

# "THE RIDDLE OF THE UNIVERSE."

From an Occasional Correspondent.

The New York "Journal's Saturday Review" dedicates a whole front page to the glorification of Ernst Haeckel's new work, entitled "The Riddle of the Universe." It is pleased to style this fresh addition to the infidel literature of the day "A work of painstaking genius."

The reviewer mentions the seven leading subjects that are treated in the volume, and asserts that "for thousands of years the intelligence of man has struggled with these problems of the infinite. What then are these problems? They are:—

"The origin of matter and force, the nature of motion, the origin of life, the apparently pre-ordered orderly arrangement of nature, the origin of sensation and consciousness, the foundation of thought and of speech, the question of the freedom of the will."

One would naturally expect from this statement of the case that the "scientist" Haeckel would enter deeply into the consideration of each and all of these questions. But he simply "brushes them aside," and declares that "the one simple and comprehensive enigma—a funny enigma is that which can be both simple and comprehensive—is 'The Problem of Substance.' We will now quote what the reviewer has to say:—

"According to Haeckel, the universe or cosmos is eternal, infinite, illimitable. It consists of two attributes, MATTER and ENERGY. This dual substance fills infinite space and is in eternal motion. Forever and ever this motion continues with a periodic change from life to death. All masses are rotating constantly, and while certain ones, solar systems or tiny cells, move to their destruction in one part of space, others are springing into new life and development in other parts of the universe."

"It has taken our earth, one little speck in space, more than a hundred million years to develop its present forms of animal life, to say nothing of long periods of cooling that preceded life."

"Man is only the highest among the vertebrates, which in turn are the highest among animals. His immediate ancestor has been here at least three million years, and he himself since the end of the tertiary period."

"Our mother earth is a mere speck in the illimitable universe, and himself is but a tiny grain of protoplasm in its perishable framework of organic nature."

This is delightfully consoling and comforting! It is pleasant to reflect that each of us is a mere "tetrapod." To feel that the fossil ape, the presence of which proves that man is a developed monkey, and the monkey an undeveloped man, must bring considerable happiness to the human race. We owe a deep debt of grati-

tude to Haeckel for having discovered that this missing link is actually what he calls the "Pithecanthropus erectus"—which we common mortals may style in our unscientific language "the monkey-shaped man standing up;" not unlike some of the names given by Northwest Indians to our fellow-countrymen, as "the man-with-the-windows-on-his-eyes," or "the-man-with-his-head-on-fire."

Haeckel "proves" that as the bones of a monkey and those of a man being the same in number, and generally in formation, it follows that the one must have sprung from the other. He has discovered that the thing we call soul, and the matter that envelopes it, are both one and the same thing. How he reaches such a conclusion he fails to tell us, nor does his science aid in solving the "Problem of Substance." The reviewer, above mentioned, surprises us, as we proceed with his appreciation of Haeckel's marvellous work. It is the very finest of sarcasm that he exhibits towards the close. He repeats that "this book is a marvellous tribute to the human genius of painstaking investigation;" and then proceeds to say:—

"It is the unimportant opinion of this writer that the man who studies the bones of the monkey and the bones of man, concluding that one is grown from the other, might as well study the books in a library, note the resemblances in the construction, and believe that the huge cyclopaedia had naturally developed from the small pamphlet."

"The potato bug, looking at the locomotive of the Empire State Express and at the old primitive locomotive, would conclude, perhaps, that one had evolved out of the other. It certainly could not imagine that the constructive force in the brain of a man had created both—that the little old-fashioned locomotive had nothing to do with the modern one, was not its grandfathers, but simply the creation of a thinking man."

Then he tells us that the work is "a concentration of accurate material faculties of perception on the great problems of life; it rejects entirely the aid of imagination, the inspirations of faith, the light shed upon our career here by the beliefs of men throughout the ages." After this statement he calmly adds:—

"Haeckel in his studies is like a man walking along the shore of a big sea, industriously examining, analyzing and classifying everything he catches them, but rejecting as unworthy of study the great, flashing lighthouse that looms in the distance."

"He rejects the lighthouse, its warnings and its meanings because he cannot reach it, dissect it and know it."

Little more is needed to prove the futility of such a work, and the folly of so-called scientists attempting to measure the infinite with a ruler's foot-rule.

