, the latter acting so directly as it does on our sensitive organism the former by comparison so languidly on our moral. And thus, whereas now in the physical and in the moral sphere pain and vice both alike attest, while one embodies, the corruption of man, the remarkable effect of making one follow and penalize the other (so captivating a result to the superficial moralist) would be to efface the attestation of both alike, and yet to leave that corruption lurking like a secret poison in the constitution of the quasi-virtuous, and thus hopelessly to infect virtue herself. As it is, the virus is made to strike out, like a well-defined malady with pronounced symptoms, in the form of vice, leaving the universal human system more healthy on the whole. And thus pain, by being often dissociated from vice and even individually united with exemplary virtue, is made to give the most affecting and tremendous testimony to moral corruption, to make probation possible and consistent, and to reinforce virtue on the whole. Indeed it is probable that under such conditions that attestation and this reinforcement reach their maximum with a minimum expenditure, so to speak, of pain.

THE RESULT, A MAXIMUM OF DISCIPLINE WITH A MINIMUM OF SUFFERING.

For as it has, I conceive, been shown (pages 474-481) that to penalize vice wholesale by pain as a natural consequence, would defeat the moral economy; so the greatest efficacy of attestation is wrung from pain under the present system. And in this way a few painful examples go a long way. How great an increase in the *quantum* of pain, as an attesting power, among mankind, might be needed to produce the same effect, if these exquisite examples, of blameless and relatively excellent lives bowed down with anguish,

were nowhere extant among us, it is impossible to say. But it seems plain that the increase must be considerable. As suffering, by being concentrated, gains in attesting power, and by diffusion loses, so a few examples comparatively, and that wholly without reference to the moral character of the sufferers, suffice to embody the testimony needed. But then again, among these relatively few examples, a still more select few, who are signal examples of acknowledged human excellence, are burdened with pain, and still more intensify the attestation. Thus we seem to see "wheel within wheel" of merciful minimization, concentrating on the few and thereby making effectual for its object that which, if multiplied in amount a thousand-fold and distributed equally among the many, would be ineffectual, or would fall at least far short of its present efficiency. Nay, we have seen reasons for thinking that it would, so distributed, have a demoralizing influence, and be a pernicious and not merely a gratuitous infliction. In short, the system which we experience seems to economize pain to the utmost, and at the same time to realize a *multum in parvo*—a moral *multum* in a physical *parvo*. It is like the instinct of the bee which leads her to construct her cells, not triangular nor four-square, but hexagonal, gaining thereby the maximum of capacity for the minimum of expended material. The examples of wisdom and goodness match and confirm one another—a goodness which shrinks from a profuse expenditure of suffering and becomes a divine economy, in the physical sphere and in the moral,—worthy, one may say again, of One who "does not willingly afflict."

THIS SUGGESTS FUTURE RETRIBUTION AS A POSSIBLE REALITY.

And this fits exactly into, and so far confirms, the belief of a future moral retribution to individuals. By that retribution being postponed, probation is made possible, and pain meanwhile made to minister to it in various ways, but chiefly perhaps by the testimony to human corruption which it maintains. For a lively sense of that corruption in us is one

of the greatest stimulants to moral efforts and self-discipline which our nature can receive.

Now, while the human race and the societies in which it is grouped form a continuous area, is the time for pain to exercise its disciplinal power. Thus a moral career is left open and a moral character determined in each human unit which helps to constitute that race. And upon such units pain, when become fully retributive, may finally operate, if its disciplinal efficacy was exerted in vain. Hereafter, supposing the continuity of the race to be then resolved into its constituent units with characters determined, will be the turn for the retributive energies of pain to have full effect. Pain must be in a great degree promiscuous *now*, if it is to be fully retributive *then*. Thus its promiscuousness is a sort of earnest of those future retributive energies. But meanwhile you cannot wholly moralize pain without utterly demoralizing man.

RETRIBUTION, INTENSITY AND PERPETUITY OF PAIN MAY HEREAFTER BE UNITED.

