



Balm.

You know not what a heart ache is
 Unless you've had a trial:
 You cannot feel another's woe
 Without a heart's denial.

You cannot know what sickness is,
 If always you've had health:
 Nor do you know a poor man's lot
 If yours has been of wealth.

You know not what it is to have
 The wolf howl at the door;
 If you have always had your meals
 And never have been poor.

You know not if another's shoe
 Abrase the toe or heel—
 Unless you've had a corn yourself;
 It's pain you do not feel.

A cringing wretch before the bar
 Whom all the people blame
 Would be as nice as you appear
 If he were bred the same.

Before another you condemn,
 Or slime him with disgrace,
 Think what, perhaps, you might have
 been
 Had you been in his place.

All men, and I think women, too,
 Do just the best they can;
 For brains and their environments
 Control the race of man.

Then give a thought of sympathy,
 For each lorn wail of woe;
 For you, no doubt, would be as he,
 Were you surrounded so.

—G. H. Walser.

Nature.

B. F. UNDERWOOD.

By Nature is commonly understood the totality of material phenomena, worlds and all the physical forms and activities that belong to them. This view comprises in the natural domain the bodily organization, the intelligence and instincts of all the creatures below man, and even the physical structure, the appetites and passions of the human race. From this classification the mind of man is excluded. The body returns to the dust whence it came, the spirit, the divine spark in man, to the God who gave it.

A larger view would recognize in the entire animal world, especially in the intelligence and affection of the higher brutes, for instance, the dog and the horse, something akin to the mind of man, and therefore entitled to rank above purely material phenomena; for it would be as difficult to show that the preceptive power, the consciousness and the incipient moral nature of the dog are the result of the action of material atoms, as that the more developed mental powers and ethical qualities of man are merely the functions of physical organization.

The modern scientific conception of evolution, according to which the higher organic forms have been evolved from lower forms, and the

higher intelligences from lower intelligences corresponding with the less developed structures, is that there is a genetic relationship, a primordial kinship between man and the despised brutes, and that, although he is immeasurably above them, he and they belong to a common order of existence and to the same great domain of being; and if we recognize the instinct of the bee and the faithfulness of the dog as well as the mind and heart of man as but different manifestations and products of the Universal Energy immanent in all phenomena, material and mental alike, we shall find no difficulty in viewing man, even as a spiritual being, as part of the natural order in which are also included brute life and all material phenomena, from the movement of a cloud of dust to the wonderful revolution of a planet in its orbit.

The ancient Greek have elevated views of Nature which they glorified and deified. They sang its praises and aimed to imitate its methods. Natural beauty, natural symmetry, natural harmony, was the object of their strivings, and their art and sculptures, their poetry and oratory and their language with its marvelous beauty, finish and flexibility, remain to attest the success with which they cultivated the study of Nature.

In later times, under the influence of theological pessimism, men came to look upon Nature as essentially evil, something corrupt and vile, because accursed of God. Although the Creator had originally pronounced the works of his hand good, the devil had thwarted his plans by successfully tempting the first human being to sin and thereby introducing evil into the world, all Nature became corrupt and depraved; the earth was made to bring forth thorns and thistles where before bloomed roses of rarest beauty and sweetest perfume; the frown of God was upon all things and "Nature, from her seat, sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe that all was lost."

It is still believed that in man there was something of the divinity which should war against Nature, crush and overcome it even though the struggle involved a life of pain, wretchedness and horrible death. To follow the promptings of Nature was a sin to be mourned over, to be expiated only by prayer and fastings and self-inflicted pain. The natural instincts and passions were regarded as the promptings of Satan, and all pleasures of life were

the means he used to lure men to destruction. To forsake family and friends, to withdraw from society, to go into the monastery or the desert, was the highest duty of man. To despise the world and all its natural enjoyments was necessary to regain God's favor, and to escape torture beyond the grave as horrible as omnipotence could inflict and as lasting as eternity. "A hideous, sordid and emaciated maniac" says Lecky, "without knowledge, without patriotism, without natural affection, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, and quailing before the ghastly phantoms of his delirious brain, had become the ideal of the nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero and the lives of Socrates and Cato."

Hundreds of years later when Nature-hatred and asceticism and pessimism had found their foe in industrial life—the condition of a progressive civilization—philosophers arose who taught that the path to perfection led back to Nature from which man had departed, and that in savage life, unperturbed by the artificialities of civilization, was to be found the method of living required to restore man to his first estate. Of this view Rousseau was the most brilliant and accomplished advocate.

The view of today is, among progressive thinkers, that the earth and man are in a process of growth, of evolution, and that Nature is neither depraved nor perfect, but modifiable and improvable. Man is the highest product of the universal energy that has appeared upon this mundane sphere, and having arrived at a condition in which he can discern the general trend of evolution he is able to cooperate with the forces of the universe, and in some degree, to accelerate progress. Recognizing his own race as the highest form upon the planet, yet imperfect, he can aim at higher conditions, help the least perfect, and make the conditions for general advancement more favorable than would be possible without his intervention.

Thus Nature makes her highest product instrumental in accomplishing her ends. Man sees the imperfection in the undeveloped conditions about him, and these he can change in adaptation to his requirements. He can drain the swamps, and improve the natural products of the ground, converting wild and almost worthless fruits and plants into nutritious and

delicious food. Himself a part of Nature, he can assist in improving it and making the world better for his having lived. His own volition and co-operative methods replace, in the action of his own race, the process of natural selection which played so important a part in the early history of man and which prevails now generally throughout the animal and vegetable world. Man's wisest efforts are but Nature's methods, for in the light of the highest science Nature includes the entire universe, pervaded and permeated with the universal energy which embraces the life and heart of all humanity. In a large sense Nature comprises all the heights and depths of being. And as Emerson wrote:

"Out from the heart of Nature rolled
 The burden of the Bible old,
 The litanies of nations came
 Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
 Up from the burning core below,
 The canticles of love and woe.
 The temples grew as grow the grass;
 Art might obey, but not surpass."

Oh, Death, Where Is Thy Sting?

Manifestly, annihilation of one's personality can, by no possibility, be any worse than would have been a failure of his parents to have made the acquaintance of each other; and surely such a failure would have been nothing of which any one could have reasonably complained. If one's next sleep should be dreamless, what would it matter if it lasted nine hours instead of eight, or ten instead of nine, or twenty instead of ten, or or twenty days, or months, or years, or centuries? Or what if, after he had remained asleep, unconscious and inexistent for a million centuries, or years, would one be harmed by continuing this through all of the succeeding eternity any more than by having been non-existent through all of the eternity that preceded his advent into existence?

If a dreamless sleep is good for the sleeper for any length of time, why should it be bad for him for any other length of time, or for time without end? If dreamless, endless sleep—that is to say, death as conceived of by rationalists—deprives us of all of the enjoyments of life, it likewise deprives us of all memory thereof and of all regret in respect thereto, and protects us from every pain, saves us from every sorrow and defends us against every danger and dread. So that it is the rationalist and not the religionist (and especially the religionist who believes in a hell of a hereafter) that can apostrophize: "Oh, death, where is thy sting?"—Independent Pulpit.