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THE GREAT DELUSION OF OUR TIME.

It would be but human if this age were a trifle supercilious, not to say deluded, concerning its own powers. Great things have been said of it, nor can it be denied that it has fallen heir to great things. At least it has enjoyed and tested beyond all other ages the fruit of the tree of knowledge. "It is an epoch," says John Fiske, "the grandeur of which dwarfs all others that can be named since the beginning of the historic period, if not since man first became distinctively human. In their mental habits, in their methods of inquiry, and in the data at their command, the men of the present day who have fully kept pace with the scientific movement are separated from the men whose education ended in eighteen hundred and thirty by an immeasurably wider gulf than has ever before divided one progressive generation of men from their predecessors. The intellectual development of the human race has been suddenly, almost abruptly, raised to a higher plane than that upon which it had proceeded from the days of the primitive troglodyte to the days of our great-grandfathers."

This statement is so far true that it is dangerous. Doubtless there are a great many people, possibly a majority of so-called educated men, who would, without considering the limitations of scientific knowledge, accept these words literally, who have formed the habit of thinking that the light which we possess to-day is, compared with that possessed by Luther or George Washington or Socrates, as

sunlight to starlight. Their view is not only that we know infinitely more than George Washington knew, but that we alone possess the final criteria of knowledge. Socrates and Washington knew a good deal, but they knew vaguely; they could not distinguish accurately between fact and delusion. Our supreme advantage is supposed to be not only that we know, but that we *know* we know. This egotistic cast or vogue of thought envelops the mind of the age. It is more authoritative than Kaiser or Pope, than dogma or creed. It percolates through all classes, it penetrates our literature, it colors our judgment. It predetermines our view, shapes the outline of our facts, and is interwoven with the texture of our thought. In a considerable proportion of our typical men it has bred a sense of supreme judicial qualification. In the presence of a magisterial equipment so vast and complete, men of previous ages appear dwarfed; their efforts seem infantile. Even Jesus appears to grope. Our Scientific Judiciary does indeed reverence the purity of his spirit, but when it comes to his authority, or his views about God, they tenderly but firmly put him out of court.

Now this sovereign attitude of the human mind has in the course of history proved intoxicating, and therefore perilous. There was a man once who said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" Too much magistracy had begun to impair the finer workings of his mind. His next step was to eat straw

like an ox. He lost sight somehow of organic relations. This suggests a vital question. Does our age actually possess the equipment for a magisterial attitude? Let us apply a test. How does this equipment work practically? Light is a thing the main value of which is practical. If it be really clear and strong it should be able to guide our steps. If the light of our time is to that of other ages as sunlight to starlight, then it ought to show us with a clearness never vouchsafed to Socrates or to Jesus just what the battle of life is, and how to meet it. Above all, there is one point at which it ought to show the path of progressive evolution, from which it ought to chase the thicker shadows of the past, the darker traces of atavism, the ferocious reminiscence of the brute. I refer to the social problem. Let us look at the facts; let us turn to the views that are prevailing to-day; let us take those writers who most thoroughly represent the magisterial attitude of our times; let us see what light they throw on the social problem, what that radiance is which has caused the glory of Socrates and of Jesus to grow pale, and has made the intellectual distance between Washington and ourselves so vast that we can hardly see him. I quote from an article by Brooks Adams in the *Atlantic Monthly* for last November. Let me ask you to notice that Mr. Adams speaks not only from the vantage ground of a careful student and an eyewitness of the social movement, but as one having final authority in regard to the laws of the cosmos.

"From the humblest peasant to the mightiest empire humanity is waging a ceaseless and pitiless struggle for existence in which the unfit perish. This struggle is maintained with every weapon and by every artifice, and success is attained not only by endurance and sagacity, but by cunning and ferocity. Chief, however, among the faculties which have given superiority, must rank

the martial quality, for history teaches us that nothing can compensate a community for defeat in battle. War is competition in its fiercest form." "Human destiny has been wrought out through war." "The first settlers slew the Indians, or were themselves slain. . . . To consolidate an homogeneous empire we crushed the social system of the South, and lastly we cast forth Spain. The story is written in blood, and common sense teaches us that as the past has been, so will be the future."