And yet it is in a certain degree individually retributive even in the present. Perhaps it is so as far as is safe, consistently with the other more important intermediate interest which it serves. And the reason why it is so partially retributive may probably be, to remind us that it can become completely and exhaustively so, when the intermediate objects are fulfilled and probation completed. Thus, as in the physical sphere, so in the moral, a danger signal is kept constantly hoisted. And although the most formidable excesses of pain may now be as often witnessed in worthy as in unworthy characters; yet our moral sense suggests that that is an accidental derangement of the moral order caused by moral evil and the needful probation under it. And so, as we plainly see both the retributive power of pain in a small degree and the intensity of anguish in a high degree, reflection suggests that it is possible that these may be united when the process of all probation is complete and the result thereof

realized. For they seem now only dissociated, as said before, by accidents and temporary causes. And further we see the duration of pain prolonged through sometimes the greater part of a human lifetime, there being a great moral end to serve by it. And, further, we see pains which were strictly retributive in him whom they first assailed, continuing in his heirs and successors sometimes for generations. And this suggests the possibility of the prolongation of pain without limit when provided with an organism on which it may fix its hold. Thus we have even in this life a glimpse of retribution, of intensity and possible perpetuity of pain. And thus we are warned of the possible future union of all these three.

PAIN THUS AN ABIDING CHARACTERISTIC OF MORAL GOVERNMENT.

And indeed, so far as analogies of the present can guide us in estimating the future, these characteristics of pain in the present constitute a serious and awful warning of the formidable resources of the Power (*unknown to us*, the agnostics will have it, but that does not touch my argument by a hair's-breadth), which seems to dispense pains in this life. And the fact of such moral government as we see being so largely carried on by pain, and indeed of pain being in every sphere, physical, mental and moral, a principal and indispensable agency, may surely be intended to warn us, that pain, like all the moral qualities which it has disciplined meanwhile, may find a still ampler sphere in whatever future state awaits those creatures who are capable of such state. Without pain the education of the world would be impossible, but when that education is done it does not follow that the office of pain will be ended. May it not rather be only then fully realized?

AND THE PRESUMPTIONS SEEM ALL IN FAVOR OF ITS CONTINUANCE.

And as pain, to whatever extent retributive now, becomes so through natural agency, so it may be then. The moral

government (whether personal or not, for I leave that question open), extending itself now into the physical sphere, may no less do so hereafter, and avail itself of physical surroundings as a basis of pain. And, however science may extend the remedial alleviations which are possible now, even supposing them able to achieve the extinction of pain in this life, yet it is science concurring with merciful dispositions. And how far those merciful dispositions may be necessarily limited to this state of probation, we cannot say. But we can plainly see that they are proper to a state of probation, in a way in which they are not to its results when established, supposed to include retribution as an absolute rule. And we must remember that it is equally as possible for science to be applied to aggravate pain as to mitigate it. And plainly the whole presumption arising from the large employment of pain in this life with wholesome results on the whole, is not in favor of but against its entire extinction in a future state; which state, if it solves the mixture of good and evil, retribution and warning, which prevails now, may probably also prove a solvent of pain from the remedies and alleviations which now temper its incidence. But, assuming the personality of a Moral Governor, we know his character, unless so far as it is declared by revelation, only from that of his government, which plainly includes pain among its resources, and may, for aught we know, carry over a "surplus of pain" into a future state.

#### THE FEW BEAR THE BURDEN OF THE MANY.

On the view above suggested, the pain-tax due from the human race at large, as a deodand on its moral corruption, is from motives of economy levied in fact upon a few only. It is plain that on this view the few bear the burden of the many. The load is so heavy that it bears some of them wholly down, and absorbs all the interests of life in the one sad and mysterious duty of bearing through pain their appointed witness to the taint of depravity in all. It was shown above (page 586) that such sufferers have an excep-