## SLANDERS ABOUT LOURDES REFUTED.

The "Trained Nurse and Hospital Review" recently published the following typical slander about Lourdes, the famous French shrine:—

"Thirty thousand patients are sometimes gathered together in one week. They are herded like cattle on the railroad at Lourdes. They lie mostly on the hospital floor. . . . No medical treatment is allowed them, for have they not come to be cured by a miracle? They are left unwashed, unattended and uncared for, save for the spasmodic voluntary service of all sorts of untrained 'hospitaliers' as they are called, men and women of all trades and callings, who accompany the pilgrims as a penance for their sins. Many Catholic sisterhoods are represented in the travelling cortege. . . . Few are trained, and their ministrations to these, the worst cases that Europe can show, are kind but amateurish."

In reply a correspondent of the International Catholic Truth Society states first that there is in Lourdes a finely-equipped modern hospital, where not only are the sick carefully nursed by the experienced sisters in charge, but where expert physicians are in constant attendance. A patient seriously ill is not even allowed to be taken to the grotto without permission of the doctor attending him.

The only time in the year when there is a vast crowd at Lourdes is on the occasion of the national pilgrimage which comes from Paris just before the 15th of August, that being one of the principal feasts of our Lady. Fifty thousand people sometimes assemble, but only a small proportion of these are sick persons. It is incredible that so many as 30,000 sick could ever be found in a pilgrimage of 50,000 when not more than fifty all told accompanied a pilgrimage of 10,000 which I saw at Lourdes a few weeks before the arrival of the national pilgrimage.

There is a prevalent idea that "cures" are reported by the authorities at Lourdes on very slight grounds and that temporary relief from pain brought about by hysterical excitement is put down as a miracle. Any observant visitor will see on his right as he approaches the grotto a gray stone building marked "Bureau des Constataions." I walked in there one afternoon and was courteously received by the English physician in charge. He showed me a book in which the record of those cured is kept. The "bureau" before pronouncing on any case requires a written diagnosis from the physician prescribing for the patient before his

coming to Lourdes. It requires a thorough examination by resident physicians after the alleged cure, this to be supplemented by the written statement from the patient's own physician after his return home. Furthermore, the person cured must return to Lourdes and undergo a second examination at the end of three or six months. After these tests have been applied the "bureau" passes judgment officially. Nervous diseases are never included in the list of miraculous cures, owing to the well-known fact that an excited state of mind will of itself in some instances produce a cure.

As to the sick being left "unwashed, unattended and uncared for" there are resident in Lourdes, besides the sisters in charge of the hospital, a number of ladies who devote their lives to the care of invalid pilgrims. One of them whom I knew well, an American lady, sister to a former consul to Bordeaux, has spent two years in hospital work and one year at the baths. She told me that three ladies are allowed in attendance at each of the women's bathing rooms. The patient, after being wrapped in a bath robe, is immersed in an ordinary bath tub full of water in the miraculous spring. At the end of fifteen seconds the patient is lifted out. The water is very cold, but my friend said, she had never known or heard of a case where a patient was made worse by the immersion, and she had herself seen several instantaneous cures during the bath.

The writer quotes the following letter of Chauncey M. Depew, published after a visit to the shrine a few years ago:—

"Being near Lourdes, in the Pyrenees, I paid a visit to the shrine. . . . As I was crossing the plaza I heard a name called from one of the dispensing wagons. It was occupied by a lady and was drawn by her son, a student at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. Both had recognized me, having heard me speak in New York. She said the doctors at home had told her that science and skill could do nothing more for her and that she must make herself as comfortable as possible until the end, which was only a few months off. So she had come to Lourdes with faith and hope. I asked her the grounds of her hopes and she said: 'Why, a miracle was performed this afternoon before your eyes. Did you not see it? That was the cause of the great excitement.' This was her story. A young girl who was staying at the same hotel as she did had been unable to walk

or put her foot to the ground for six years. She had suffered frightful pain and screamed with agony when dipped in the icy water. She had been bathed six successive days, and after the procession had passed that afternoon had called out that she was cured. I said to the medical student, 'What do you know about this?' He said he had seen the knee bandaged at 12 o'clock that day. It was swollen badly and had twenty-eight running sores. I told him I must see that girl. The pilgrims were mobbing the purification room, to which she had been taken, to see or touch her, and the attendants were doing their best to keep them out and get them away. My medical guide with New York sagacity called out, 'The distinguished Mr. Chauncey Depew wants to see the patient.' Instantly a way was cleared, and in a few minutes I was inside. The girl was not there, having been carried home to escape the crowd. There was an English doctor and I appealed to him. He said he had dressed the leg at noon; it was swollen and incurable; he had cut the bandages of a half hour before and the leg was healed and the girl could walk, and he showed me the cut bandages. It was about two feet long and had been slit with a

