

**THE ALLEGED CRUELTY OF NATURE, THE  
STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE, AND THE  
LAW OF BATTLE**

**The "Atmosphere" of Thought and Custom.**

Our mental or psychic environment, resulting from the web of ordinances, institutions and beliefs within which we move as individuals, might be likened to the atmospheric envelope surrounding the earth, which is charged with moisture, often made manifest in the form of clouds and mists. These, like the fogs of superstition in our super-organic envelope, obscure our view or only enable us to obtain transient peeps at the universe without.

Even when the sky is clear, diffraction of light distorts our vision, and we may also be misled by mirage. It follows that we are thus given a false sense of proportion with regard to our more remote environment, and this it is necessary to correct in imagination by means of our reasoning powers.

Our own experience and the communicated experience of others provides the basis upon which we found our hypotheses, and these are continually tested and improved by intelligent observation upon results obtained in practice. "We see what we know."

Before astronomers are able to arrive at the truth with regard to the position and the movements of heavenly bodies, they must make corrections in the measurements obtained by their instruments, to allow for the medium through which they view these objects.

It is not less necessary, when studying other natural phenomena which concern our immediate welfare, to make keenly intelligent corrections for the distortions and obscurations caused by viewing symptoms through the biasing medium of our super-organic environment. In the Principle

of Population controversy there is provided a lesson showing how essential it is to cultivate an imagination which can pierce mental obscurities caused by superstition.

It is easy, deceived by appearances, to blame God (people in this connection usually say Nature) for what is within the scope of our choice. Even a Huxley might exclaim, in a moment of peevishness: "I wash my hands of Nature!"

It may not seem at first a pleasant duty to forsake some favourite doctrine, apparently in accord with facts, and to have to retrace our steps after disillusionment. We may be weary, and it is disappointing to find that some path which promised a short cut led, after a baffling journey, far away from the truth we were seeking, ending in the cul-de-sac of error.

But it is better in the long run to return to first principles than to perish in an admirable though ineffective attempt to hack a way through, or as an alternative to lose oneself in a vexatious forest of circular reasoning, succumbing ingloriously to the weariness of the flesh.

#### **The Alleged Undue Influence of the Remote and Unseen.**

It was once almost universally believed that the host of heaven had discriminating influences, usually of a malignant character, upon the lives of mortals. The planets and the stars were personified and worshipped as deities, whose favour might be obtained or whose displeasure might be allayed by means of devotions, presents and sacrifices, discreetly made, so as not to arouse jealousies. The power of the gods was measured by the virulence of their supposed actions, and the priests and oracles contrived to uphold the "honour" of their patron, to see that condign calamities fell upon the impious. It was believed that wars, pestilences, famines and all things obscure in origin were attributable to the caprice of the gods.

While these beliefs may be yet held in part by the dupes of fortune-tellers, the rising sun of scientific knowledge has dispelled such mists of superstition except in dark mediæval hollows. At school our children are still taught insincerely that God is a capricious tyrant, who can be

prevailed upon to act specially in their favour by prayer and supplication, and unless propitiated according to ecclesiastical and other rites and ceremonies, might injure them now or in the hereafter. It is of course represented that another being, Satan, carries out the punishments, but at the best they form a conception of God as a peevish elderly gentleman, who might intervene so as to spoil their innocent sport.

It is not surprising that these misconceptions persist into later life. During the Great War pastors of each belligerent country were sometimes heard to declare, to the manifest approval of their respective flocks, that their faith in the righteousness of God would vanish in the event of defeat of their country's arms. At the General Election of 1918, immediately after the Armistice, a perfervid lady speaker referred patronisingly to "the Great Magician who waved His wand in our favour over the battle-fields of Flanders, responsive to the righteous prayers of the Allied Churches!"

### **The Laws of Nature are Inexorable.**

The laws of Nature are eternal, universal and immutable. They are beyond our volition, and as inaccessible as the stars or the æther. Like the rays of the sun, their incidence is alike upon the just and the unjust, and we cannot turn them aside.

