

The Chapel Hill Weekly

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"The Survival of the Fittest"

"The Survival of the Fittest" is Herbert Spencer's translation of Charles Darwin's phrase, "Natural Selection." Having become familiar through much repetition, it is used by thousands of people in a sense that is quite different from what Darwin meant. Of course very few of these people have ever read a word of Darwin; they are merely parroting something they have seen written, or have heard said, by somebody else who probably also has never looked into a Darwin book. They provide one more bit of evidence in support of the truth of the poet's saying that a little learning is a dangerous thing.

The widely prevalent misconception of Darwin's meaning is discussed in a monograph by R. E. Coker, professor of zoology in the University here, entitled "What Are the Fittest?" Limitations of space prevent us from quoting as much of this monograph as we would like to, but a few passages, we believe, will serve fairly well to show what Darwin had in mind when he used the words that have been translated into "The Survival of the Fittest."

"Fittest" and "strongest" were never intended to be synonymous terms in biology. . . . Biologists may fail in their responsibilities to the thinking world if they do not try to make clear to statesmen, historians, and philosophers, to speakers and writers in general, that the conventional use of the term, 'the survival of the fittest,' has not, and never has had, the sanction of those primarily occupied with analysis and interpretation of biological phenomena. . . .

"It is well known that a very common lay interpretation of 'natural selection,' or 'the survival of the fittest,' is identified with the supposed principle of 'tooth and claw' or with the alleged 'law of the jungle' promulgated by those who never saw a jungle.

"We all know that this interpretation by whole nations, not indeed by all citizens of any nation (for no principle of action is ever recognized by all whose action it governs), but at least by a large and effectively influential portion of some nations, has now made the supposed rule of 'the survival of the fittest' in threat and combat the basis of national policy. We know, moreover, that such a definition is accepted by a great number of otherwise competent non-biological thinkers as well as by some who do very little or only second-hand thinking. The not uncommon linkage of international war and the principle of natural selection was painfully exemplified recently by a radio speaker who, in concluding a somewhat dramatic narration of war news, exclaimed: 'What a pity that Charles Darwin was ever born!' Thus exposing an appalling ignorance of Darwin! . . ."

"Who are the fittest? The real question arises not as to the principle of 'the survival of the fittest,' but rather as to the qualities that make for fitness to survive, to populate the earth and to progress, that is to say, to grow progressively in the characteristics that have demonstrated fitness. Here we enter into the realm of opinion, and opinions will generally be based upon observation, inference, logic and, to be sure, in no little part, where the survival of man is involved, upon a reasonable

faith; for it is another characteristic of man that he has ideals and faith, although the effect of his faith on his behavior in a group is most variable. With respect to mankind there may be diverse theories as to the conditions of survival, but it seems clear that any and all opinions fall necessarily into one of two opposing groups, and it may make a great difference what type of opinion any great group of people has; because man is again distinguished from lower animals by his notable capacity to modify his behavior or to have it modified under the influence of abstract opinions. It is really important, therefore, that actual or expressed principles of action be critically examined and appraised for their potentially good or bad effects on human behavior and on ultimate human welfare.

"There is, for example, the expressed opinion that survival is best assured by aggressive combativeness carried even to the extreme of unscrupulous and merciless brutality. . . ."

"Darwin needs no defense, but, so that the thoughtless ascription to him of such a conception of the conditions of survival and evolution may not go by default, I quote a few sentences from his book, 'The Descent of Man.'"

"In this book he suggests that, had man been derived from 'an animal possessing great size, strength, and ferocity,' he 'would not perhaps have become social; and this would most effectually have checked the acquirement of the higher mental qualities, such as sympathy, and the love of his fellows.' A compensatory advantage for want of strength and speed he finds in 'his social qualities, which lead him to give and receive aid from his fellow man.' Again he says (p. 142, edition of Collier, 1900):

"The moral sense perhaps affords the best and highest distinction between man and the lower animals; but I need say nothing on this head, as I have so lately endeavored to show that the social instincts—the prime principle of man's moral constitution—with the aid of active intellectual powers and the effects of habit, naturally lead to the golden rule, 'As ye would that men should do to you, do ye to them likewise,' and this lies at the foundation of morality."

"Darwin did not overlook the fact that man has been socially cooperative in inter-tribal combats, or the fact that man has never attained any degree of perfection as a social organism, but rather 'man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin,' and, by implication, also in his social frame. According to Darwin, man owes his civilization in no small part to being social, cooperative and kindly. It may be that he was all wrong in this opinion, or that he overemphasized the social qualities, but at least it is nonsensical and libelous to ascribe to him a view that is the exact converse of the one he has so well expressed."

The part of Mr. Coker's monograph (the part from which we have quoted) is called "A Mischievous Fallacy." The second and final part is called "War through the Glasses of a Biologist."

The Stainbacks in California

Lt. and Mrs. R. F. Stainback are at the Coronada Club, 707 Orange avenue, Coronada, Calif. Lt. Stainback is taking an advanced course in the Sound School and will be there until May 8. Mrs. Stainback is working four hours every day in an airplane factory.

