

CHAPTER II

NATURE AND MAN'S HAIR

WHEN some one asks what gave man his hair and what is its purpose, we instinctively answer "Nature." Thus has mankind at all times accounted for things which it did not understand. Nature, we are accustomed to say, gave man his hair for protection. What, exactly, this term "Nature" means, is, as a rule, not made clear and we must stop here for a little inquiry. In our use of the word "Nature," some of us have in mind a great outer spirit, a supreme deity, located in and working from a distant heaven, who is able to direct the spider to spin his web and "sees the sparrow fall." There are others who will say that nature is the thing itself, and that the spider makes its web by its instinctive nature and habit, by a formula which it has acquired gradually through untold ages and which it has developed from a small beginning, and that the sparrow falls because it has become

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too old to fly or because a naughty boy has shot a well-aimed stone. Since to "Nature" so many things are wantonly attributed and since so many apparent inconsistencies need explaining, it behooves us to look closely and see whether we can arrive at some conclusion.

If we assent to the belief that a heavenly "Nature" gave man his hair for protection against enemies, which this self-same "Nature" also had created and similarly provided, we must also subscribe to the idea that Nature gave man teeth, eyes, feet and arms as means of attack and defense and that, therefore, fighting and killing must have been the purpose of the Creator. To make matters more lively, the same Nature produced the tremendous animals of the forest, the man-eating fish of the sea, the poisonous snake and the deadly invisible bacteria which spread disease. It also created scorching heat and congealing cold. Nature made some creatures weak and others strong. She placed frizzy hair on the skull of the negro who lives under the scorching sun of the equator because, frizz, it is said, absorbs heat and Nature desired to protect this child of hers from the scorching sun. But when

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slave traders brought African negroes centuries ago to be slaves in distant northern lands, Nature failed to withdraw the protecting frizz.

This same Nature benevolently provided man with legs for walking and for running when in danger or when in pursuit. When man had become civilized, was no longer in danger and did no longer live by killing others in the forest, man desired to move even faster and Nature kindly provided him with horses, and in due course of time with trolley cars, railway trains, automobiles and flying machines, exactly as she provided birds with nests in which to lay their eggs and beavers with dams. For surely we cannot say that man made these things himself. Has not benevolent Nature provided him with her great natural resources—coal, wood, stone, iron, gold, gas, oil and water, and showed man how to catch and tame wild horses and how to build cars and trains, just as she showed the bee where pollen and honey are located and led the hawk to the pigeon coop when it was hungry? It was she who even taught the humble fly to walk on the kitchen ceiling in order that he

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might observe the position of the sugar bowl and the freshly-baked pie.

Nature, so runs the argument, gave man his hair to protect him against cold, disease and the teeth and claws of his enemies. But later she gave him clothing, took away his hair and let his teeth decay. Clothes harbored other creatures also of Nature's own making which disturbed man and even threatened his life. Seeing her mistakes Nature provided man with soap, and humans of a special class known as doctors. One babe, Nature brought into the world to breathe for a single instant but another survived and Nature molded its life so that it might destroy others of her creatures, in fits of temper or on a larger organized scale. Finally, when supervision over the diversified children of Nature became difficult, Nature created kings, princes and heads of many kinds of beliefs who governed over humanity by divine right and assisted in the task of keeping the world in order.

Obviously we have reached a point in our attempt to analyze "Nature" and her acts, at which we must realize that the argument has reached absurdity. A line must be drawn some-

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where. We are compelled to admit that it is not "Nature" regarded as an external force which directs us to bite our food but an individual reaction resultant from the smallness of the throat, perhaps, or the pain of the stomach incidental to larger morsels. An inner force that we call caution makes us open our eyes to prevent us from falling or colliding, an inner force that we call foresight directs us to collect ice in winter for summer use; an inner force that we call wisdom advises us to eat so that our bodies may be provided with the means of developing legs, arms, teeth, fingernails and all the attributes that belong to the human form including, of course, our brains and our hair.

As a tree comes into being from seed containing an unknown something, life itself, with the roots and stem first, from that the branches and then the leaves as end-produce, waste as it were, falling from the structure at the end of summer, only to perform the function over again after an interval of rest, so is man. "Nature" is the unit itself. The unit needs only the initial life germ, from which it will develop according to its type. We must, then, also acknowledge that man, him-

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self, produces his hair as the tree produces its leaves. Smith makes his and Jones makes his according to his type. But as first comes the stem and the branches which are fundamental, then the leaves which are transitory, thus first developed man's essential attributes and appendages—and finally as an aftermath, as a result of the more essential processes, his hair.