Applying this pitiless principle to our commercial relations, Mr. Adams argues that our only salvation is to maintain it to the bitter end. There is no hope of improvement; the human organism must fight or die. "The evolution of human society, *like that of the brute*, must be along lines of pitiless warfare." Notice in this quotation what the light of to-day is, according to Mr. Adams; it is the doctrine of Natural Selection. By its pure white light he discerns without any illusions the pathway of society. "Human destiny has been wrought out through war." "Dreams of peace have always allured mankind to their undoing." "Nature has decreed that animals shall compete for life, in other words, destroy or be destroyed. We can hope for no exemption from the common lot." Surely nothing could be more logical than this. It ought to come with a shock to those who have never thought out in their own minds the unlimited application of this modern scientific theory to human life. It has been said by the highest authority, "Natural Selection works through death." As Mr. Adams has put it, *war* is Nature's decree, *not* human brotherhood. The latter, alas, is an illusion, a tradition handed down from the vague and inconsequential ages. Nature's real decree for mankind is war to the knife.

In the *Atlantic Monthly* for January, 1904, is a powerfully written article by Mr. London on the Scab, in which the

same view is maintained. I quote the following : —

“ In a competitive society, where men struggle with one another for food and shelter, what is more natural than that generosity, when it diminishes the food and shelter of men other than he who is generous, should be held an accursed thing? . . . To strike at a man's food and shelter is to strike at his life, and in a society organized on a tooth-and-nail basis, such an act, performed though it may be under the guise of generosity, is none the less menacing and terrible.

“ It is for this reason that a laborer is so fiercely hostile to another laborer who offers to work for less pay or longer hours. . . .

“ Thus, the generous laborer, giving more of a day's work for less return, . . . threatens the life of his less generous brother laborer, and, at the best, if he does not destroy that life, he diminishes it. Whereupon the less generous laborer looks upon him as an enemy, and, as men are inclined to do in a tooth-and-nail society, he tries to kill the man who is trying to kill him.

“ When a striker kills with a brick the man who has taken his place, he has no sense of wrong-doing. In the deepest holds of his being, though he does not reason the impulse, he has an ethical sanction. He feels dimly that he has justification, just as the home-defending Boer felt, though more sharply, with each bullet he fired at the invading English. Behind every brick thrown by a striker is the selfish ‘ will to live ’ of himself and the slightly altruistic will to live of his family. The family-group came into the world before the state-group, and society being still on the primitive basis of tooth and nail, the will to live of the state is not so compelling to the striker as the will to live of his family and himself.”

Mr. London scientifically clears up the moral character of the Scab, generously including most of us in his diagno-

sis. He shows that, however we may appear to the casual observer, we are all Scabs by turn, and that, though outwardly we often seem to be generous, we are really true at heart to the principle of Natural Selection. Concerning each one of us, he remarks, “ He does not scab because he wants to scab. No whim of the spirit, no burgeoning of the heart, leads him to give more of his labor-power than they for a certain sum.

“ It is because he cannot get work on the same terms as they that he is a Scab. . . . Nobody desires to scab, to give most for least. The ambition of every individual is quite the opposite.”

I pass over the argument by which Mr. London goes on to show that everybody, except King Edward and a few people whom hereditary advantage has rescued from the real struggle of life, is at times a Scab, — the laborer, the capitalist, the merchant, *the minister of the gospel*, the American nation, the English nation, — in short, every human organism which is in this competitive warfare plays by turn the part of Scab, according as the strategy of its situation requires. We work for less pay to get control of the situation, but having once got control of the situation we use it to crush the Scab, reduce competition, and secure larger returns.

