

- There are certain conditions which may enable man to continue living on this earth. Ignoring them may mean his annihilation.

SHALL MAN SURVIVE?

Ever since the dawn of the first day we have been surrounded by hordes of creatures infinitely better prepared for the struggle of existence. Some of them were a hundred feet long and weighed as much as a small locomotive while others had teeth as sharp as the blade of a circular saw. Many varieties went about clad in armor. Others were invisible to the human eye but multiplied at a terrific rate. And whereas man could exist only under the most favorable circumstances, on a few pieces of dry land between the high mountains and the deep sea, these fellow-passengers of ours considered no summit too high and no sea too deep.

When we learn on eminent authority that certain insects are able to disport themselves in petroleum and that others manage to live through such changes in temperature as would kill all of us with-

in a very few minutes, then we begin to realize against what sort of competitors we have been forced to hold our own, ever since we made our first appearance upon this whirling bit of rock, lost somewhere in the darkest outskirts of an indifferent universe.

What a joke we must have been to our pachydermous contemporaries who stood by and watched this pinkish sport of nature indulge in its first clumsy efforts to walk on its hind legs! But what has become of those rulers by brute force over almost 200,000,000 square miles of land and water? They have disappeared except where, as "Exhibit A" or "B," we have kindly given them parking place in one of our museums.

In short, during only a couple of thousands of centuries (a mere second from the point of view of eternity), the human race has made itself the undisputed

ruler of every bit of land and at present it bids fair to add both air and sea as part of its domains. And all that has been accomplished by a few hundred million creatures who enjoyed not one single advantage over their enemies except the divine gift of Reason.

Even there I am exaggerating. The gift of Reason in its more sublime form is restricted to a mere handful of men and women. They become the masters who lead. The others can only follow. The result is a strange and halting procession — 10,000 stragglers for every true pioneer.

Whether the route of march will eventually lead us, that we do not know. But in the light of what has been achieved during the last 4000 years, there is no limit to the sum total of our potential achievements — unless we are tempted away from the path of normal development by our strange inherent cruelty which makes us treat other members of our own species as we would never treat a cow or a dog or even a tree.

This earth of ours is a good home. It produces benefits in so abundant measure that every man, woman and child could have his or her share with a little extra supply thrown in for the inevitable days of rest. But Nature has her own code of laws. They are inexorable and there is no court of appeal. Nature will give unto us without stint, but in return she demands that we study her precepts and abide by her dictates. A hundred cows in a meadow meant for only 50 spells disaster — a bit of wisdom with which every farmer is thoroughly familiar. A million people gathered in one spot where there should be only 100,000 causes congestion, poverty and unnecessary suffering — a fact which apparently has been overlooked by those who are supposed to guide our destinies.

But there is a more serious way in which we offend our generous foster-mother. Man is the only living organism that is hostile to its own kind. Even loathsome hyena lives at peace with the members of his species. But Man hates Man, Man kills Man,

and in the world of today the prime concern of every nation is to prepare for the slaughter of some more of its neighbors.

This open violation of Article I of the great Code of Creation which insists upon peace and good will among the members of the same species has carried us to a point where the human race may be faced with complete annihilation. For our enemies are ever on the alert. If Homo Sapiens is unable to assert himself as the master of all he surveys, there are thousands of other candidates for the job and it oftentimes seems as if a world dominated by some of the more highly organized insects (and how they watch their opportunity!) might offer very decided advantages over a planet top-heavy with battle ships and siege-guns.

What is the way out of this hideous state of affairs? It is in the consciousness that we are all of us fellow-passengers on one and the same planet. Once we have got hold of this absolute verity

— once we have realized the fact that for better or for worse this is our common home — that it therefore behooves us to behave as we would if we found ourselves on board a steamer bound for an unknown destination — we shall have taken the most important step towards the solution of that problem which is at the root of all our difficulties.

We are all of us fellow-passengers on the same planet and the weal and woe of everybody else means the weal and woe of ourselves! Mark my words and remember them on that fatal day when the human race shall be requested to pack up its little toys and surrender to a more worthy successor.

The only hope for survival lies in one sentence: *We are all of us fellow-passengers on the same planet and we are all of us equally responsible for the happiness and well-being of the world in which we live.* — Hendrik Willem van Loon, condensed from "Van Loon's Geography."