

What does this inexorable law of death mean, or on what principle does it depend? In our own species it has a moral significance,—‘Death reigned from Adam;’ and, though a pardonable mistake, no longer insisted on by at least theologians of the higher class, the same moral character, as a reflex influence, has been made to attach to it in its inevitable connexion with the inferior animals. But in them it seems to have no moral significance. Bacon makes a shrewd distinction, in one of his Essays, between ‘death as the wages of sin,’ and death as ‘a tribute due to nature;’ and we can now fully appreciate the value of the distinction. For we now know that while as the wages of sin it has reigned from but the fall of Adam, it has reigned as a tribute due to nature throughout the long lapse of the geologic ages from the first beginnings of life upon our planet. What, then, does this inexorable law of death mean? and on what principle does it depend?

It was in mere cobweb toils that those Sadducees who believed ‘not in angel, neither in spirit,’ endeavoured to entangle our Saviour, when they propounded to him the case of the woman with the seven husbands, and demanded whose wife of the seven she was to be in the Resurrection. But there was a profundity in the reply, which the theologians of nearly two thousand years have, I am disposed to think, failed adequately to comprehend. ‘The children of this world marry and are given in marriage,’ he said, ‘but the children of the Resurrection neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more.’ Now there seems to be a strictly logical sequence between the two distinct portions of this proposition,—the enunciation that the denizens of the state after death do not marry, and the enunciation that they do not die, which for eighteen centuries there was not science enough in the world adequately to appreciate. The marriage provision was simply a provision tantamount to the original injunction, not of