Now I have quoted these two writers because they are representative. Not only have they carefully studied the organization of society, but they clearly reflect the illumination of that philosophy which, more than any other, is the distinguishing and magisterial equipment of our day. It is by the light of Evolution that we feel qualified to test the Bible, Christianity, and, in fact, every human belief or moral position. For Evolution is to the popular scientific mind so absolutely established as to seem approximately identical with the cosmos itself. It is therefore a final and authoritative test. It is evident at a glance that both these writers have studied our

social problems by the light of Natural Selection, and that this is to their minds the only light worth considering. This fact classifies them as distinctively men of the type referred to by John Fiske. They are, according to him, separated from the men whose education ended in eighteen hundred and thirty by an immensely wider gulf than has ever before divided one progressive generation of men from their predecessors. For Natural Selection is the authoritative type of Evolution so far as living organisms are concerned, and Evolution is our distinctive magisterial equipment. Scientific observation existed before our time, but it is our peculiar glory to have discovered the scientific philosophy which appears to coördinate, account for, and interpret all known facts past and present, and which has therefore suggested the idea of an apparently absolute yet purely intellectual criterion of truth and test of reality.

Moreover, these writers are consistent; they follow their logic to the bitter end. They do not mix things up. Natural Selection, which works through death, figures in their scheme as the sole law of human development. It is Nature's decree. "Dreams of peace are an illusion." — "Human destiny has been wrought out through blood." — "Common sense teaches us that as has been the past so will be the future." — That condemns The Hague Tribunal to the Limbo of hopeless phantasms. It exposes the folly of our modern attempts to mitigate the ferocity of war. We are but trifling with an irresistible force; ferocity and murderous cunning are always Nature's tools, by which she shapes not only our physical, but our ethical manhood.

This, then, is the way in which the magisterial doctrine solves our social problems, and this is the present social status of the age which has basked in its light, which "has been suddenly, almost abruptly, raised to a higher plane than that upon which the race had proceeded

from the days of the primitive troglodyte to the days of our great-grandfathers." Let us take account of stock. We have society actually organized to-day on a primitive tooth-and-nail basis. "From the humblest peasant to the mightiest empire humanity is waging a ceaseless and pitiless struggle for existence in which the unfit perish," a struggle in which "success is attained not only by endurance and sagacity, but by cunning and ferocity." In fact, we are, according to Mr. London's article, already passing some important milestones on the backward road toward the moral status of the primitive troglodyte. "When a striker kills with a brick the man who has taken his place, he has no sense of wrong-doing. . . . He has an ethical sanction. . . . The family-group came into the world before the state-group, and society being still on the primitive basis of tooth and nail, the will to live of the state is not so compelling to the striker as the will to live of his family and himself." Now, as Mr. Adams would say, common sense teaches us whither this points. If the family-group existed before the state-group, then family needs existed before state or religious ordinances. "Thou shalt not steal." "Thou shalt not kill." What are these belated requirements of social convention compared to the necessities of the family development! If a brother clergyman draws away your congregation, reduces your salary, and so compels your children to go barefoot, why not knock him on the head! This is troglodytism, if the present writer understands the word, and he thinks that he does. It solves the social question by *disintegrating* society, and the singular fact is that Natural Selection, which is supposed to be the principle operating in moral development, which is, in fact, identical with the cosmic order, should have led us back in a kind of blind-man's waltz, till we have, according to these writers, actually reached the primitive tooth-and-nail basis, from which, according to modern science,

we started hundreds of thousands of years ago ; and that we should have reached the lowest point thus far under the guidance of an age whose intellectual grandeur dwarfs all others.

No doubt every optimist in the country will declare that this is a stalwart misrepresentation of the present facts, but if a sober-minded man considers the present aspect of the labor question, the political situation in New York, Chicago, St. Louis, and our other great cities, the enormous development of graft, the thievish character of our new methods of finance, the fact that the small investor is to-day, like the man of scriptural times who traveled between Jerusalem and Jericho, sure to fall among thieves unless personally conducted ; if he reflects on the Standard Oil operations and the Turkish situation and the impotency of our modern civilization to put a stop to lynching, or to prevent such a fearful catastrophe as war between Japan and Russia, he is forced to confess that there is, after all, too much truth in this dark picture, and that our conduct is quite often on the tooth-and-nail basis.