knife from top to bottom. I then insisted I must see the girl. About 8 that evening my student acquaintance came to my hotel with a message that she and her friends would be glad to see me. My son and I started off instantly. 'I found a young lady about 17 years of age, with a sweet, innocent, happy face. She told her story substantially as I had heard it and that she had been unable to walk a step in six years. I asked her if she could walk now and she went several times around the room, limping some, but with no apparent pain. I then ventured to request a sight of the knee. Her friend said 'Certainly.' The knee seemed quite normal. The flesh and muscles were firm and natural. Black spots marked the places where the sores had been, but the sores were healed and healthy skin, not scales, over them. I have little faith in modern miracles, but they puzzled me. I was about to point so far as I am concerned is that I did not see her before the alleged cure. The testimony, however, of the New York medical student, of his mother and of the English doctor was clear and positive. They might have been deceived or tried to deceive me, though neither seemed probable."

## INTEMPERANCE IN EUROPE.

The anti-alcoholic movement is developing a more than ordinary interest among the thinking people on the continent of Europe. It is certainly remarkably that within a few years this question should have forged its way to the very forefront of public questions. We have been accustomed to think of the European people as using and not abusing intoxicating drinks, but the wave of drunkenness that has been passing over the continent has increased its influence until its effects have been felt over France, Holland, Austria, Russia, and Italy. The devastation that has been wrought has set the scientific men searching for cause and remedy. It has awakened churches, and the carrying on of discussions and debates held the throngs until far into the night. There were among the delegates many of the most celebrated scientific and medical men of Europe.

The reports have just reached us of the gathering of an Anti-Alcoholic Congress at Vienna. It aroused such interest that the vast hall of the Society of Music was crowded, and the reading of reports and the carrying on of discussions and debates held the throngs until far into the night. There were among the delegates many of the most celebrated scientific and medical men of Europe.

At one of the sessions of the Congress the French Army physicians described the measures taken by the military authorities in France to combat alcoholism in the army. They submitted statistics to prove the alarming increase of drunkenness within the last few years among the soldiers. Whether it was the increasing popularity of the stronger form of alcoholics or the weakening of the vigor of the soldiers and the development of the nervous organization of the men, or both combined, that was the real cause of the prevalence of intoxication, they were not able to say.

In any case they found the facts as stated, and it was absolutely necessary, if the vigor of the soldiers would be preserved, that something should be done to resist the onward march of alcoholism among the soldiers. Dr. Rudler said that he himself had delivered lectures to his division which were attended by 1,300 soldiers. The officers were all interested and enforced such measures that in their judgment would encourage abstinence among the men. His contention was that the army should be considered the school of the nation inasmuch as France claimed some of the best years of the life of the young men, and during these years the young men were subjected to influences that might make or mar their after career as citizens of the Republic. The officers did right when they set themselves against the drinking habit, and enforced such moral and sanitary measures as were calculated to save the young men from the blighting effects of the drink habit.

An Austrian military doctor said that hard drinking was not so much the custom in the Austrian army as in the French. Still it was sufficiently prevalent to cause alarm and to arouse the authorities to a sense of danger that might come upon the nation if the taste for alcoholics developed among the soldiery. It appeared from the speeches of the other military doctors that in the Austrian army brandy was a restorative during field exercises had been abolished, and the sale of milk in the barracks was steadily increasing. They all agreed that the British army, with a temperance society of 25,000 members, was in advance of every other. They recognized, however, the fact that the very existence of a temperance movement that included so many total abstainers is abundant evidence of the prevalence of a terrible evil in past times. For with their sentiment about the use of wine and beer they realized very well that it was the recognition of a truly deplorable state of affairs that alone could compel abandonment on the part of some of the use of stimulants in order that others might be brought within the limits of moderation.

There was no discussion of the state of affairs in the American army, probably because the question of "Canteen or no canteen" had not come to their knowledge. Undoubtedly this question has entered into an acute stage with us, and many of the most experienced publicists have openly declared in favor of the Canteen, so that the

drinking of the soldiers may be done under circumstances in which the elements of moderation and control may be injected.

A Russian lady read a report of M. Dimitri Borodini, a St. Petersburg delegate, on the brandy monopoly by the Government. His contention was that drunkenness is increasing among the Russian peasantry, and because it does increase the Government is benefited in a financial way. During the last two years 350,000,000 rubles were returned from this source into the Government's exchequer. Is it right, he asked, that the Government should foster among the people, but at the same time, the interests of the country if the state acquires wealth and the people decay? It was evident to all that the monopoly has had a demoralizing effect, for it paralyzed all efforts in church or state to prevent the spread of intemperance. The population contributed 21 rubles of the population contributed 21 rubles of the Government's revenues were returned from this source into the Government's exchequer. 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