tional and unique character among their fellow-men; but how much more intense this character becomes when we recognize the fact that their suffering is vicarious—borne *for* their fellow-men! The life-long clinic bears his burden in effect for you and me and many more. The average depravity which all share, is the measure of our interest in his pain, which, because he suffers, we escape. His suffering is the condition of our escaping that which is due from each of us as fully as from him. It is as if life contained so many penal lots of variously graduated suffering up to the maximum possible, intermixed with blanks of acquittance. For the few on whom falls the maximum lot or some high figure in the *cadre*, a hundred or a thousand have a nominal share or go scot-free. The immunity of these latter is purchased at the expense of the former. The plague-spot of our common taint breaks forth in its afflicting power upon them, and leaves us physically scatheless. Because “they are bowed down and fallen,” therefore “we are risen and stand upright.” It is a common warfare in which they purchase our discharge. If there be a moral Disposer of events, he is making use of their afflictions to benefit us—to enrich us at their expense at once with the physical exemption and the moral lesson. We ask ourselves, “Why should this be?” and, as between us and the sufferers, we can find no reason why; unless, indeed, in the rarest of rare cases, where the lot of suffering lights on the hero-dovotees of self-sacrifice, as mentioned above (page 589).

#### WHAT ACKNOWLEDGMENT IS DUE FOR EXEMPTION SO GAINED?

There are few perhaps so dead to reflection and so bent on living purely for self, whom such examples will not move to gratitude. For indeed the law of pain thus considered not merely stimulates gratitude to the highest pitch, but enriches human life with a mystery in whose presence we hold our breath with awe. The sufferer is invested with a halo of reverence, and raised to an elevation moral as well as physical, which makes him belong almost to a higher sphere of

existence, as realizing intensely a substantial verity which is not of this world, and of which the shadow only falls upon ourselves. In that higher sphere the physical and moral entities intertwine their roots, and in such a sufferer their secret relations seem personified and incarnate. The plague-spot of suffering becomes to him a seal of a moral patent of nobility conveying the superior blessedness of pain endured for others' benefits. The dark outline of these profiles of vicarious pain is thrown upon an illuminated disc, and the gloom of these beds of anguish draws a moral glory round it. But, above all, their sufferings form a bond of sympathy on the part of all whose lot is so light because theirs is so heavy. What acknowledgment on our part for so unmerited a privilege can be too great? They "minister to us in" higher "things, is it a great matter if they reap our" lower "things?" A selfish neglect of them has the dimensions of a moral enormity, a sin against nature.

#### PAIN BECOMES A BOND OF BROTHERLY SYMPATHY.

It seems to me impossible to conceive a greater change in the aspect and conditions of the whole question than that which these considerations import into it. Pain which, equally distributed, would isolate, as we have seen (page 475), now becomes a tie of brotherhood. All that can be done to minimize that suffering in itself, we are bound to do, not only for the sake of physical alleviation, but of the moral balm of fellow-feeling, the tenderest and most soothing of all. Nor is it easy to exaggerate the impression of wisdom and goodness combined, which this dispensation of pain leaves on the student of human nature—one which interweaves with disciplinal power the fast-clinging sympathies of gratitude and succor, and wrings from the scourge which most appalls us by its infliction a sovereign balm to moralize humanity. As regards the sufferer, such considerations are likely to promote patience and ripen a type of character profound and intense in its power of teaching by example, as well as purified and ennobled in itself. Of course there will

be cases of a querulous and fretful, or an obdurate and sullen type, and some of angry and exacting selfishness; for inbred corruption will produce according to its kind, although modified by the conditions under which it works. I must leave to those who have opportunities of observing any estimate of the proportion which such cases bear to others. Under any law of distribution the proportion of such cases would probably be no less. But is it not plain that under the opposite system of *equal* distribution we should all become some one of these, or each of them in turn, if the burden laid on all were heavy, and perhaps cynically careless, if it were light? Whilst the temptation to unrestricted indulgence at such times as we were free, by way of recompense for the infliction, would probably prevail with most, and turn pain to a discipline of licentiousness. In short, the system of unequal and apparently arbitrary distribution, seems not only the one alone capable of carrying a moral purpose, but the one which raises it to the highest possible level.

BUT ANY MAY BE CALLED TO THE LOT OF SUFFERING.

