

**THE MYSTERY OF  
PAIN: A BOOK FOR  
THE SORROWFUL**

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The Mystery of Pain: A Book for the Sorrowful by James Hinton

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MITCHELL KENNERLEY

of

*"The Mystery of Pain" was originally published in London in 1866. For an extended account of the author, see "Three Modern Seers," by Mrs. Havelock Ellis.*



PREFACE TO NEW EDITION

**L**ET us suppose that there existed an island of which the climate was so unhealthy that every one of its inhabitants became in his infancy affected with rheumatism, causing all motion of their limbs to be a source of pain. And let us suppose, also, that this island had been without communication with the rest of the world, so that its inhabitants had never come into contact with any people free from their own affliction. They would have found walking always a painful thing; the thought of it would be to them a thought of pain; and since we call things that are always painful *evil*, they would call walking an evil. But in this their thought would be false. They would be feeling a good thing painful because their life was marred, and calling it evil only because they did not understand their own condition. And if it could be explained to them that the cause of their pain was not anything bad in



walking, but only their own disease, that itself would be a gain to them. Even if the conditions of their life could not be changed, it would still be a benefit to them to know the true source of their evil plight, and learn in what direction they must look for real relief. Besides, how many strange and mysterious things in their life it would make clear, to know that this walking, which they dreaded, and called bad, was a natural delight and good of man: what vain endeavors it would save them from; what higher apprehension of possible delight in life, even for them, it would afford.

Now this is like the idea I have tried to explain in this little book; namely, that things which we have inevitably called evil may yet be truly good. My thought was that all which we feel as painful is really *giving*—something that our fellows are better for, even though we cannot trace it; and that giving is not an evil thing, but good, a natural delight and good of man, and that we feel it painful because our life is marred.

So far my thought now is the same as when I wrote the book, but I have come to

see that it was incomplete. I was thinking of painful things, and took no account of pleasurable ones. What I said in it was this: when a painful thing comes to us, let us think, not of how it affects ourselves, but of how it affects others. Now I would add: when a pleasant thing comes to us, let us think, not of how it affects ourselves, but of how it affects others. This is but making our regard true to the facts around us, but it would bring with it results of the greatest consequence; for the very nature of the duties which lie upon us—our very right and wrong—depends upon the question whether it is a thought of ourselves or of others that moves us. When a man begins to seek goodness, then the effect of having his thought fixed upon self is seen: it falsifies the very nature of right, perverting it from being the simple following of service into a question of restraining ourselves from pleasure. So that any being who has succumbed to letting self stand first to him has brought on himself a bondage which he does not suspect, a need for banishing pleasure which God lays on none of his creatures. And

therefore there is a deliverance also possible for us from evils which seem hopeless, because it may come in a way we have not thought of namely, from the perception that, by submitting to a false feeling, we have made our thought of duty also false. To let regard to ourselves be first is to deform our right; to change it from being what it simply is—our fellows' good—into a false thing, our own restraint from pleasure. And wheresoever this is, there stands a deliverance ready, an entrance, by the door of a truer feeling, into a truer law. And this also is what Christ has shown us.