But there is nothing new about this ; it is the old story of a wicked world which always moves in a circle, which needs salvation, which cannot save itself because it cannot make steady moral advancement, which builds empires only that they may perish under the weight of their moral corruption. It is the old *humanum est errare*, out of which grew that conviction of sin, that cry to Heaven for help, which since the time of the Vedas has echoed out of every quarter of the globe, from the heart of burdened humanity. The Troglodyte we have always with us ; like the Wandering Jew, he never dies. His characteristics are always the same ; he takes a few steps forward, and then turns back toward the tiger and the ape. But he never becomes either tiger or ape. He becomes what we call a fiend, or, in modern day parlance, a degenerate. He

is always arguing plausibly for the tooth-and-nail ethics, always ignoring its limitations, always confounding the lines at which a higher principle should take control. He is always putting the struggle for a livelihood before honor and right. How many there are of him we never know, though we always try to find out before election day. Often he lives in high places, and very often he succeeds in organizing society. He always controls a great many votes. He has a kind of primitive logic which takes hold of men with a sort of cosmic force. Behind him is the stern fact that man has an animal nature, that this animal nature is without doubt engaged in a severe struggle for physical existence, that Natural Selection, like Gravitation, really has a grip on him. In short, it is the old story of the world, the flesh, and the devil, apparently, though not really, backed up by the cosmos itself. It is the same world which Socrates faced, and Jesus, and Paul. Righteous men have faced it in all ages and feared not. Often it has quailed before their rebuke. It has recognized an authority higher than intellect, greater than that of physical nature, and has cried out, "We have sinned !" The only difference in our own time is that we have noble-hearted and high-minded men, not at all troglodytes as to their personal conduct or ideals, who, writing with the magisterial authority vaguely supposed to be possessed by our modern science, deliberately acquit the wicked world. True, it is cruel, it is brutal ; they would be ashamed, as high-minded gentlemen, to act on such principles, yet they declare with the finality of absolute truth that the world cannot act otherwise ; it is simply carrying out Nature's decree.

The peculiar feature, then, of our times is, not that the world is on a primitive tooth-and-nail basis, but that it stands acquitted, nay, justified, by a verdict apparently based upon the doctrine of Evolution, and that conscience is discred-

ited and put out of court by the apparent authority of those standards which have given us a supreme and magisterial position among the ages. The Troglodyte now has an unassailable backer in the scholar who sits on a judgment seat higher than that of Moses, and who says to the world, "You have no grounds for crying, '*peccavi*;' you have not sinned; you are doing just right; you are debtor to the flesh to live after the flesh. It is Nature's decree, not that you should be a brother to your neighbor, but that you should rob him and fight him for a livelihood."

Words would fail to tell how, from the time when Darwin's and Spencer's philosophies were published, this magisterial tendency has proceeded to assist the Troglodyte in cheapening character, by its judicial decisions based on the evolutionary hypothesis. It has not only enabled our primitive friend to throw bricks with greater cheerfulness, but it has made his *creed* impregnable; nay, it has enabled him to make all other creeds look foolish. The Troglodyte always believed that preachers of righteousness retained the claw-foot under their shoes and stockings. He knew that prophets and apostles only waited for a chance to show their teeth. His intuition told him that generous people were really scabbing when they went about doing good. He saw by a kind of cosmic light that those great ideals upon which our higher morality fed were silly dreams. His reason told him that the power which makes for righteousness was a sun-god, or a highly developed form of ghost worship, or a fetish, due to the effect of environment. He always *understood* that the moral nature itself was a product of circumstance without the least atom of final authority, a kind of vermiform appendix which were best removed, since its place has been superseded by the exact knowledge of the cosmic law. Why should a man longer be punched by conscience when he has risen

to an understanding of Nature's decree? What do we want of morals when reason has become supreme? All this the Troglodyte knew in his heart, but he was a little shy of telling it because the stalwart moralists had the ear of public opinion. Now, behold a Daniel come to judgment, who has not only confirmed his suspicions, proved his creed, and made him a prophet of the cosmos, but has made the stalwart moralists themselves give up the validity of their moral perceptions, while they try to explain that their opinions were really based on Evolution.

