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PLEASURES AND PAIN

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PLEASURE AND PAIN.

CHAPTER I.

OUR whole life, in this present form of existence is compounded of pleasure and pain, and we cannot conceive of any state in which we shall retain consciousness without their aid; they not only constitute our life here, but they actually are the Golden Gates which admit us to the life beyond. Through them is the pathway that leads to infinite power, absolute knowledge, perfected love. When one has reached the extreme limit in both, and sensation has taught the man that they are identical than are the gates ready to open for him. The first seven rules of "Light on the

Path," deal entirely with that part of sensation which we call pain, and that pain is the pain, not of the ordinary man, but of the Occultist. The ordinary man suffers solely on his own account ; or on account of those nearest and dearest to him. The occultist suffers in, and with, the whole world. Its cry is always in his ears. And not till he has gone down into the uttermost depths of the hell of misery which exists in this world, and has endured crucifixion with the tortured and oppressed, can the feet of the soul "be washed in the blood of the heart." There comes a moment when the very life of the isolated personality seems to break its bonds, and become infinite in its compassion, and then the blood of the heart gushes forth and flows into the deep with the heart's blood of the victims of the world. But before that hour can come the disciple has long lost the capacity to grieve over his own personal wrongs, and so his eyes have literally become incapable of tears. For he who can weep at the loss of his own child, at the suffering close beside him,

when he becomes aware of the mass of misery which exists in the world, finds such relief as this, an impossibility. Tears are too trivial to offer at such a shrine of horror, where sacrifices are hourly yielded up to the tyrannies and cruelties and greeds of blind humanity. The Saviours of the world go dry eyed through its dark places, absorbed in contemplation of the pitiless rule of pain, which sits for ever enthroned and powerful like an avenging deity. His own pain, his loss or suffering, are mere drops in a great ocean of grief, and he has learned that tears are only for those who still separate themselves from the whole, and appeal against the fate that falls on them. Personal sorrow is an attribute of man before he has begun to grow towards the light. He cries out like an animal that is hurt, and which resents pain as an injustice. At the beginning of this great lesson we regard the two sensations of pleasure and pain as entirely separate things, as the animals do. The loss of this feeling, as regards our own personal selves, marks the first steps

on the great Path. Therefore it is, that as the eyes are opened they weep no more. Therefore it is, that as the divine call reaches the ear it loses its sensitiveness—not its intelligent hearing of the sounds of life, but its sensitiveness to personal pain. It regards hard sayings, cruel words, and sneers, directed against its own personality, its own individualised life, no longer. These things are of no account, and the ear no longer carries a note of pain to the listening spirit within. It is given up to the task which follows on the bursting of the bonds of personality, that of repeating to the soul the sounds of the voices of the whole, not only the divine whispers from heaven but the cries from earth, and the voices from hell. These can only be heard when the ear is no longer sensitive on its *own* account. And they come together, blended, intermingled, the one sometimes obliterating the other. This is inevitable, while man is still man. And never forget that the voices are of equal value. Only through the uttermost experience of earth can we pass

to heaven. The ecstatic, who dwells in visions, must serve out his bitter apprenticeship at another time, and so make up for the days he has spent in dreams. Therefore though the ear must lose its sensitiveness it may not lose its hearing. That must become enlarged, widened, quickened, as all else must which is part of the instrument of the spirit, the temple of the divine. So with the voice. Before the spirit can utter truth and awaken souls and touch them into life, the voice of the man must have become incapable of uttering any hard or cruel thing, of wounding any personality, any individual. When sight and hearing and speech are thus purified from the sin of separateness, the soul can lift itself and stand in that outflow of infinite pity which is called the "blood of the heart." Many who are absolutely in earnest in their desire to walk on the great path, lose their way because they cannot understand what it is to lose the sense of separation. They imagine this to be an experience of the soul which begins and ends