And at the same time those who escape have no guarantee of security. Our exemption, if we are exempt under this law, is not absolute. The office of vicarious suffering which exalts by humiliation may come in turn to any. *Hodie tibi cras mihi* may be verified any day. When we are least expecting it, the lot may be changed, the burning arrow may light on us, and kindle "a fire in the bones" at any moment. It may then be ours to lie down and rise up with pain, or to wrestle prostrate day and night with it. And thus, among the lessons in which pain is fertile, that of humility chastening presumptuous assurance is one. No doubt there are those whom philosophy is able to arm with resignation, patience, and fortitude, even under such a great and sudden change. But of this I will speak further on.

THE TEACHING POWER OF CONSPICUOUS EXAMPLES OF PAIN.

The guiding and typical example followed in the above remarks has been that of protracted and painful sickness or

the prostrating result of some shock of accident. But other forms of suffering revolve more or less round the same point of origin, in orbit concentric or eccentric, as it may happen, and approach the same general law. And whatever the special form of the affliction may be, if it falls on one morally unblemished and in human eyes worthy of escaping, or if it produce greater purity of character by its chastening effects on him, the more intense becomes the moral power with which it appeals to those who witness it. One such I myself knew, who united talents of a high order to indomitable perseverance, although clogged and overweighted by a sickly frame, which for the last ten years of his life made him dependent on others for the most ordinary locomotion, and which accumulated malady upon malady to paralyze and afflict him. Always ready to exert himself when the pains relaxed, to resign himself when they overwhelmed him, he struggled on, bright with hope and courage to the last—the most instructive and pathetic example of which it was ever my lot to feel the influence. There will of course be some too obdurate in sceptical cynicism to appreciate the lesson, or to find in such a spectacle anything but an occasion of cavil. But on the average mind, sensible of the average emotions of humanity, such examples of suffering will impress themselves with an urgency and plead with a stress of persuasion more eloquent than all the exhortations of philosophy, as the reflection matures itself—“That undeserving sufferer bears this for me.”

THE PROVINCE OF PHILOSOPHY, AND OF RELIGION WHERE PHILOSOPHY FAILS.

The philosophy which can support a sudden change from the energies of health to privation and pain requires a robustness of the moral fibre and a reserve of mental resources only to be found among the few. To fortify the weak and “make strength perfect in weakness,” to raise the timid nature which shrinks from the ordeal of pain, to the level or above the level of philosophy, is the special privilege of reli-

gion, as casting the creature expressly upon the same Power which afflicts as the source of consolation also, and drawing closer the ties which unite the two. And of all religions probably none has been so fruitful in such resources as Christianity, taking it merely as one of the aspects which the relations of man as a spiritual being to some thing or some One above him assume. I have written hitherto with a studied indifference to all such questions, and have not even assumed the personality of a Supreme Being, and to all of whatever creed, or indeed of none, I submit the foregoing argument, without prejudice arising from any form of belief and without offence to any. But my office would be incompletely done, as attempting the interpretation of pain, if I forebore to point out further the special bearing of the foregoing upon great further questions.

THE ECONOMY OF PAIN IS THUS AN ARGUMENT FOR NATURAL RELIGION.

It will be found that, although the above considerations do not postulate a Moral Governor of the universe, they harmonize with that notion, and fit into the conditions which it implies. Metaphysicians may reason one another blind to facts upon the argumentative necessity of supposing the Absolute and the impossibility of knowing or approaching it or him. But the moral government—or system, to use a more neutral term—of the universe goes on as if it were ordered by wisdom and goodness in a very high degree, one sufficient to comprehend subordinate, and combine the many complications and divergencies of things physical, intellectual, and moral. Some affect to regard the universe as a mere display of power. They might as well regard the whole spectrum as containing only one primary color. The facts which we experience and the laws under which they seem to our apprehension grouped, prove wisdom and goodness at least as plainly as they prove power. And we reason from the facts to the qualities or character, as completely and as effectively,