The Natural Law of Equity, which is based upon the social instinct, and is sometimes called the Golden Rule, i.e. Do to others as you would be done by, is as inexorable as the Law of Gravitation. The Golden Rule is sometimes regarded as an ideal line of conduct, impossible of attainment, whereas for the greater part of our lives we implicitly obey it. We rarely default, but when we do, the law of gravitation does not result in more dangerous consequences.

Natural law cannot be turned aside, the consequences cannot be evaded, and we must obey, whether conscious or unconscious of its existence. Since the Natural Law of Equity is based upon the social instinct, it is impossible to be unjust to oneself without hurting others, just as it is impossible to hurt others without ill-effects accruing to oneself. That the consequences of social maladjustments

are not yet realised to take the form of war, pestilence and famine is simply because we have not yet learnt to trace effects back to their causes with sufficient exactness.

Nature or God has no more regard for the highest primate than the earthworm or the maggot, nor any less. All live under an equal dispensation of Justice. There is neither favouritism nor cruelty in Natural Government.

#### **The Indispensability of Pain.**

A child is taught not to fall from a height, by remembering the pains occasioned by little falls. He does not burn himself at the fire, except as the result of an accident, if he has experienced pain from the touch of objects near by. He acquires a capacity for happiness in proportion as he can learn discriminatingly from his own experience and the communicated experience of others.

Like causes produce like effects. Carbon burnt in an excess of oxygen does not result in the production of carbon dioxide at one time and another substance at another time. No matter how complicated the chemical action or the play of natural forces, it is always found that under like conditions there is unvarying constancy in results. We are so certain of this that when apparently we have obtained a different result we know that the conditions have been varied without its having been observed. Whether in physics, in morals, or in policies, there is the same fundamental principle of undeviating relativity between cause and effect.

Animals in free nature have their young, and do not require to receive special education as to how they should be taken care of and suckled. If we were shown the same animals neglecting their progeny, so that the cubs had to be hand-fed by a keeper, who possibly also had to guard them from the violence of their parents, should we discourse learnedly about maternal ignorance and the necessity of education for the mothers? Should we accuse Nature of cruelty?

Like causes produce like effects. Fresh air and sunshine and freedom are as necessary for the human animal as for the beasts of the field, yet how is this possible in the cellar dwellings, barrack cities, and in the ill-smelling,

poisonous atmosphere of the noisome tenement slums, where the blessings of sun and rain are alike a curse, and where there is a denial of all natural regeneration by vegetation?

The doctrinaires of maternal ignorance do not imagine the plight into which educated mothers of the cultured classes might fall if they were deprived of their "keepers," the trained nurses, and placed under the same conditions as their slum sisters. With all their education, mothers of the "upper classes," living in a cage of gold, hemmed in by oppressive conventions, frequently exhibit symptoms of the same maternal aberration. Obviously, infant neglect and high mortality in child-life are not due either to education or lack of education, to civilisation or barbarism of the mothers.

Just as we use our common-sense in our observations of captive animals, and diagnose that captivity has warped their instinct or intelligence, so, when we see similar abnormal behaviour in humanity, we ask ourselves, Is humanity free?

Doctors are concerned because there is an increasing proportion of young women who are unfitted for healthy motherhood. In a medical census taken at Wood Green recently (1917), in the London district, of 2,185 children, only 673 were normal in all respects. At the outbreak of war, and during the course of the war, the medical examination revealed a lamentable and almost unbelievable proportion of unfits in the total "man power" of the nation. The average duration of life is low, and the prevalence of venereal disease, "the race poison," is more than serious. Comparisons between the average measurements of the structural bones of the present-day Englishman and those of his ancestors show a distinct tendency towards degeneration, especially as regards the facial bones. Caries and pyorrhœa are familiar diseases and persons with a whole set of good teeth are rare.

These unpleasant symptoms are not due to the fact that Nature is hostile or cruel, for how can Nature be cruel to herself? We are part of Nature.