John Hanft 6 Years Old

John Hanft celebrated his 6th birthday Monday with a luncheon party.

Literary Guild Chooses Mrs. Betty Smith's Novel

(Continued from first page)

the public, there will be more copies printed, and more royalties. And the producers out in Hollywood are putting in offers for the movie rights.

For years Mrs. Smith has been struggling, with the wolf constantly nosing in at the door, to feed and clothe and educate two daughters. She has done her own cooking and housework. In between—and she has made those in-between times regularly, in spite of all difficulties—she has sat at her typewriter and written plays and, lately, this novel. The publication of her plays has brought her in a little money now and then, and she has got some help from the Federal Theater Project and from fellowships.

"When I decided two years ago to write a novel," she said to a caller one day this week, "the big question was: When? It would take a lot of time, and if I quit other writing that meant that I would not be having anything to live on. So I decided I would get up at 6 o'clock in the morning, instead of at 7 as I had been doing.

"That is what I did. I wrote on the novel from 6 to 7; when I didn't get through with as much as I had set myself to for one day, I would put in some more work late at night—and then start in again at 6 the next morning."

The novel contains 185,000 words. There were 800 type-written pages, double-spaced, in the duplicate manuscript that Mrs. Smith showed her caller. She started two years ago; finished the first draft of the book in a year and rewrote it four times; and did the final typing herself.

Mrs. Smith, born and brought up in Brooklyn, married when she was 17. She had two children when she was 19 and presently had the entire responsibility for them. For a while she had a job on the Detroit Free Press, and she managed to scrape together enough money to enter the University of Michigan. She completed all the work for an A.B. degree, but couldn't have the degree because she had never been graduated from high school. She went to Yale and there studied playwriting first under George P. Baker and then under Walter Prichard Eaton. Mr. Eaton has kept in communication with her, and has given her encouragement and aid in her work. And P. H. Koch and Paul Green have helped her, too. The recognition of her talent by these three and other friends led to her receiving an Avery Hopwood fellowship, a Rockefeller fellowship, and a Dramatists' Guild fellowship.

Mrs. Smith's older daughter, Nancy, is taking the pre-med course in the University and is going to be a physician. Mary is a sophomore in the University.

Food Fads and Fancies

(Continued from first page)

be eaten at the same meal with milk (ice-cream, etc.)"

There is not the faintest evidence that any such combinations are harmful if they include foods which are safe to eat alone. If any of these foods have been spoiled by some type of bacterial action they will be unwholesome to eat, whether eaten alone or combined with anything else.

In recent years many faddist diets have appeared, often for the purpose of scaring the public into buying the author's book.

"Cucumbers should not be eaten with milk."

"Fruit should not be eaten with other foods."

"Milk and cherries (or any other acid fruit) are a bad combination."

"Meat with milk is a bad combination."

"Two starches should not be eaten at the same meal."

"Two kinds of fruits should not be eaten at the same meal."

The same comments as given above apply to these ideas. Not a single one has the faintest bit of foundation.

Digestibility of Food

"Chicken is the most digestible meat and should be used for invalids, convalescents, etc."

"Pork is the least digestible of meats."

The best measurements which have been made of the relative ease and speed of digestibility of these meats have failed to show that there is any distinction whatever between speeds of digestion if the meat has been chewed to the same degree. It is true that meats containing more fat digest a little more slowly than pure lean meats, because a coating of fat around a particle of protein can delay digesting until the mass of food reaches the small intestine. This is no objection in the case of a normal person. While it might be said that fat meats in general are, for this reason, less suitable for invalids, there would be many exceptions even to this statement, and certainly the variety of animal that produces the meat has in itself no effect on speed or ease of digestion.

"Hog fat is particularly indigestible."

"Fried fats are always indigestible."

For the reason mentioned above fats are slower to digest, hence the statement that we often hear, that a meal with more fat "stays with you longer." But fat from the pig is no harder to digest than any other fat; and fried foods, if properly fried and not soaked in the fat, are not necessarily any the less digestible.

"Cheese is hard to digest." "Bananas are hard to digest, especially by young children."

"Raw potato is indigestible."

None of these statements is true. As regards raw potato, it may be said that any vegetable containing much starch is somewhat more easily digested when cooked than raw, but that does not mean that there is any objection to eating a raw vegetable if we happen to like it. It is even being recommended nowadays that a little scraped raw potato be given to young children as a means of supplying them with some vitamin C, if the economic condition of the family does not permit buying other sources of this vitamin (fruits, etc.).

"Lemon juice is better than vinegar for salads, because it is a natural fruit acid."

"Vinegar makes the blood thin."

Lemon juice is better than vinegar if you like it better and can afford to buy the lemons. It is also better because it contains vitamin C, which vinegar does not. But we can get the vitamin C from other sources, and the acid in lemon juice is no better for the body than the acid in vinegar. Vinegar in moderate quantities is perfectly wholesome. It does not make the blood thin. I would not know just how to go about making the blood of anybody thin by means of any kind of food.