in soul-life, that it takes place in a condition of soul ecstacy. It does take place in this condition without doubt ; but when it is a real thing and not a mere dream, its result is shown in the whole life of the man becoming changed. This change is unheralded, unannounced ; it occurs so naturally that it startles no one. For it is not the result of thought or of a resolution ; it is born of conviction and knowledge. The true occultist has the instinct of living with, and for, the whole, from the first moment when he has tasted the divine air of free and untrammelled life. He may be but a neophyte, and an ignorant one, when this dawning of the higher intelligence first breaks upon him ; but he will go over all obstacles, through all difficulties, in the right road. He cannot help it, for he has begun to grow, and shoots up unerringly towards the light as does the seed within the earth. And there is many a devoted disciple, many a teacher of great truths, many an earnest and noble soul, within whom the source of evil lives, and lives fruit-

fully. This evil is self, the iron bar that closes the gates through which the Ego passes, exchanging the narrow horizon of its own personal life for the limitless one of all life. This Miracle, or Resurrection, is one which is to be accomplished now and here, in the vortex of the busy, suffering, enjoying world. No occultist has a right to wish to pass away from this world, or to shut himself off from it while he lives. For he *is* the world, just as he is all that is beyond it, he is a part of the whole and therefore is responsible. While there is a wrong to be righted, an injustice to be destroyed, while there is suffering and sin, there is ceaseless work for him, which he may not turn away from. For, no matter who he is, nor how unimportant his place in life, it is his business to save those who suffer, and to redeem those who sin. He belongs to the army of Love and must fight against the great, powerful, serried ranks of Hate. He cannot desert his post; if he does he is no longer a soldier, over-shadowed by the "Warrior" of his higher

self, but an outcast.

Self is so strong that it must be fought ceaselessly ; many who do not understand that through pleasure and pain is the way of escape from it, fight in vain. Great natures are often betrayed by their own greatness. They find in themselves higher gifts than other men possess, and they find an increasing pleasure in the exercise. They seem like redeemers, yet all the while the growth of self within them is rank and strong, and will in the end stifle and silence their divine part. For they have made the mistake of living in the pleasure of their own work, forgetting that the pain and suffering which is a part of the world's life is their inheritance also. They must live in it, working ceaselessly the evil of it into good, they must pass through its deepest places, and suffer with those who are cast into the uttermost darkness. While there is one blind soul still held in the toils of drink or drugs, while there is hopeless poverty amongst us, while our laws are biased and prejudiced and unjust, while the

horrors of the old torture chambers are permitted and practised in our laboratories, the occultist has work to do here, and when he is released must grieve for the work he leaves undone. For he cannot separate himself from any of these things ; the meanest animal that utters a cry of pain or terror is himself. It is his business to convert that pain into pleasure, that fear into faith, and so to destroy the evil which causes it. Let occultists who are aiming at the knowledge of the divine wisdom devote themselves to this first lesson and learn it thoroughly, else when they pass on they will find a terrible task before them of retracing mistaken steps. Self is killed by pain ; it cannot be a pleasant or an easy task to destroy it. But it is more pleasant and easier to do it step by step, fighting it back always, and gaining strength for this war by continually entering into the life of the whole, than it is to find at the end of life a "giant weed," which has so stifled the growth of the soul that it can neither see nor hear,

nor speak, nor stand. When it should arise in the presence of the Masters like a god, it is no more than a helpless infant. Do not forget that a tree is known by its fruits. You may recognise yourself, and you may recognise others, by the degree of selfishness shown in daily life. To be unselfish is a great step forward, but it remains a negative quality till the eyes are opened and the soul awakened. Unselfish effort, the enthusiastic work of the fanatic is the first characteristic of the occultist. That is why, though ambition is the first danger to be avoided, he must work for the all with the same fervour as the ambitious man works for himself. And so, though he has learned the purely ephemeral value of this life, he respects it as deeply, for all, as do those who cling to it with agonised desire. Its value is supreme because it teaches a lesson nothing else can teach ; and it may not be treated lightly, even though it be the life of a sparrow or an insect. If it has to be sacrificed, it must be sacrificed with respect. For it is that divine and

mysterious thing *life*, which we can take away, but cannot restore, even though it dwells only in the body of a beetle or a wasp. Live in the atmosphere of eternal thought, and you will know how great is the value of every creature, great and small, how great is the value of every step on the path, even though it be a very brief one. The life of a butterfly is brief indeed ; but it *is* a life, and in the presence of eternal thought time, and durations of time, are as nothing.

