

# The Evolutionist and Death

*Evolution*

VERNON KELLOG, in *Scribner's Magazine*:

In any discussion of death with its mystery, we ought to have constantly in mind the limitations of our special senses, even as strongly reinforced as they now are by instruments of great delicacy and precision. We must keep in mind the ignorance I have previously referred to regarding the fundamental character of matter and energy. If we try to sum up our present understanding of the ultimate make-up of the universe by declaring that all is but electricity in motion, as a great physicist has declared, we have not done much more than to affirm our profound ignorance of the ultimate facts of existence. We keep on discovering new forms of energy. The "cosmic rays" which Millikan is studying so intensively show us that interplanetary space is not the void we have for so long tried to conceive of its being. Atoms are out there, breaking down and releasing tremendous forces which come to us as a radiant energy that penetrates six feet of lead. What mighty phenomena we have still to become acquainted with! What secrets of the cosmos are still to be revealed to us!

The stored-up reserves of energy in various forms of inorganic matter are only beginning to be realized by us. What reserves are there in or-

ganic matter? What possibilities of transformations are there in living bodies? In what new mould may life be cast when that moment of change in the human body comes which we call the moment of death? These are questions now unanswerable, but some time we may have the answers. It is a bold man who would venture now to guess them. It is a reckless man who would declare, with the dogmatism which is no less characteristic of some scientific men than of some theologians, that death ends humanness, unless by humanness we mean only that special form of it with which we are now familiar. The human body and spirit as we now recognize them may constitute but a stage in the full flowering of humanness. Death may be but the change from one condition of humanness to another. The evolutionist is familiar with change, with profound and radical change. It is this change that is evolution. He is usually able to see the before-change condition and the after-change condition. But in the case of that change we call human death he can see only that before-change condition. What the after-change condition is he knows but in part. And that part unknown to him may be the part that means everything to him.

*Science News-Letter, July 21, 1928*

More than half the deaths from falls are among people over 55 years old; whereas more than half the deaths from burns are among children under 10.

Magyar peasants of Hungary sometimes eat bacon and bread four times a day.

The Fiji Islands export more than half a million bunches of bananas a year.

Some insects fly only once in their short lifetime, in connection with mating.

Inhabitants of Mars, if any, have a day that is about half an hour longer than ours.

Cattle were kept for their skins and meat during two or three thousand years before men learned to use beasts to plow or pull wagons.

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