as if we were discussing the policy of ancient Rome, and demonstrating there the lower wisdom which combines with selfishness. In the case, however, of ancient Rome we have our person or persons historically attested, and thus independent of our argument, in the august personality of the *S. P. Q. R.* In the present case we have the qualities of wisdom and goodness, and on them the personality depends as an inference. We can only understand them as seated in a person, not in a cosmogony, or a chaos, or a vortex. Therefore, when the facts point to qualities, and the qualities form a personal character, the facts may be said to point to a person. And those who recognize that all the facts of existence are *as if* a Person presided over the world, and who, therefore, conduct themselves as if there were a Person so presiding, are keeping touch with nature far more closely than those who roam the maze of metaphysics in quest of the Absolute. Under what mental conditions we can identify that Person with the Absolute, we may possibly in some future stage have faculties to decide. Meanwhile, the facts of existence being as they are, we follow their clue in safety, feeling it probable or more that on the further side of this earthly state there will still be facts of existence among which we must take our place, and from the incidence of which a recognition of the impossibility of relations with the Absolute will no more shelter us than it does at present. Accordingly the economy of pain is an argument in favor of natural religion.

#### ON MEN'S DIVERS CAPACITIES FOR PHYSICAL PAIN.

And here perhaps I may venture some further remarks on what was touched in general in an earlier section (page 473), the variable capacity of human beings for pain, even physical, and the much greater variation as regards capacity for moral pain. It is well known that the quick vibrations of the air producing a musical note may become augmented continually in rapidity, until they reach an acuteness of tone imperceptible to the ordinary human ear. But here and there an ear

will be found perceptive of them when to others there is absolute silence. And this exalted note will produce in the hearer a sensation of pain by its acuteness from which others are exempt. To the auditory apparatus of all alike the pulsating waves of air must find access, but on a few only they register sensation, and that in pain. And so I suppose there are eyes which can bear more intense light than others without the sense of blinding and dizziness. Although here the relation is inverted ; for, whereas it is the extra margin of sound perceived which produces pain, this extra degree of light, excessive to others, would be endured painlessly. This, however, is not at present important. What *is* important to notice is that the register of painful sensibility differs in different organisms, and that some seem moulded on more sensitive lines than others.

#### ON MEN'S DIVERS CAPACITIES FOR MORAL PAIN.

But the differences of capacity for moral pain seem to exceed in their width of range all differences in physical sensitiveness. Dulness of emotion and bluntness of sensibility are common phenomena—nearly as common as a lack of musical ear. There are to some no lively regrets, to some no tingling shame, no sense of keen exasperation, no depth of mortification, no recoil of disappointment, no tenacity of affection, and therefore no anguish of bereavement, or no strain of anxiety, possible. How differently the sentence of death and the doleful or ghastly *insignia* of execution affect different persons! Nature indeed delights in variety and “it takes all sorts to make a world.” But again, these varying capacities are wrought upon by variety of surroundings no less great, and may be intensified by situations and circumstances differing in every degree within the range of experience. And these latter varieties seem to increase and multiply with civilization, at the same time that the capacity for moral pain, as stated above, is thereby increased. Hence arise enormous inequalities in the amount of moral pain which falls to the human lot ; and heavy burdens of this sort

seem to be more frequent than in the physical sphere, although it is nearly impossible to fix any standard of comparison; nor shall I attempt to do so here. But indeed the subject of these pains needs further research; and, save so far as they are connected with the passions, they have not received the notice which they deserve in moral philosophy.

ON THE TRUTH ATTESTED BY MORAL PAIN.

As is the case with physical pains so with moral, such of them as arise from wrongful indulgence of some propensity may be viewed as similarly related to that indulgence as are their physical parallels. Of this we may take the feelings of Alexander after killing Cleitus, as recorded by historians, as a notable instance. Moral pains have no direct relation with things dangerous or noxious to life, nor at all with the physical sphere and man's progress therein. Thus their preservative and didactic uses, in the sense used hitherto, are hardly if at all traceable. But they seem to have a lesson to teach of no less importance than that of human corruption which is attested by physical pain. They seem to point out clearly that the human soul cannot satisfy itself with the perishable nor stay itself thereupon. They attest our need of personal communion with One who knows not shock or change, and vindicate the need of an accessible Moral Governor of the world. Our grandest moral powers are those which find their motive in the affections, and those powers are so intense as often to explode in recoil and shatter the subject of them; or the affection itself becomes morbid when bestowed on unworthy objects, often with tragical results. I believe that such facts are meant to teach a lesson which the romancist seldom draws from the agonizing incidents constructed by him on these lines. It is that long ago proclaimed by St. Augustin, "Fecisti nos ad Te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in Te." And! thus the truth attested by moral pain is in a sense the opposite to that attested by physical. The latter attests human corruption a drawback and disqualifi-

cation for that communion with the Moral Governor, whose standard is taken to be perfect. It seems the opposite, but is really the complement; for the more we are conscious of our corruption the more we feel our need of Him. And thus moral pain is preservative of the higher life, as physical pain of the lower.