The lesson of pain meets the occultist at the first step, and he can never escape from it. For he passes deeper and deeper into knowledge, and when he has outlived the experiences of suffering and learning for himself alone, he passes into the conditions in which he suffers and knows with, and for, the many, and eventually with and for the all. He leaves the limited experiences of his own personality, and enters on the great field of universal life. And there he will find comrades, and even teachers. He may entreat the Masters to enter his own

silent and undisturbed chamber, and to speak to his own soul in its solitude. He will ask in vain—In that solitude one voice only, speaks, the one voice from which true guidance can be obtained ; the voice of his own soul. When it is powerful and pure enough to bid him go forth and work for others as he would work for himself, then, in the hospital wards, in the dens of poverty, amidst the horrors of pathological experiment, he will one day find himself upheld by a strong hand, the hand of one stronger to protect the weak than he is himself. And in the hour of extremest devotion to some unpopular cause, of fiercest battle against the evil powers of tyranny and cruelty, he may hope to recognise a comrade in the great effort ; for it is only the white souls that have become conscious of their own divinity, who are capable of pure unselfish labour and heroism.

CHAPTER II.

THE twenty one rules are seen in the astral light, written on the walls of the antechamber, by all disciples who are travelling towards the central flame, who have turned away from the darkness of self. And those who have not learned the earlier ones, which are all related to the mystery of pain, have to retrace their steps over the weary road of material life, and perhaps even in a more material world than this. Those who are fortunate enough to read them and understand their meaning while embodied have a great responsibility. Miss it—and then indeed a harder task is set.

Those who point out the way are sent into the world armed with clear speech that

cuts like a knife. The use and purpose of this is to lay low the pretty flowers¹ pleasant illusions which make the world agreeable to the mass of those who live in it. This harvest has to be reaped and thrown aside before the weed of self can be attacked at its roots, and long before the "little tree" of personal growth is cut down and laid upon the floor of the temple. The stanza which precedes the twenty-one rules refers entirely to the preliminary harvest, the destruction of these pleasant illusions. For the feeble souls that have scarcely began to grow they are well; to the strong souled, to the occultist, they are a hindrance that must be put aside. The disciple must face the facts of life and learn its truth, from the first moment when desire of birth comes upon him and he essays the difficult path. These pretty flowers belong to ordinary life, in which the ordinary man lives his little span, thinking of himself and his family only; returning again and again to the same experience, through innumerable rebirths,

as a child returns to his first lesson-book, and studies the alphabet, before he goes further. The occultist's object is to understand life and transcend it; his duty is to lead others towards that difficult effort. The way is *within* and *without* simultaneously; (rules 18 and 19). It cannot be found only in the place set apart for study, or in the solitude of the soul; only half of it is there. This truth cannot be emphasised sufficiently, or repeated often enough. With every step in knowledge attained by the disciple, a gift has to be given to the world; otherwise the law of separateness will rule him as strongly in his sanctuary as it rules the man of desire in his life in the world, and will bring with it a heavier punishment. For the iron bar of personality will remain fast closed across the gates; and the disciple, who may have come very near to them by the bitter doors of renunciation and asceticism, and through the ways of ecstasy and contemplation, will sink in despair when he finds that his path is closed and that he must needs turn back.

These illusions meet us on every side and all the time we live, till they are destroyed. They make life possible and agreeable from the moment the day breaks till we sleep at night.

