

War Values—Losses and Gains

DEATH is the greatest natural evil in life. Life is thrown into an elemental panic at its approach. No philosophy can save the situation. Age is some solace. Religion makes it sweet and easy. But then that is not natural; for Faith lets into the soul a glimpse of the great white way of the new Jerusalem's lighted city. The soul is intoxicated with the torrents of its supernatural beauty and quite forgets or despises the grim monster, which in the struggle with nature is surely strangling his quarry.

Such is death to the individual. Be it the flower, the bird, the fish: it is all the same, death to each, or decay if you will, is the supreme evil. The hand of God through nature has granted a very definite span of life to each individual type. The ordinary man will die at seventy: so says the Psalmist. Then he drops into the grave like ripe fruit in the fall drops from the trees. Even then it is the supreme evil, not so much per se, as by reason of speculations that are natural and inevitable to the human mind, as to immortality, heaven, hell, sanctions, rewards and punishments.

St. Augustine, discussing physical evil, illustrates the subject most luminously by presenting to us a child bewildered in a forge, looking at the irons hanging on the wall and lying about in utter confusion. The blacksmith by a natural eclecticism, born of his trade, selects with comparative ease and quickness the right iron for his needs as they daily develop. This physical image brings out his argument most clearly. He contends that there is a Master Mind behind the scenes of the universe which, often unknown to us, co-ordinates completely all the apparent contradictions and anomalies that confuse and bewilder our vision. Though impertinent to the point here no one can show that moral evil which is an implied denial of God's existence, consequently blasphemy can contribute to a higher harmony which it is not given to man to see.

The Creator so co-ordinates the various kingdoms elemental to the universe, that there is a constant ebb and flow like the tide among them, to their several and mutual advantages. The organic and the inorganic act and re-act, give and get compensation. The breath of the plant is the life of the animal; the breath of the animal is the life of the plant. There is no annihilation; there is no loss of energy. The sum total de-