That we feel unduly uncomfortable owing to the changes of the seasons, and are often successfully attacked by epidemics like influenza, means simply that we have defaced

our environment beyond our inherited constitutional power of adaptation. Man is a gregarious animal, fond of the society of his fellows, but this fact does not explain, on the one hand, the overpopulation of the towns and cities, densely piled with humanity, often 500 or 600 to the acre, and on the other hand the depopulation of the country-side. Within the environment in which the majority are forced to live, the rarity of human beauty and grace is no surprising concomitant, and it is certainly such that the healthiest and most alert cannot hope to survive generation after generation.

Pain is indispensable, for unless we suffer pain, how otherwise can we realise that we are proceeding in a wrong direction? It is through pain that we learn wisdom, and we must learn or perish.

### **We are Living Dangerously.**

In our artificially manufactured hostile environment, self-sacrifice by unnatural fasting, celibacy, unprotesting acquiescence in injustice, and other forms of the mortification of the flesh, are as unavailing as gluttony, sexual excess or physical and moral violence.

That the votaries of each extreme meet in agreement by attributing their misfortunes to dæmons or evil spirits or to Nature's cruelty when their conduct is met by its inevitable consequences, is no indictment of Nature or God. That they obstinately proceed under the influence of this mood into greater extremes of folly, thinking that safety can be secured by "living dangerously," only shows they are slow to learn in their befogged psychic state.

We find pleasure in accepting the risks which, by progression in evolution throughout millions of years of adaptation, we are fitted to face. It would be evidence of deranged nerves if the proximity of the sea, a river, or a precipice were considered by one to be hostility in Nature. Just as healthy and sane people enjoy boating, swimming or climbing, so the elegant musk-deer delights in its carnivorous environment of the African veldt, because happiness is ensured by natural adaptation. It regards the lion from the same point of view as we do our topographical surroundings, i.e., as a feature of interest, but it does not live dangerously.

If we allow our senses and intelligence to be dwarfed or obscured by superstition, if we shut our eyes and in blind vanity disregard the plentiful warnings—the danger signals against the retention of social institutions *which are not standing the test of time*—then in the fog engendered by the assumption that all is well, Nature may appear hostile as we persist in wrong directions, hurting ourselves in doing so. Do we see here a possible explanation for the otherwise mysterious and increasing prevalence of hysteria, neurasthenia and other nervous disorders?

Doctors are not able to cure these or any other diseases; they may only palliate them. By ensuring that the patient is placed under favourable conditions for recovery they "assist Nature." This is an admission that Nature is the healer, and that we bring about disease and misery through our transgression of the laws of Nature. Ignorance of these laws does not preserve us from the consequences of folly, and man must liberate his intelligence from the fogs of superstition, allowing it to guide him as instinct guides the dumb creation of freedom.

It is no longer thought by enlightened medical men that there is really hereditary transmission of disease. The seed being a single cell, it could not survive if it were tuberculous or syphilitic. In such cases as when a child is born diseased, the disease has been brought about at an advanced stage in its pre-natal environment. When the parents live dangerously, the consequences are cumulative until the race ceases to transgress.

#### **Palliatives are not Remedies.**

Just as in a besieged city, until the citizens are freed, organised rationing is preferable to disorganised famine, so, while we are alienated from healthy surroundings owing to our superstition, it is good to care for unfortunate children suffering from "gaol" fever and "English" disease, and to provide free medical attention, clinics and communal crèches.

It is well to treat by the Salvarsan method those suffering from venereal disease, to assist congenitally weak eyesight with spectacles, to replace decayed teeth with dentures, to have mental hospitals, workhouses and national alms-

houses. But if we regard these provisions as absolute remedies, we shall be shocked to find that, instead of curing our present evils, we have only built up a bank of consequences for a more evil future.

**“ Human Nature being what It is.”**

It preserves our reason to link up cause and effect. In China there is a delusion that neighbourhood is possessed of good or evil luck, determined by the quality of “ Fengshi ” residing in burial-places.

In some parts of the East it is the custom for the rescuer of anyone who has fallen into a river, or who tries to drown himself, to be condemned to keep the rescued person for life, as it is believed that the river spirit has been deprived of sacrifice and evil may come of it. In Britain, not long ago, occult hostility took the form of a belief in the Evil Eye and in witches, just as at the present time Fabian intellectuals and Anglican Deans speak of the niggardliness of Nature in advocating compulsory checks to population.