#### THE ECONOMY OF PAIN AN ARGUMENT FOR CHRISTIANITY.

But not only does this economy of pain fit into and illustrate natural religion, but still more exactly and closely it fits into and illustrates Christianity. For we see the principle of vicarious suffering herein made co-extensive with humanity; and the central idea of our religion shown to be so far from exceptional, that it is actually normal, and crowns the entire edifice of such suffering with an instance the highest in its own kind. The unique and sublime effect ascribed in Christian teaching to the cross of Christ stands of course apart from all other effects of suffering, and is here only noticed to be excluded from the comparison. But as the crucifixion includes with that higher aspect, that of a martyrdom, or witness borne to the stern reality of human corruption, by the stern agony of prolonged suffering, so to that martyrdom we have an absolute parallel under the conditions set forth above (page 589). But yet more, in being a suffering endured for others, and by virtue of which those others escape their proper share of a penal testimony due equally from all, or from each in proportion as he is tainted with the common bane, the examples of pain under the law indicated above are each a *replica* of the crucifixion itself. Every victim of what in human eyes is an inscrutable visitation, in proportion as he is by every human standard blameless, becomes a closer realization of the great Ideal, which in Him who suffered, "the just for the unjust," finds its highest expression. Precisely in that proportion he endures for others rather than or beside himself, and becomes a scapegoat of humanity, "Stricken of God and afflicted." The individual apostle whose personal suf-

ferings are most fully known through his own indignant self-vindication, thought it no presumption to speak of "the sufferings of Christ abounding in us," of "the fellowship of" those "sufferings" as what he hoped to claim, and of his own "filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ" (2 Cor. i. 5; Phil. iii. 10; Col. 1. 24). Such phrases we may without exaggeration apply to many a struggle of human beings with pain, on whom has been concentrated that which was due to the corruption of humanity at large. The "household words" of Christianity thus shine with a new light of experience, illuminating the wards of every hospital. The example of Christ is a die which stamps with its own Image a wide currency, more or less alloyed indeed, but still of intrinsic value. It interprets the pains before it took its place in history as well as those which occur since. Countless humble sufferers for sins other than their own give in their witness to Him and "follow in His train." Assume Him to have suffered in a mystery to atone for sin, and they suffer in a mystery no less real to attest its terrible reality.

AND CHRISTIANITY IS THEREBY JUSTIFIED IN ITS IDEA.

And conversely, if their life is spent in an endurance, which, as we have seen, is the ransom of others, why cavil at the notion of His life given in a super-eminent sense as "a ransom for many?" And if, as may often happen, the heaviest load is laid on the gentlest and most Christ-like souls, if it cuts short careers of exemplary beneficence, or turns some who chafed impatiently at their own unequal burden, to bear it with resignation at last, then the Great Sacrifice, which finds its moral features reflected in some and transforms others to their likeness, justifies its own idea in both and reproduces after its own kind. Thus the reasonableness of that idea finds confirmation all around us, and vicarious suffering, unique in its "bright peculiar flower," shows its roots struck deep in human analogies. The distribution of pain, again, only follows the same central idea of

redemption in the stimulus which it gives to charity and the firmness in which it knits the bond of sympathy. It shows the intensely moral character which pervades that idea, and at the same time justifies faith in that redemption as a reality.

I am not for the purpose of this argument assuming the divine authority of the example of Christ or of the New Testament record. But I urge that this argument tends to vindicate that authority by the force of human analogy widely diffused. It seems absurd to suppose that so large a phenomenon as pain, so effectual in the physical and mental spheres, should be accidental and meaningless in the moral, should have so sharply defined a reality and yet be there a mere superfluity. Presented as above, it bespeaks gratitude, cements brotherhood, "provokes to love and to good works," exalts the sufferer to a place of honor, becomes a text of humility and patience, and turns to a blessing what seemed a curse. It becomes, therefore, an argument in favor of that belief in a Moral Governor into which it exactly fits, and of that Christian idea into whose very focus its lines converge.

