

# Northwest Review

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 14 1906.

### Calendar for Next Week.

#### JANUARY.

- 15—Second Sunday after Epiphany.  
Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus.  
St. Paul, first hermit.
- 16—Monday—St. Marcellus, Pope, Mar-  
tyr.
- 17—Tuesday—St. Anthony, Abbot.
- 18—Wednesday—The Chair of St. Pet-  
er in Rome.
- 19—Thursday—St. Canute, Martyr.
- 20—Friday—Saints Fabian and Se-  
bastian, Martyrs.
- 21—Saturday—St. Agnes, Virgin, Mar-  
tyr.

### EVOLUTIONIST LOGIC.

Our city contemporary, the "Free Press," of last Saturday, had an editorial article entitled "Evolution by leaps," which is a very curious specimen of the illogical reasoning of many evolutionists. Their besetting sin is the tendency to draw very wide and large conclusions from very narrow and small premisses. The article begins thus:

"In Harper's Magazine for January Professor De Vries, of Amsterdam, tells an interesting story. In a long series of experiments with the evening primrose, an American plant, he has produced two wholly new types, one with broad leaves, the other a dwarf. These sprang from their parents as do the familiar "sports" of the gardener, without intermediates or any seeming preparation whatever, and not merely each in a single specimen, but in many examples. What is more, when seeds were grown from these plants, the types remained unchanged, generation after generation. Professor De Vries argues that these results must broaden current notions regarding development. It is usually believed that evolution is due to the gradual accumulation of slight and nearly invisible variations, such as may be observed in two roses blooming on the same bush. This view, he says, must be modified by recognizing that now and then a leap takes place which, quite unheralded, gives us a new type not united to its parents by any links we are able to detect."

Here, from a few abnormal developments that have no connection with change of species but are merely differences in size, Professor De Vries leaps to the absolutely unwarranted conclusion that these leaps he admires so much give a new type "not united to its parents by any links we are able to detect." But these new types are united to their parents by a whole chain of links which Professor De Vries implicitly detects when he calls them both primroses. The only difference is that one of these two types has broader leaves than the ordinary primrose and that the other is a dwarf primrose. Had these evening primroses suddenly developed into cowslips or daisies, Professor De Vries would have been justified in concluding that evolution occasionally proceeds by leaps. But he nowhere pretends that his new types have ceased to be primroses. Their divergence in size from the common type is not more wonderful than the birth of a giant or a dwarf from human parents of average size, an occasional phenomenon which is as old as the history of the human race.

That the seeds sown from these abnormally developed plants should, under careful artificial selection, retain the same characteristics during several generations, is again nothing newer than the artificial breeding of the toy poodle or the huge mastiff within the impassable limits of the single species, dog. But how does this prove that natural, as contradistinguished from artificial, selection would have brought about the same result? And even if it did, what bearing would that fact have on the origin of new species, which is the fundamental postulate of the evolutionary theory? The only absolutely

certain result of the great stimulus imparted to scientific research by the theory of evolution is the proof of the wonderful variability of types within the limits of one species, and in this respect evolution has rendered real service to the scriptural doctrine of the substantial unity of the human species, for it has shown that vast differences in types, or race, as we call it when applied to man, are quite compatible with specific unity. This result is confirmed by Professor De Vries's experiments; that is all.

Upon a still more slender basis does Mr. George Iles build what the Free Press calls "a parallel argument." He is quoted as saying in "Flame, Electricity and the Camera."

"It is commonly imagined that the progress of humanity has been at a tolerably uniform pace. Our review of that progress will show that here and there in its course have been leaps, as radically new forces have been brought under the dominion of man. We of the electric revolution are sharply marked off from our great grandfathers, who looked upon the cell of Volta as a curious toy. They, in their turn, were profoundly differenced from the men of the seventeenth century, who had not learned that flame could outvie the horse as a carrier, and grind wheat better than the mill urged by the breeze. And nothing short of an abyss stretches between these men and their remote ancestors, who had not found a way to warm their frosted fingers, or lengthen with lamp or candle the short, dark days of winter."