How often, in justifying more interference with the lives of other people, whose turbulence increases in proportion as their liberties are curtailed, do we hear our lawmakers begin a wise-sounding statement with the words : “ Human nature being what it is ”—an innuendo they would resent indignantly if all that it implies were directed against their personal characters as “ respectable ” people. It is their belief that human nature is inherently wicked (how they could possibly discover this, if it were so, is never explained, nor can it be), that it must be kept in check by “ firm ” government, and that it is this interference which renders civilisation possible.

To believe that our Mother Earth or our Human Nature is inadequate is just as unreasonable as to fancy that it is because of education, culture, civilisation or the lack thereof that there is hell upon earth.

Religion, education, culture and all the things that go to make a real civilisation would not disappear, would not cease, but increase and progress if we made a return to conformity with the Natural Law of Equity and built upon a just basis. There is no mystery about it : cruel poverty,



painful disease and murderous battle are within the scope of our choice.

### **The Cult of Militarism.**

Oriental attitudes of mind are not confined to the Orient. In the Occident fatalism has not reached the pitch where a fellow-creature would be left to his fate were he struggling for life in deep water. Yet so used have we become to the spectacle of neighbours of every class of society struggling for existence in a hostile environment, made not so by Nature or God but by our stupid choosing, that the psychological effect upon darkened intelligence has been to induce a strong belief in a sacred struggle not merely for existence, but for supremacy, tending to the improvement of the human race through the survival of the fittest.

It was characteristic of the militant evolutionists, who flourished so exceedingly before the Great War, to affirm that only a few prizes were awarded by Nature, and that the great majority of necessity drew blanks in the "gamble" of life. Deceitful appearances in human affairs favoured their views that Nature was a niggardly hag, "red in tooth and claw," whose treasures must be fought for by her scrambling children. The winners in the struggle, so it seemed, were selected in a simple process of elimination by means of the "elemental" agencies of cunning, knock-out blows, rape and murder. This crude hypothesis has been summed up in the well-known expression: "Get on or get under."

The warlords and professors of this theory regarded with complacency the condemnation of millions to penal servitude for life in barracks and in cheerless poverty. This dispensation was necessary, because how was it otherwise possible for the fortunate leisured few to wrest from miserly Nature her carefully guarded secrets?

They pointed to the degrading poverty which everywhere existed as irrefutable evidence that all would sink to the condition of the lowest unless, as they contended, power were given for the legalised exploitation of the scrambling masses. Even poverty itself was not an unmitigated curse—at any rate for the poor! Was it not true that poverty was a great incentive to effort, often productive of genius?

Was not necessity the mother of invention, so why question a system so eminently beneficial that man scored over Nature in any event ?

So, arguing from false premises, imagining that they could "take in God," the professors asserted that until power was acquired and used within the State no nation could become great and be enabled to assert itself in dominion over other nations, thus growing prosperous in exploiting them. It was a sacred duty, therefore, to employ moral and physical violence, even to the point of murder, if it were necessary, in the process of efficiently organising the nation.

"Political and human rights have nothing to do with each other," said the imperialists, who desired the bondage of compulsory military service imposed upon their fellows. In Germany especially it was taught in the schools, churches and universities that individuals belonged to the State, which was deified as a god, with the Kaiser as its personification. A slavish obedience to military authority was enjoined as the first duty of man, and the Kaiser publicly proclaimed that a soldier must be ready to kill even his own father or brother if ordered to do so by a superior officer.

The lesson of the Great War has proved the cult of militarism to be a doctrine of vanity, yet militarism has been preached more than ever among the nations which were supposed to have won the war. Militarists learn nothing from experience.

#### **The Cult of Collectivism.**

It is curious that those who imagined themselves to be in opposition to the imperialists also fell down and worshipped the same false god, sometimes called the State, sometimes the Majority. While condemning military conscription, many persons professing to be Socialists (which apparently means anything) demanded powerful State interference and "co-operation" by force in almost every other direction. One of these conscientious objectors declared: "The State can be whatever you make it, so can Liberty!"