If our primitive friend has any sense of humor, his sides must shake over this last performance, for it has made him look not only honest, but authoritative. It has stimulated a natural passion for his primitive ideals, and it has taken the wind out of some of his opponents. Their voice is not as clear, nor their presence as distinguishable, nor is the mass of people as much interested in them. In fact, the popular interest leans toward animalism; the animal cuts more figure than the spiritual. The scientific moralists are thinking their case over; many of them are still trying to patch it up with Evolution. They have not yet dreamed of falling back upon the validity of the moral perception itself. And there are a great many people who want to be good, but have lost faith in their moral ideals, and are humbly looking to the scientists and the philosophers for their moral nutriment. As to the prophets and apostles, their voice is still and small in the ear of a moral nature whose main study it is to supply practical ethics enough to make business prosperous and the governing party secure.

Now Mr. Huxley long ago discovered the blunder that had been made in applying the theory of Natural Selection to Social Evolution. He saw that the cosmic light had failed at this point, and he introduced a variation as follows: "There is another fallacy which seems

to me to pervade the so-called 'Ethics of Evolution.' It is the notion that, because, on the whole, animals and plants have advanced in perfection of organization by means of the struggle for existence and the consequent survival of the fittest, therefore men in society, men as ethical beings, must look to the same process to help them toward perfection. Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step, and the substitution for it of another which may be called the ethical process. What we call goodness or virtue involves a course of conduct which in all respects is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint, in place of thrusting aside or treading down all competitors it requires that the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellows. Its influence is directed not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive. It *repudiates* what we call the gladiatorial theory of existence. Laws and moral precepts are directed to the end of curbing the cosmic process and reminding the individual of his duty to the *community*, to the protection and interest of which he owes, if not existence itself, at least the life of something better than a brutal savage."

Mr. Huxley made this discovery just as any one of us might, by a simple common-sense observation of human nature as it *works* practically. He did not, however, sympathetically observe all the phenomena involved, and he excluded some of them for this reason. So that his theory of Social Evolution never could claim magisterial authority, simply because it is incomplete. It is no doubt a profound discovery that the altruistic principle conserves and builds up human society, while antagonism disintegrates it; that love conquers, overrules, and fructifies the lower competitive forces, as animal life conquers, overrules, and fruc-

tifies chemical affinity or gravitation in organic development. But it was not original with Mr. Huxley; thousands of people had seen and applied it before he was born. Jesus was the real discoverer; He first mastered the social or ethical principle. He found it to be universal good neighborhood or brotherhood, traced it to its source in God's fatherhood, flooded it with the Divine affection, put it into his own self-sacrificing life, and showed us how we might practically attain to it through his help. Since then the idea has been symbolized by the Cross of Christ, and has for eighteen centuries been regarded as the Christian solution, though Christendom has too often been antagonistic to it.

Mr. Huxley asserted that this ethical process must be substituted for the cosmic process. Jesus and Paul declared it to be the supreme force in the cosmic process itself. Mr. Huxley's trouble was that he, too, fell under the great delusion of fancying that this philosophic form of truth was the final and ultimate one, and, therefore, he identified Natural Selection with the cosmic process itself; but when he followed his new light he lost his magisterial authority over the high church evolutionists; and they are, to-day, barking at the same old tree up which they suppose their truth has climbed, though it has gone out of sight.

But, whichever theory is correct, could there be a greater delusion than this sense of magistracy? Have we anything to back it up? Have we any theory on any subject which is universally accepted or can be reckoned as a final and absolute form of knowledge? Philosophy is surely an enormous help to both intellectual and moral perception, but is it possible to have a philosophy that can take the place of perception? And if it were possible, what would become of perception, and of individuality, and of genius, and of inventive discovery under such a predetermining influence? I would not be understood for a moment as holding