Specific Effects of Foods

Under this heading we have some of the very best items of our collection. It is hardly necessary to make any comment about any of these; not a single one has any basis of truth, with the possible exception of one or two cases which will be mentioned below.

"Acid fruits (tomatoes, oranges, grapefruit, etc.) make the stomach acid."

The stomach of any normal being is and has to be much more acid for the digestion of food

than the acidity of such fruits. This extra amount of acidity is negligible when compared with that of the stomach, and the acids in these fruits are almost always burnt by the body so completely that they have no final effect on acidity. Many erroneous ideas are afloat and have been thrust on the public, to the effect that people should at all costs prevent their bodies from becoming too acid, and should therefore eat large amounts of alkaline foods, or buy drugstore preparations to produce alkalinity. Such remedies are never necessary under any normal conditions and should certainly not be employed except by the direct recommendation of a physician.

"Salt causes cancer."

"Oranges and lemons or tomatoes cause cancer."

There is no known food which causes cancer.

"Some meats should always be eaten raw."

This is untrue. Most meats are much better and safer cooked. The idea that raw meat is beneficial was partly derived from magazine stories about experiences in the Arctic where explorers ate a small amount of raw liver to obtain vitamin C. With us this is unnecessary since we have ample amounts of vitamin C in our fruits and raw vegetables. The cooking of meat, especially pork, is particularly valuable as a means of killing such dangerous parasites as trichina.

"Nuts are the best form of protein and have some special value."

Nuts are good sources of food, the peanut being particularly valuable, but they are not necessarily better than any other foods.

"Meat, especially beef, makes boys more aggressive."

"Fish is a good brain food."

"Bread crusts make the hair curly."

"Onions and garlic are good for colds."

"Beets make red blood."

"Celery is good for the nerves."

"Celery is good for rheumatism."

"Carrots are good for the eyes."

"Carrots clear the complexion."

"Tomatoes clear the brain."

"Tomatoes are a good liver tonic."

"Oranges and lemons aid digestion."

"Raisins are needed by everyone for iron."

"Lettuce makes one sleep."

"Onions eaten before bedtime are a cure for insomnia."

"Egg-white injures the kidneys."

The only one of the above which has the faintest semblance of truth is the connection between carrots and eyes. Night blindness is caused by a deficiency in vitamin A. Carrots are rich in vitamin A. In no other regard are they better for the eyes than any other vegetable; and, if carrots are good for the eyes, so also are butter, egg-yolk, green leafy vegetables, and sweet potatoes, all of which contain good quantities of this valuable vitamin.

Classroom Teachers' Meeting

The Chapel Hill Classroom Teachers held their April meeting Monday evening at the home of Mrs. Fred B. McCall. A buffet supper was served; the members of the local school board and the school administrators were guests. The regular meeting after the supper was presided over by Miss Mildred Mooneyhan, the president of the organization.

D.A.R. Meeting

The Davie Poplar chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution will meet at 3 o'clock Tuesday afternoon at Spencer hall, with Mrs. Irene Lee and the other members, hostesses to the General Davie chapter of Durham. Harry F. Comer will speak.

Mrs. McCall's Leave

Mrs. Fred McCall has a six-weeks leave of absence from the elementary school here to serve as one of the three state directors of the extended school service now being established by the Government for children whose mothers have jobs away from home. Miss Frances Martin, a member of the staff of the Government agency concerned with this enterprise, has come from Washington to help get the new school service started in North Carolina. She was in Chapel Hill day before yesterday for a conference with Mrs. McCall.

It is not only in communities where there are war industries that there has been an increase in the number of the women leaving home for work. Everywhere women are taking the places, in factories, stores, and offices, of men who have gone into the armed forces. This means that a great number of children cannot be cared for, as they used to be, by their mothers. The Government is moving to deal with this situation through the extended school service.

The service is for children from 2 to 14 years old. Many of the children who go to regular schools have to be looked out for before school opens in the morning and after it closes in the afternoon.

Mr. Buckner Recovers

C. E. Buckner, principal of the high school, who was ill last week, has recovered.

PICK SUNDAY MONDAY

Each Face Hides A SECRET PAST!

Men with records black as their hearts . . . smashing out in an orgy of violence and crime!

JOHN HOWARD

"ISLE OF MISSING MEN"

HELEN GILBERT GILBERT ROLAND ALAN MOWBRAY

—Tuesday—  
JOAN FRANCHOT BENNETT in TONE  
"She Knew All the Answers"

—Wednesday—  
ROBERT ELLEN PRESTON in DREW  
"NIGHT OF JANUARY 16TH"

—Thursday—  
ASTAIRE-HAYWORTH  
"YOU'LL NEVER GET RICH"  
A COLUMBIA PICTURE

—Friday—  
GINGER GEORGE ROGERS in MURPHY  
"TOM, DICK AND HARRY"

—Saturday—  
GENE AUTRY in  
"DOWN MEXICO WAY"