But can it? If the militarists or imperialists who believe in the Rule of Force and who have conscientious objections to Peace by Negotiation are wrong, so also are

the State-Socialists who believe in Majority Rule or Bolshevism.

One may look through the highest-powered magnifying glass and yet fail to see any essential difference between the ideal State of the militant-imperialist and of the State-Socialist. Though they both frequently speak of Liberty, there is a mental reservation that "it can be whatever you make it!" It is not surprising that the ideals of the Socialists, like those of the so-called Christians of each belligerent country, crumbled into fragments at the first stroke of war. They had been worshipping images.

### What is Freedom ?

Let us pause for a moment to get a clear vision of what is meant by Liberty.

In applied physics there is what is known as a "perfect" engine. It is an ideal engine of maximum efficiency, wherein all the conditions laid down by the laws of Nature are completely complied with, losses due to friction and so forth being reduced to an irreducible minimum. Similarly we may imagine in applied sociology an ideal State. It is obvious that the approximation to such a state of perfection is not reached by establishing institutions which take away the freedom of the constituents.

Yet the imperialists and the State-Socialists, each in their own way, propose as their ideal State one in which there are a few privileged individuals and glorified slavery for the masses. It is not that they do not desire freedom—indeed, they complain bitterly of the consequences of their own acts. But they do not realise that they are reaping their own harvest, and so attribute shortcomings to particular persons in power.

How, then, is Liberty approached? It is not licence, and it is not compulsory service. It is only attained when social institutions are in accordance with Natural Discipline, which must be obeyed, and which is comprehended in the statement: Do not unto others what you would not have done to yourself. Social institutions must be founded upon justice—upon equality of opportunity for all.

The question really is, where have we gone astray? We have gone astray, creating a hostile environment for

ourselves, and failing to link up cause and effect, we allege that Nature is cruel. People have been known to ask, "Can we forgive God?" and theologians babble of "original sin." Scientists and high-browed politicians try to impress their hearers by alluding to "the blind forces of Nature." They do not realise it is they who are blind!

Failure to take the bandage from their eyes has caused the keenest inquirers after truth to come to wholly illogical conclusions about certain natural phenomena, upon which errors lesser minds have made haste to erect a tissue of falsehood. "No personal habit more surely degrades the conscience and the intellect than blind and unhesitating obedience to unlimited authority." (Huxley.)

Darwin, Wallace, Lyell and other competent contributors to the evolutionary theory have doubtless erred in minor respects, but it must be left to the imagination to picture what would occur if their works were lost, and there only remained the false doctrines of the militant evolutionists.

### **The Thin Veneer of Civilisation.**

A belief in a Nature angular and spare-framed went appropriately with that held by the theologians, that man was naturally vicious, greedy and faithless, endowed with a mind which could only be disciplined by the wholesome fear of hell-fires. Like the professors, they welcomed every new accession of power to the State which would restrain "the unspeakable passions and lower instincts inherent in human nature, sacrificing them to the service of civilised progress."

The doctrine of "original sin" received reciprocal support from the professors, who drew artful conclusions from impressionable childhood, spoilt and savaged by the influence of "Prussian Militarist" nurses and mentors. Their Sadducean imagination delighted in the invention of murderous characters for prehistoric man.

It was variously credited that when not "hunger marching" our remote ancestors were in a state of continual unrest, owing to the insufficient food supply. In those times of "club rule," according to the romantic professors, the strongest arm and the thickest skull survived, accompanied by the persistence of a cunning intelligence, which at length differentiated with, and placed a limit upon, the bony

structure progress of the cranium. Such was their fantastic conception of Natural Selection.

It was supposed that Sexual Selection in evolution was accomplished by equally crude and violent means. The competitors for the favour of the Palæolithic maiden fought a battle which invariably had a fatal termination!