these writers whom I have quoted as responsible for this tendency. We are all infected. We all take turns at it. Let us say that it is the *Zeitgeist* that has done it, and shake hands all around. It was Count Ito who said that when he was preparing the Japanese Constitution he tried to think how Buddha would look at the matter, and he added, "I think that I did succeed fairly well in getting into his skin." It might be worth while if some of us would occasionally try to get outside the epidermis of our so-called modern thought, and take a straight look at the age from an exterior point of view; it need not be so far off as Buddha, but sufficiently remote to afford a good perspective. It is quite possible that from such a clear, cool height of vision our generation might seem to be, like Nebuchadnezzar, a little touched in the head. I have selected these writers because they are strictly logical, and, unlike some of us, they do not straddle. They take the most authoritative type of Evolution, the one which most deserves to be regarded as Nature's decree, the one which Mr. Huxley styles the cosmic process, the only type of philosophy which could at the present day by any possibility be exalted to the rank of a final standard, and they think it out to the bitter end. If we have any clear cosmic torch, this is the one. They hold it high and wave it wide. By its illumination we see the column of humanity with reversed arms turning its back on all the great ideals toward which it has crawled upward in the space of a hundred thousand years or so, cheapening the moral nature, and marching back without conviction of sin toward the original homunculus. This is a dark picture, certainly.

True, if we remove this cosmic torch things do not look so dark. There are at least as many people to-day as ever working for the interests of righteousness and peace and human brotherhood. They make fewer practical blunders, they keep the issues clearer, they utilize

the results of science, they bring to the task a broader scientific knowledge, a profounder sympathy for human conditions, a greater willingness to look at all sides. Witness President Eliot's noble contribution to a better understanding between labor and capital. These people are putting up a stout fight for the moral nature, and they meet with much success among plain folk. They vitalize character, for the moral nature feeds upon revelations and ideals as the body feeds upon bread. But the great difficulty with these people is that they are all fools. This does not mean that they are obliged to have guardians appointed over them; in reality, many of them are guardians of the commonwealth or community to which they belong. They are not dull in practical affairs; their foolishness consists in the fact that all their high ideals and inspirations rest upon a so-called semi-mythical or subliminal basis which they cannot prove before this infallible tribunal that has indorsed our friend the Troglodyte. They cannot make their articles of faith square with any specific type of evolutionary doctrine, or prove their revelations to the latest type of scholarship. Our magisterial authorities are withholding a verdict on their case until the Society of Psychological Research has finished its investigations.

This lack of intellectual status gives them a phantasmal appearance, which probably caused Mr. London and Mr. Adams to overlook them altogether. Indeed, one frequently hears in intellectual circles the statement that no one to-day believes in such articles of faith. But it is the fools who bring practical light to the social question. They do not stop to square things with Evolution, they do not wait for the Society of Psychological Research, they do not ask how things originated. They simply look at the problem in hand. They have one supreme authority, — it is moral perception *assisted* by science. It is made keen by practical use, and clear by walking in the

light of the highest ideals. They and they alone see the value of the moral organism; they see that its supreme organic law is love. They see that there is a power behind it, a power which makes for righteousness, and that it has its supreme embodiment in the Gospel of Christ. They see the importance of the struggle for bread. Their heart goes out with sympathy for those who are in that struggle; they themselves are in it, and they know what it means. They know the sinister outlook of the cosmic order; they have felt its dread temptation. They know the bitterness of defeat in battle. Through long ages they have maintained this fight, not for a system of ethics, but for the worth and deliverance of the moral nature itself. Often they have felt the tooth and nail, ay, the beak and the claw of a degenerate civilization. Often they have been brought before magistrates, robbed of their goods, delivered unto death. Always they have appeared to be opposing the cosmic order, always they have been called fools for their exaggerated valuation of the moral nature. And yet to them it has always appeared to be the one great reality of this life, the soul of humanity, the offspring of the gods, the heir of a life beyond the grave, the bond of a human brotherhood. For all human suffering there seemed to be compensation if only this higher manhood were not debased, but for moral defeat there was no compensation. Therefore, to deliver this moral nature they have dared the worst. Often single-handed, poor, friendless, struggling for daily bread against mighty odds, they have yet found courage to go forward, chanting, as they marched, their battle hymn: —

Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also.
The body they may kill,
God's truth abideth still.
His kingdom is forever.

