

that, however strongly its phenomena may excite our imagination, they can scarcely, if at all, awake our emotions to any sympathy. But there is an order of life just below us, spread like a stratum all over the world, land and sea, with a sentience so akin to our own that its phenomena and incidents are readily interpreted into terms of our own consciousness and profoundly stir our emotions of sympathy. In the strata of the earth we read the history of this animal life from its dawn in the primeval ocean to the present period. What an inconceivably enormous aggregate of life, and every unit of it has quivered in torrents and suffering inexpressible; and, finally, yielded to the last agony, death.

“For every draft of vital breath
In earth, or air, or ocean,
The melancholy gates of death
Respond with sympathetic motion.”

The whole human race, with all its higher, keener power of suffering, has been copartner with its more lowly comrades in this tragedy of pain through the world ages. How fitly the words of St. Paul apply to this whole realm of physical life, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”

Appalling as is this universality of pain through all the geologic ages in all realms of physical life, it is in the spiritual life of man that we reach the most terrible of all suffering, the utmost depth and intensity of pain.

A phenomenon so universal, to the race and to the individual, so profound, so terrible, so mysterious, must necessarily greatly influence thought and life, toning literature, shaping religious belief and observances, fashioning habits and customs and institutions.

The treatment of pain in the masterpieces of the world's literature would furnish an interesting study. There is no great work in creative literature, no work that holds a permanent place in the highest rank, that does not have to do with suffering. Homer, and Virgil, and Dante, and Shakespeare, and Milton, and Goethe—take pain and all that has relation thereto from their immortal works and you take from them what makes them immortal.