But the selection, being a shrew, had to be wooed suitably. She did not submit at once to the most successful exponent of frightfulness. Nevertheless, the ubiquitous club speedily eliminated any lingering coyness. She was dragged insensible by the hair to the nuptial cave, and upon recovery became slavishly devoted to her ferocious lover!

Thus the militant evolutionists, whose first-hand knowledge of natural history appeared to have been taken from the captive life of lower animals or of humanity in the squalid slum and court, proved to their own satisfaction that the cultured inhabitants of Europe and America are the descendants of ancient races of hooligans, who preserved themselves by killing and eating each other!

They opined that the "cultivated races" had gradually acquired, and transmitted by inheritance, superior characters, which revealed themselves in later life after the wild oats of youth had been sown, this tendency being most apparent among the cultured classes. They jumped to the conclusion that the cultured man was necessarily a just man. They assumed quite gratuitously that men and women inevitably became more righteous as they got older. The senile professors were unable to differentiate between the childish and the childlike!

They imagined that they were unanswerable when they stated that "the thin veneer of civilisation" was manifest in the greater personal and social value put upon life, and that the "cultivated races," being too civilised to fight, were the natural custodians of the "inferior" races, who could not be trusted to govern themselves.

The God-Nature answered them completely by the Great War.

### **The Thin Veneer of Barbarism.**

So as to square with their doctrine that cultivated man had, to some extent at least, tamed "hostile" Nature, the

professors represented the struggle for existence to be fiercer among savages, and proportionately more intense among the lower creation.

Those who know the facts are in a position to affirm that when the savage is poor, the reasons for it may be found in similar conditions to those producing the civilised struggle for existence.

Certain savages may eat with relish the worms found in rotten wood, others may devour grasshoppers, but Englishmen prefer game that is high, cheese that is maggoty, while Frenchmen eat snails and the legs of frogs. These tastes are no criterion of measure in indigence.

That some savage tribes destroy the sick and the aged and that they practise infanticide is not proof of greater struggle. Are not similar practices common among communities which boast of their civilisation? A cultured society is not inevitably a humane one. Humanity and justice synchronise with free institutions and custom, and their opposites, that is, inhumanity and injustice, are the accompaniments of slavish ideals.

Slow methods of killing the weak and helpless are not less cruel than quick dispatch, and in recommending the latter method for inconvenient paupers and manufactured criminals, the militant professors prove that their feelings of humanity are at any rate as highly developed as those of the savage. In this they collided for once with their friends the bishops, who reminded them that "It was the inscrutable will of the Lord, 'The poor ye have always with you,' and He made some poor and some rich, that the latter should manifest their charity towards the former." (Bishop of Salisbury in a sermon.)

When prisoners have been confined in a dungeon without food, it has been known for them to lose their reason and prey upon each other. When sailors have been cast adrift and have become insane from hunger and thirst, they have sometimes devoured comrades. In times of protracted sieges during war, cases are recorded in which starved civilians have crazily consumed their own children. There is, however, no fear that such might become a perpetual habit with the captives when they recovered their freedom and mental balance.

Although the custom of cannibalism is frequently found, or at one time existed in locations where cereals, fruit and other things are naturally provided in overflowing abundance, the dismal evolutionists believed it to have its origin in the chronic poverty of the natives. More competent observers, however, have pointed to a different reason for its origin, namely, superstition or mind-imprisonment.

The Sandwich Islanders did honour to their good chiefs by eating their bodies, but their bad and tyrannical chiefs they would not touch. Savage warriors have feasted upon the enemy slain and prisoners, under the delusion that the latter's fighting vigour was thereby added to their own. In eating a missionary or other superior being, the superstitious heathen imagined that in this way he would become endowed with the white man's cunning.

The veneer of barbarism is no thicker than the thin veneer of civilisation. It is not many hundred years ago that the priests or witch-doctors of our ancestors officiated at ghoulis ceremonies in which the ignorant and awed devotees drank the blood and ate the flesh of human sacrifices.

True religion is mental and intellectual freedom.

### **The "Struggle" for Existence among the Lower Animals.**

In order to explain why there were no evidences of interminable want among the lower animals, it was asserted by the pretentious professors that the population was checked owing to the fact that the animals ate each other up. They were of opinion that the old and stricken were weeded out by beasts of prey, which were themselves cannibals.