There is something in this estimate that awakens a response in humanity; it

touches a lost chord. It is no vague intuition; it is the testimony of the moral constitution itself, and it appeals to the moral consciousness in every one of us. It is backed up by the logic of life. It is like the testimony of the elm tree when it tells us that it must have sunlight and air for its top, and moisture and earth for its roots. It is by this authority that the fools speak and act. Not always have they understood; often they have been beguiled into thinking that their real authority was a dogma or a theology. Then they have ceased to be fools; they have become magisterial, and have crushed their religious geniuses and killed their prophets. Often they have fancied that they have eliminated the element of mystery from ethics, and established morals on a basis of scientific logic; and then they have lost their dynamic force. Now and then there has been a fool who has understood, and his voice has shaken the world. For every great leader of men, whose trumpet note has rallied the army of righteousness, and led it to victory, has been face to face with the power that makes for righteousness, so that he could say with one of old, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee."

In his *Social Evolution* Mr. Kidd attributes all our upward march to the fools. He has, however, an euphemism for them; he calls their ideals and inspirations supra-rational. If he is correct, history actually resolves itself into one supreme battlefield. It is the fight of the moral nature, first for survival, then for conquest, through the power of its supra-rational ideals. But whether or not Mr. Kidd be right concerning the past, there is surely but one battle to-day. On its outcome hangs the fate of all our institutions and of our individual souls. It is the battle of the fools. And there is but one great question to-day, namely, whether we will cling to our magisterial tendency, or join the fools and accept the validity of the moral perceptions.

John H. Denison.

TROLLEY COMPETITION WITH THE RAILROADS.

It is barely eight years since street railroads have outgrown the horse-car period, and have required the use of the word "interurban" to describe the enlargement of their field of traffic. The electric installations of the early nineties served their purpose in a measure, and were in many cases attended by extensions of the local traction lines, but their competition with steam railroads was entirely negligible until after 1895. The year 1895 is a landmark in the history of electric roads; prior to that time it may be broadly said that the street railroad system of each city was an independent unit, organized with the sole object of carrying passengers from one part of town to another, and with a remote interest, if any interest at all, in traffic centring outside the city limits. The possibilities to be achieved by running electric cars at moderately high speed along ten or fifteen mile stretches of country roads, deriving both a local and a species of through business by coupling up adjacent cities and towns, came, as a result of improvements in the art, suddenly into view, and a series of extensive additions to existing lines were planned or begun, radiating out far and wide from the original confines of the city limits and the adjacent suburbs.

It may perhaps be questioned whether the steam railroads were really as slow as they appeared to be in realizing that in this interurban development they would shortly have to face novel and strongly fortified competition. The electric roads were spreading, and there was no obvious way to prevent them from doing so. Early attempts at competition were treated as isolated cases, and it is only since 1898 that the electric roads have demanded recognition in the field of short-haul passenger traffic.

From 1898 through 1901 the characteristic of interurban road development was exceedingly rapid extension, and during 1902 and 1903 there have been considerable reorganization and adjustment, the loose ends have been coupled up, and extension has been somewhat more moderate and perhaps better directed than previously. The government census report on electric railroads for 1902 estimated the total length of main track on June 30 of that year as 16,648 miles, as against a street railroad mileage of 5783 in 1890. During the twelve years, according to the report, mileage worked by animal power decreased 95 per cent; by cable power, 51 per cent, and by steam power, 76 per cent, while electric working increased 1637 per cent.

In spite of the construction and connection of interurban electric lines to form through routes fifty miles or more in length, their profitable territory still lies about a series of centres, and it is worthy of note that these centres are not cities of the first magnitude, and doubtless never will be. The interurban traffic about New York is carried by the steam roads, because the congestion in the streets is too great to permit any extended use of cars that must thread their way through eight or ten miles of city streets before reaching open country. Similarly, in Chicago, the Illinois Central runs a lucrative suburban service with cars of special type, and reports that it does not feel the competition of the street cars, which nominally compete in the service to most of the suburban points reached, but have not the advantage of a private right of way, and cannot furnish rapid transit in its true meaning. It is a primary necessity in the suburban traffic of a great city that rapidly moving cars shall not occupy the same thoroughfare with slow