The first of these illusions is that there is, or can be, anything in the world which is not your business, and for which you are not responsible. This is a direct blossoming of the sense of separateness, and unless it is cut off resolutely and again and again without cease, it will stifle you and paralyse you. It makes you like the wandering child in one of George Macdonald's fantastic true stories, who entered a little ivy grown tower, thinking to find rest and safety, and found himself a prisoner. The ivy closed over the door, and the child found himself within four walls, with nothing visible besides but a narrow space of sky. So is the man placed who permits himself to become cased in his own personality, and who shrinks within it from the responsibilities and difficulties of the outer world. It is as useless for an

occultist to try and evade a problem of life, as it is for a schoolboy to try and skip the problem in Euclid which is the task set him. All the problems of life have to be faced and mastered ; poverty, misery, evil, vice and crime are all our teachers. This has been reckoned a hard saying, it being supposed that the personality of the disciple must be given up to evil, in order that he shall learn its lesson. Not so. But the learner must steep himself in the atmosphere of the evil as completely as though it were his own. He must try to relieve poverty and suffering, and perceive how relentless and powerful they are ; he must try to redeem the criminal and the tyrant, and realise how they are wedded to the evil in them. So it is that the lessons are learned—not by those who are themselves passing through the experiences, and who are blinded by the dust of the arena in which they fight with shadows. It is thus that the desire for sensation, and the hunger for growth are destroyed ; they fade away before the grief which falls upon the soul

when it first realises the sorrows of the world, before the passion of pity that follows that realisation, the hungry longing to help, the desire to comfort and aid, to redeem and to save. Most people when first they understand what can be suffered from poverty, when first they have realised the horrors of war, or the more shameful, because more unjust horrors of the vivisecting room ; when they have seen a child ill-used, and failed to help it—most people under such circumstances as these, have a bad night's rest and complain of it. But they sleep the next night, and bye and bye forget what they saw or heard, that gave them such unrest. But the occultist never forgets ; he is part of the whole, and feels with it. He wakes out of his quiet warm sleep night after night, and looks in the darkness at the eternal, asking why these things must be. And in the silence the Voice speaks, and tells him that it is his fault, that it is he who is to blame. Each and all are responsible ; the ordinary man, safely ensconced in his personal life, does not know

this. But the occultist knows it, and the Voice will never excuse him. Peace can never again be his in this world, where the cries of the innocent go up continually to heaven, praying hopelessly for help, until he has made himself a part of heaven by giving both help and hope. Peace will only be found in the heart of the soul's solitude, in the innermost sanctuary, when the Voice speaks again to say "Well done."

CHAPTER III.

IT is necessary to consider very earnestly, at an early stage in the career of effort, what is the occultist's relation to the world of matter and to the kingdom of the animals. The ordinary man is alternately the master and the slave of matter. He can control and use it up to a certain point ; after that point he finds himself a pygmy—helpless before apparently blind forces of incalculable power. In respect to the animals, he may be regarded as the accepted ruler in their kingdom. Most of them are willingly his slaves ; those who are not, he contrives to subjugate sooner or later, by his superior skill and inventiveness. He is all but the absolute ruler in this great world which surrounds him on every side. And he works his will in it freely, his will being limited.

Western occultists are not yet awokened to the fact that they have absolute and special duties towards this great army of bright intelligencies which are given into man's power. Through all the long weary history of man's life on earth, he has sinned without cease against these little ones. So long, so weary, is the history of births and rebirths, with its sad records of sin and shame, that were it not for the other half of the great double gate, if it were not for the passionate power of pleasure which is co-incident with life itself, it could not have been continued. Man learns with difficulty. He cannot grasp the fact that there is a duty to his neighbour ; how then can he be expected to fulfil it ? The occultist becomes aware of his duties as his spirit passes within the vestibule of learning ; and it is incumbent upon him not only to fulfil them, but to point them out to all who are within his influence.