According to this theory, animals living a natural life never died of old age, but were feasted upon by their comrades to save burial expenses !

There was once a man, it is said, who believed that donkeys are immortal because he had never seen a dead one !

It requires a practised eye to pick out the aged wild animal, which, living a clean and healthy life in its natural environment, does not become decrepit, and which, when nearing the end, finds some secluded spot where he may sleep away. After death he is rapidly hidden by the carrion animals, burying beetles and vegetation.

It is not the old and tough cattle that are sought for food by the carnivora, but rather the young ones, which have to be taken by stealth when the parent animals are off their guard. Old bulls which have left the herd, living a quiet and lonely life, are quite able to take care of themselves, as hunters well know.

As for the preying beasts, it is contrary to the instinct of self-preservation, which they have in common with all species, for them to prey upon animals of their own species. The truth as to this is expressed in the saying "Dog does not eat dog." If he does, it is in error.

No ignorant barbarian can pervert the truth like the arm-chair naturalist, whose unfortunate propensity should be accompanied by a longer memory. At one time he asks his readers to believe that animals in free nature invariably die young, and at another time that in captivity they also die young, which happens to be true, but not for the reason he gives. The following, as an extreme example, is taken from an article in the London *Daily Mail* (January 27, 1920), in which it is stated that wild animals die prematurely in captivity *because they are too happy to live* :

"The arteries harden and the heart degenerates just as in man, but years before the proper time. You take a wild animal, feed him, keep him warm and dry, and remove the fear of enemies. The animal then becomes perfectly happy—far happier than in a state of nature, for the fear of death, lurking in every tree branch or in every patch of tall grass, has disappeared. A sort of beatific lethargy follows, however, which causes an unnatural 'natural death.'"

So painfully nervous must the wild animals be "in a state of nature," it is surprising that they do not drop down from heart-failure when "the dread of death" comes out of its hiding-place!

#### **The Law of Battle.**

In the preface to the second edition of *The Descent of Man*, Darwin wrote: "My conviction of the power of sexual selection remains unshaken, but it is probable, or almost certain, that several of my conclusions will hereafter be found erroneous."



The fabric of superstition erected by the militant evolutionists cannot be altogether accounted for as an extension of error perpetrated by the Darwinists, although it cannot be gainsaid that they were influenced by Darwin's tendency to overrate the severity of the competition in sexual selection. This tendency was due to the continual search of Darwin, owing to his unfortunate Malthusian bias, for amputative checks to population. The theory, as a matter of fact, is unintelligible, if the assumption is made that where a physical battle takes place between the competing males, which of course are of the same species, it is one to the death.

In boxing or wrestling bouts, which are survivals of the sexual combat in the case of man, the competitor who loses his temper and becomes violent usually gets the worst of it. Any ignorant spectator who believed that the contestants desired to take each other's lives would be said by polite people to be deceived by appearances. It is true that a fatality as the result of a mischance has been known to happen, but this may take place in any game, and no one would be more distressed than the unlucky combatant who had been the cause of the accident.

We smile tolerantly if we hear that our son at school has had a fight, and so long as he fights fairly with his fists a boy of his own size, we are indifferent as to the result, which is always beneficial and regulative. Boys after a fight usually become fast friends.

It is, however, different if he employs weapons like stones, sticks and booted feet. This we regard as a serious fault, and the solicitude we feel is instinctive. The boy is living dangerously, and we are concerned about his preservation.

#### **The Sexual Combat as a Selective Agency.**

The biological purpose of the test is to ensure that the most healthy, alert and progressive males at any given time are chosen for race propagation, thus ensuring that the species is preserved and improved. In the cases in which the test by combat takes place, it is a fair and just one of skill, strength, endurance and temper, governed by instincts as regulative as the Queensberry rules in boxing. There is equality of opportunity for all competitors.