Our hair is no more an essential part of our body than leaves are essential to a tree, and if prehistoric man produced hair in abundance, covering all his surface with it, this hairiness was but incidental to an inner function, to the life that produced the body, to the process of forming, to the growing force and energy. He produced much because that inner function was stronger within him than it is within modern civilized man. When antediluvian man leaped over crags and raced through forests, he was a simple, single-minded creature. He did not know how or why he came into being but he knew that he had to exert himself to keep alive. He was here and he wanted to remain. The job was not easy. The requirements, his inner feeling told him, were such that if he did not nimbly

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come up to them it was all over. He needed speed, strength and tremendous watchfulness because there were enemies everywhere. They were in the tree tops and in the cave, open and hidden. Every living thing had the same errand on earth as he himself. Each one was resolved to kill in order to keep alive. When prehistoric man thus waged his terrific, solitary battle for existence, he was one with many beasts around him in the abundance of his hair covering. Where then did it come from and what was its purpose if it had any at all? Was it the outcome of his particular body chemistry? Was his hair the result of a combustion of fuel similar to the ashes that result from the burning of wood and coal?

If prehistoric man's effort to keep alive was merely an organic act and the only act he was called upon to perform in his state of existence then his physical form and the chemistry of his body were tuned to perform this act alone and his every movement was in answer to some nervous flash from that what we call basic life—the instincts. But these instincts are not the animal's savior. They are not the animal's acting

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force because the instincts, though the basis of his existence, refuse to provide him with any weapon of a physical nature with which to defend himself. The instincts do not nourish the animal, and do not make it run, climb or hike. The instincts merely invent and direct while the actions are physical and these physical acts, no matter how small, require food fuel as an automobile needs gasoline to stimulate it to motion. The combustion of fuel creates energy and the creation of energy within man calls for a continuous nervous process of fat combustion.

Being determined to live, our prehistoric ancestor was necessarily condemned to ceaseless nervous activity. There was no rest for him. Hunger was the ruling spirit of the forest. Hair-covered man roamed the mountains hungrily, his restless eyes peering out under a sloping forehead with high-gabled crown, seeking, incessantly seeking, a weaker creature to appease the gnawing of his stomach. Hunger brought to the man-beast the first apprehension of danger. It drove the animal's nervous flare to its highest capacity. It made him alternately fearful and ferocious as he pursued his prey or saw

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it escape and was simultaneously mindful that stronger foes around about were seeking his own life. The task was an unceasing one, for hardly was one call satisfied after enormous exertion than the next arose with new insistence. Motion was necessary to secure food and fat, and food and fat produced motion which used up the fat again, producing more hunger. The greater the demand and the exertion, the greater became the renewed demands for more food. Existence was thus concentrated on one single purpose—self-preservation. The more food was turned into energy the more hair was produced. During his brief day on the speeding planet, the best food-finder in the forest was then as the wild beast of the forest is to-day,—recognized, feared, loved and hated, because he was marked by his long and shaggy hair as the strongest, most perfect of his kind.

Then man-beast sidestepped. He became thought-conscious and found that he could make himself more comfortable. He learned the advantages of companionship, learned to build fires and make weapons. His nervous agitation and the resulting demand for food abated. The

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process of keeping alive no longer required his full concentration. He became a social creature. How this came about is no part of our story. Rather we are interested only in *what* came about when prehistoric man's growing brain cells brought him to a new and less exacting mode of existence. There developed physical changes in him. His crown sank lower and the receding nose line broke and gave him the profile of a forehead to house the newly acquired intelligence. His instinctive fires diminished because fear and hunger no longer incessantly twanged his nerve-strings. He walked erect and often found himself storing up, within himself, in the form of fat, the fuel which he formerly needed to provide him with energy. The old consuming fire of necessity, that had kept him lean, was dampened. And as his fires lowered his fat combustion and the resulting ashes—his hair—decreased also.

Hair, incidentally acquired, acted on man's senses. It gave him comfort during cold weather, set off, however, by an equal measure of discomfort when the season was hot. It gave him type distinction, beauty, as the flowers lend

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beauty to the fields. Would man's existence have been threatened by the absence of hair in antediluvian times? Shell fish, seal and polar bear all live in the same element, vastly differently clothed. The rhinoceros, elephant, snake, turtle and crocodile exist under the same equatorial sun without a vestige of hair and are accredited to live much longer than intelligent man. The naked native, unclothed, with but a small patch of frizz on his scalp, lives with the hairy lion. Is the hairy lion a creature more valuable to the Creator and Regulator of all things, now and at all times, than man, himself? Even the Eskimo, dwelling for ages past amid snow and ice, is not better provided for than the native of the Gold Coast. He, too, with all the rest of mankind has sidestepped from the status of man-beast and has become intelligent. *He is no longer hair covered because the impelling urge of self-preservation has diminished. Each small rise of his forehead has meant more organized life, less application of the primitive brain cells and less hair.*

CHAPTER III

WHAT MAN HAS LOST

THE modern individual's course of life runs in a groove of almost pre-described essential influences and events. He follows laws, customs and softening formulæ from the cradle to the grave. His high-gabled crown, where present at birth and holding the secret of his ancestral connections and his animal inclinations in the form of primitive brain cells, is flattened down as his forehead rises. The primitive brain cells, being ill-adapted for modern conditions, atrophy and lose their force. Animal at birth, man turns into a civilized human almost as soon as he learns to walk upright. Millions of hair outlets covering the whole body even of the newly-born twentieth century child, had been ready to fill up when the embryo emerged from its journey through the ancestral ages, but there was no supply for them. The scalp surface was adequate to take care of its diminished quantity of hair that modern man produced.