In a note to Mr. Iles written by Professor De Vries last month, he says:

"I am very much gratified to find that you have come to results which are so nearly related to mine, and this in the field of physics. I am quite convinced that Darwin took the evolution of animals and plants to have been much more rapid than has been supposed by his followers."

Touching no doubt is the affliction with which these kind gentlemen pat each other on the back and praise their common discoveries. But where have they unearthed a shred of proof that "their remote ancestors had not found a way to warm their frosted fingers, or lengthen with lamp or candle the short, dark days of winter?" The theory of our savage ancestry has not a leg to stand on. Savagery is a degenerate, not a primeval condition. The only proof of the theory that it is the latter is either fabulous heathen myth or nebulous evolutionist conjecture.

The Free Press calls that quotation from Mr. George Iles an "argument." Strictly speaking an argument is a chain of reasoning by which one proposition is deduced from the comparison between two others. No such reasoning does Mr. Iles employ. He merely makes three brilliant assertions to prove that the progress of humanity has proceeded here and there by leaps, and one of these assertions, the very climax of the three, is based on the altogether imaginary and unproved brutishness of our "remote ancestors." Moreover, what sort of progress does he attempt to prove? If his so-called argument is to be in any way parallel to the evolution of new species, it must tend to show that the progress of humanity is in the direction of a new and higher species of men or man-like beings.

Now the specific excellence of man, what differentiates him essentially from the most perfect of brutes, is the power of forming abstract ideas. If, then, Mr. Iles wished to prove the specific progress of humanity by leaps, he ought to have brought forward some cases in which men had suddenly revealed a new and higher power of abstraction, such, for instance, as the power of immediately understanding the conclusion of a complicated mathematical argument without passing through the intermediate stages of reasoning. Had such a new faculty suddenly become universal among men, then indeed might we begin to speak, in sweeping terms, as Mr. Iles does, of the progress of humanity by leaps. But all he really gives us is a glimpse of one little corner, and that the least abstract and consequently the least human, of man's achievements. He confines himself to the lowest order of intellectual effort, that which deals exclusively in the concrete and has nothing to do with pure abstraction. He is concerned only with discoveries in the realm of matter, with mechanical inventions. Doubtless a certain kind of reasoning was needed to discover the possibilities of steam and electricity, but it is reasoning that partakes more of the imagination than of the intellect.

What particular intellectual benefit has the human race derived from the material triumphs of steam and electricity? Speaking broadly, these most convenient inventions have distinctly lowered the intellectual status of the majority of mankind by filling their imaginations with a sort of adoring worship of the forces of nature and of inventive genius in particular. The untinking multitude, egged on by such shallow reasoners as Professor De Vries and Mr. George Iles, easily mistake these material inventions for manifestations of high intellectual power, and forget that the one great Hebrew and Christian idea of a pure spirit, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent, Creator of all things outside of himself, and in whom all other things live and move and have their being, is indefinitely loftier than any possible achievements of physical science. And yet this idea originated many thousand years ago.

Even Mr. Iles's leaps are not historical. In the two modern instances he chooses of steam and electricity more than three hundred years of patient research and slowly progressive experiments were needed to bring these two forces into the effective harness they now wear. Compared to Professor De Vries' few years of personal experiments on primroses the three centuries required for the harnessing of steam and electricity are very slow leaps indeed; step by step advance would be the proper name for them.

### MUCH LIKE DEMOSTHENES.

"Woman," he said, "really ought to be a better orator than man."

"Why so?" she asked.

"Because," he replied, "to a certain extent at least she follows the methods of that famed orator, Demosthenes."

"In what way?" she inquired, still busy with the finishing touches of her toilet.

"You remember," he answered, "that Demosthenes used to practice talking with his mouth full of pebbles."

She hastily took the hairpins from out her mouth and informed him that he was a mean old thing.

### LARGEST TREE ON EARTH.

W. H. Hart, a well known lumber mill man, claims to have found a giant sequoia measuring thirty-six feet in diameter and 100 feet around the base. This is said to be the largest tree on earth. Hart says the tree is in Eshom Valley, Tulare county, California, in a secluded gulch near one of the mills. The mammoth, he figures, is 400 feet in height.

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