PAIN STIMULATES REFLECTION THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF  
SENSATION.

Pain is thus exhibited as the great stimulant of reflection through the medium of sensation. This I venture to think is its presiding idea. It lets us into the secret of our weakness, defectiveness, corruption, which would otherwise remain unknown or be inertly known. It is the condition which makes the education of mankind possible, alike in the lower and in the higher sense. It not only safeguards the physical basis on which rest all higher faculties, nor only urges on the mind to seek knowledge, nor only drives the lesson home, but it draws out what is in man, shows the instinct of self-preservation what to lay hold upon and keeps it in constant exercise. It draws out, further, what is in nature, the object, and rivets it subjectively in man. Thus

how fruitful in the whole field of gaseous chemistry have been the perils of mining with their shocks to life and limb!

#### THE HIGHER LESSONS OF PAIN.

But pain suggests higher lessons. It is an abiding witness that man is corrupt and his best civilization defective and detrimental—a fact which is never so mischievous as when it is missed, and which some will probably miss to the end of time by steadily ignoring this testimony to it. It confirms the idea of a Moral Governor, and in the moral sphere points to Him as the resource of His defective and dependent creatures, and thus justifies the universal instinct of prayer. It shows these two ideas,—the one of the moral degradation, the other of the moral elevation of man,—to be each the complement of the other, and that instinct as a bridge thrown across to unite them. It supplies the salt of heroism and the balm of brotherhood. A bond of operative sympathy among living humanity, it passes on from age to age a continuous conductor of intellectual effort, and makes the unexhausted balance of pain in one generation the platform of new problems and the pledge of progress for the next. Although most impressive in its vast masses which overshadow a lifetime, it becomes more so because those masses are rare; but most of all so because, rare anywhere, they are possible everywhere. The sparse incidence is multiplied into the ubiquitous possibility; and the two factors unite, as we saw above (page 5) the minimum of pain endured reinforced by the maximum of pain endurable, to give the product a maximum efficacy, and thus combine the web and the woof of a merciful economy.

#### SUGGESTIVE OF THE ASCETIC IDEA AND OF MAN'S GREATER FUTURE.

The vast fruitfulness of pain in many lessons lies no doubt at the base of the ascetic idea (page 589). Men were so conscious of its many sided stimulative power, that they thought to cultivate it as an artificial product, and expected increas-

ingly useful results. Nor is the notion wholly void of practical success. Only, things artificial have their limits, often soon reached, but if not then recognized, the proportion of nature is violated. Thus manure in agriculture supplies artificially certain natural elements to the soil, but by an overdose the result is marred. Next, the stimulant itself is discredited, even within the limits of its useful application. Even so it has fared with the ascetic idea in the moral history of man. Pain, moreover, suggests that vicarious suffering is a human need; for unequal distribution means vicarious suffering, and if equal distribution would stultify the entire economy, then the necessity of unequal distribution is confirmed. In all these respects, and perhaps in many others which have escaped me, the economy of pain seems worthy of the Great Administrator to whose personality it points, suggesting sublimer aspects of "things not seen as yet" and implying a larger economy than the present, lying beyond the visible horizon. Pain is the raw material of our probation; effectual, whether as an emollient or an astringent of the character, to reveal what is in man, and while it educates to test him. Pain drives us ever on from the present to look to the future; and on it Faith builds the suggestion of a greater future, where, although there "be no more pain" for that army of martyrs whose "warfare is accomplished" in their triumph; its result, in the character may abide, like the spear wound and the nail-prints in Him whom they resemble; where for those whose probation is perfected through suffering, the corruption to which it witnessed shall be effaced, and nature's signal of distress be displayed no more. Probably enough, with pain, pleasure also may disappear, and the resulting state be analogous to an exalted form of that life-joy of which mention was made in the earlier sections of this essay.