Accidents in the rough sport owing to a false slip may occur even to the fittest animal. There may be a broken limb and a fatal termination, but these have no bearing upon evolutionary progression, because they cancel each other out. The immature animal is not killed, but only pushed to one side until he gains the full prestige of maturity and is entitled to "a place in the sun."

There being no object in the destruction of the older and defeated animal, his life is preserved also. He gives place gracefully, and occasionally leaves the herd or school, henceforth to rusticate on the mellow side of loneliness or to rejoin after the season.

The species cannot be preserved unless the individuals are, and the merest reflection is enough to convince one that the survival of either is impossible, were the combat to the death.

The severity of the contest varies a good deal. In many cases the selection is determined apparently by spontaneous preference. Instances are known, among birds and mammals that engage in fighting for the possession of the female, in which the competitors have been left fighting while the female unobserved took her departure with a third suitor.

There are many species where there is no battle, but the males seek to captivate the opposite sex by exhibiting their personal attractions in beauty of plumage, fur, form, colour, voice and so forth. Sometimes the males dance and spar round each other, and in certain cases, as, for example, the penguins, the competitive love-making is a pretty display of fine manners and politeness.

#### **Provision against Serious Injury.**

Where animals engage in more or less severe duels, provision is made against serious or fatal injury. This provision appears to have been evolved parallel with the development of the weapon. Sometimes it takes the form of a shield, and sometimes the weapon itself, while effective as a defence against the attacks of preying beasts, is rendered ineffective for the infliction of serious injury to males of the same species.

Although wild boars fight desperately, the blows fall on each other's tusks, or on a layer of gristly skin covering

the shoulder, called the shield. In old age the boar is handicapped owing to the tusks becoming curved up and inwards.

Stallions attack each other in the neck with their teeth when fighting, and so do male seals and the baboons of the Cape of Good Hope. In each case they are protected by very thick manes. Many carnivorous animals are similarly protected, while others have tough loose skin round the neck.

Among combative cattle the bull's horns are placed at such an angle that in butting against each other the points are out of danger. In some varieties the horns are very short, not like the cow's, which are intended for serious work in defending her young against the attacks of wolves and other predatory creatures.

The fiercer the contest, the more handicapped are the belligerents. Deer, especially the red-deer, are notoriously combative, but while their antlers form a good defence against carnivora, they are futile as lethal weapons against each other.<sup>1</sup>

Let two persons arm themselves each with the gnarled branch of a tree and fight a mock combat in the manner of the stags. They will find it enjoyably funny, and they will wonder what Darwin meant in contending that the stag's antlers, while not so dangerous as single points, are well adapted for fighting with rivals possessing similar weapons. It was simply ludicrous for Darwin to write of stags "bellowing a challenge to mortal combat," as though after the rutting season one might expect to find the moors strewn with corpses! The fiercest battle is really an innocent affair.

The horns of other ruminants are all prevented in some way from inflicting grave injury upon comrades. The springbok has horns bent at right angles, with the points inwards and towards each other. Other antelopes have long curved horns bent backwards so far that they reach almost beyond the middle of the back. The horns of rams

<sup>1</sup> Accidents with a fatal termination, equivalent to manslaughter or accidental death, do take place. It sometimes happens that the horns of duelling stags or male elks become inextricably interlocked, so that both competitors perish. Here is a biological comment upon the folly of competitive armaments!

are spiral, and the lyrated horns of the antelope, *Sirepsiceros kudu*, are right and left-hand helices. The horns of the moose extend five and a half feet apart at the tips, and against rivals similarly armed they are quite harmless.

#### **The Rarity of War among Animals.**

In their haste to demonstrate that all nature is at war, the professors with the bloodshot eyes see war where there is none. It is not surprising, since real war among the lower animals is a rarity, that they have not looked for it in the direction in which it is to be found.

Darwin gave a useful clue when, in describing some amazing customs among savages, he wrote: "These miserable and indirect consequences of our highest faculties may be compared with the incidental and occasional mistakes of the instincts of the lower animals."

#### **What is War ?**

In that violent strife between members of the same species which we call war, fighting to the death is intentional, both sexes take part, irrespective of age, all individuals suffer, *and the fittest do not tend to be preserved.*