Men justify their sin against the animals by supposing that they have no soul ; exactly in the same way as Mohammedans justify their

sins against women by the same groundless supposition. The student of occultism is aware that that which is himself, and that which is called the Master, and that which is the worm beneath his foot, are all one and the same. When the sense of separateness loosens its stifling grip upon him, he knows that this is so. He knows that not only his spirit, and that which animates the worm and gives it life, is Divine, but also the body in which his soul dwells, and that lesser one which forms the little temple for the worm. Occultists know that matter is alive ; by their dilatoriness, by the difficulty they find in raising themselves and those about them into a condition of intuition and knowledge, they are responsible for the fact that it has been left to scientists to discover and demonstrate this. The moment the soul frees itself from the domination of its own selfish isolation, it begins to see, and know, and understand those things which generations of scientific men have waded through the blood of innumerable victims to discover, sacrificing

on every side the irrecoverable gift of life, in order to approach a little nearer to its secret. We have permitted the idea of discovery to excuse those who find pleasure in the sin of vivisection, in the hideous laboratories of physiological experiment. This is a blot on our history which will necessitate ages of expiation, retribution, compensation, and the occultist who blinds himself to it, and refuses to become active in respect to it, is merely wasting his time, and accentuating his own sense of separateness. The cost of this useless experimentation is that which none who do not belong to the army of Hate and Evil dare think of it, or can think of, and remain sane. Torture, suffering, such as Claude Bernard himself has said, the imagination of man is incapable of conceiving; the absolute and shameless abuse of power; the betrayal of confidence, the disregard of all laws of pity, affection, and duty. In fact the absolute breaking of every commandment of the creed of Love, and the outraging of its every law.

How is this wrong, a wrong which has become a part of history, and yet is present and growing even stronger, to be made right? For, once the occultist has seen the wrong, he can never become blind to it again; nor can his ears ever be deaf to the cries of the helpless victims, when for the briefest second his spirit has heard them. He is obliged to go on with his work, having once put his hand to the plough; he is obliged to make the wrong into a right so far as his power can go. He knows that he may not turn aside, or shut his eyes; he who is an initiate in the order of Love, knows that he may not avoid evil or permit it. He must pour out upon it the infinite pity which is the "blood of the heart" he must "love" it, and transform it.

There is but one way of attacking a great wrong which stains the whole human race. Do not allow, for a single second of time, that it is too great ever to be righted. This idea, even if admitted only to your own mind, gives strength to the enemy. Pledge yourself to use

your own strength against it unflinchingly and unceasingly, as long as your life lasts, and to draw all whom you can touch or influence in any way into the same position. So shall you help to create the army of love which holds as its right and privilege the gifts of power and knowledge.

"By their fruits ye shall know them"—how many of our Western occultists are known in the world as respecters of life, as disinterested champions of the oppressed, as representatives of the law giver, whose laws are those of love? The rule of evil and cruelty is strong and active; its opponents must go out into the world and oppose it, their protest must be as a trumpet call, their deeds must be continual, and these must be not mere deeds of charity but living acts of justice. If they stay in their own safe and sheltered place, and fear to meet the Evil of the world, the spirit will become stupified within them, and the double gates will remain fast shut, no matter how earnestly they may desire that they shall open. Burning

and cruel wrongs exist on every side, and it is the task of the disciple to fight these *where he stands*. In this generation, in this country, we have a little handful of men and women who do fight this battle, and who can lay claim to the glorious title of Humanitarians. But only one or two of these are avowed students of occultism. Remember that in the great life there are no half measures, there is no compromise. Watch your every step with profound anxiety. The disciple who is not a Humanitarian in deeds as well as in words may know that he is weighting the balance on the other side, on that already over weighted one of Selfishness, Separateness, Hate, and Cruelty, the qualities which go to make up that evil which men call the devil. Beware, I say a thousand times beware, lest in the busy activities of your own personal life, in the duties and pleasures of your home, the great snake is lurking. It is there, without doubt, if you ever forget the many helpless ones who are in misery, if you ever cease to work for

them. "He who is not with me is against me." These words form a rule in occultism.

And do not let your sense of separateness blind you to the fact that if you have mistaken your way it is not only your own self that suffers and is led astray, but the whole effort, the whole army. You cannot detach yourself from that of which you are a part.

CHAPTER IV.

THE oscillation is stilled, the perfect peace is found, only by actually approaching and touching upon the gates themselves. This is why the keenly sensitive organisation, capable of enduring the highest ecstacies and the uttermost agonies is essential for the final, or even the later, experiences of life. The early lessons can be learned in shapes that live partly in the vegetable kingdom, partly in the ~~animal~~ criminal. The disciple who is nearing the great gates needs a frame that vibrates at the highest touch, one that is like a highly-strung musical instrument. As the violinist touches his instrument with awe and love and perfect accuracy, so does the disciple touch his, or permit it to be touched. As the violinist's

instrument is necessary for him, in order that he shall take his place in the orchestra, so is the disciple's necessary in order that he may open the gates and enter the Divine life. But for this organism, with its keen sensitiveness, how should he know the mysteries of pleasure, or learn the bitter ritual of pain? Its faculties and feelings are priceless gifts, to be tried and tested to the full. And when the personal life opens and expands by the magic power of sympathy, into the great life of the all, just as a flower opens and expands itself to the sun and air, then is that organism of infinitely greater value. The soul, which is approaching the great peace, is enabled by its sensitive brain and body to understand the joy and pain of all other embodied creatures. It has to be used for this great and wonderful experience before the disciple has learned the lesson for which he is born and re-born. To be able to suffer with others, and to rejoice with them, is one of the ten marks of disciplehood. The manner in which a man lives his daily life reveals to

those who understand the signs, the army he belongs to and his place in its ranks. Just so far as he has truly sought out the way within his own soul, so will he also see it in the world. There can be no mistake, for these things result from the laws of super-nature which are inevitable, like the laws of nature.

When the eyes of the spirit, as well as the body, have gazed upon the misery of the world and the torture of the innocent, till all personal suffering is forgotten in the great agony; when the ear has listened to the pitiful cry that rises day and night from all our cities, and has so stirred the soul by its message, that personal sensitiveness is over for ever; when the man can never again hurt or offend anyone or anything because he has entered the order of love; when all is accomplished and the self killed out and laid as an offering on the altar of life; then the soul knows itself to be alone and isolated. That knowledge is what is expressed by the phrase "standing in the presence of the Masters." With this uplifting

comes the consciousness of the pleasures of the soul, the supreme delights which come to the disciple and compensate him for all suffering. The nine rules of *Light on the Path* from 8 to 17 have to do with that part of sensation which we call pleasure. Herbert Spencer has pointed out that those actions only are universally considered good which produce pleasure. This is a law of nature and super-nature. The disciple need not fear the abysses of pain and horror into which he must plunge if he is to know the world in which he is living; if he enters upon these experiences in the spirit of the order of love he will be rewarded by a birth of passionate desire within him—desire as infinitely greater and keener than the ordinary desires of human life, as is the divine being greater than the human being. He will know splendid passion which makes saviours and redeemers; he will long to give light to the world, he will yearn for power that he may relieve it, for peace that he may impart it, for possessions

that he may give them—not earthly possessions, but divine ones.

To the occultist who is in earnest I say again beware of separateness, of that *self* which will meet you on every side. Open yourself to the pain and pleasure of the world; laugh with the children, listen to the birds, learn from music and from all beautiful things. Go to the bedside of those who die in hospitals, uncared for, unknown, perhaps victims of scientific experiments; go into the dark alleys of the city and do not merely give, but get to know what poverty means; go into the laboratories of vivisectors, and into the places where animals are killed for food, and realise that the torture of the innocent is an actual fact; face it all and feel it all, and recognise that the sin and the shame of it are *yours* unless you fight against them ceaselessly. Then go back into the silence and the quiet of your own room and shut yourself away from the world for a space and look for the light that is within you.

Printed by JAMES LATTIMER, Southwark Park Road, S.E.

