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### ELECTRICAL HUMBUG.



HE old song which dealt with the marvels and deceptions of London trade, and complained pathetically of the metropolis that

"Humbug has here got the snuggest of monopolies

And everything is anything but what it seems." needs an additional verse to-day to describe the prodigies of humbug which the spread of electrical knowledge has called into being. Upon the heels of every great discovery there follow adventurers who use the new name to palm off worthless objects upon their dupes, but electricity has probably more to answer for than

others in this particular. There is probably no limit to the uses to which electricity will be ultimately put for the benefit of mind; but what is even more certain than this is that the majority of so called electrical appliances sold at the present day owe their electricity to the imagination and their efficacy to the superstition of the purchaser. Electricity may be, when properly applied, a specific for some nervous diseases, but what connection either with electricity or rheumatism we have yet to discover. That these things meet with a ready sale seems certain from the flood of hand-bills and advertisements of every kind which deluge the country and litter the counter of every drug store. Electric belts, electric pads, electric brushes, not to speak of electric pills and potions and powders which contain about as much electricity as their purchasers heads do sense. How for example can a brush composed of ordinary bristles, even if the back do contain a magnet, to keep up the delusion as to its electrical power, how, we repeat, can such a brush exercise any other effect upon the head than the ordinary hair brush composed of the same materials and applied in the same way. And if the brush contain wires, introduced among the bristles to heighten the delusion, the friction of these, so far from being a benefit, is productive in many cases of injury to the scalp, while the electric

effect is as far to seek as ever. This is not to say of course that there are not galvanic remedies which really do set up a current, and produce an effect upon the surface exposed to them, which may or may not be beneficial. It is not for us to discuss the genuine use of such appliances; all we war against is humbug in whatever form; all we want to do is to warn those who want or think they want electricity, pay for electricity, and don't get electricity after all.

### THE ORIGIN OF MAN.

The latest contributor to Darwinian, or rather anti-Darwinian literature is Mr. WM. DENTON. To begin with the praise that is legitimately due to him at the outset, Mr. DENTON has succeeded, as it seems to us, in avoiding the Scylla of dry physiological investigation without getting into the Charybdis of unscientific over-popularity. The book is easily to be "understood of the people," but is none the less on that account the result of accurate scientific study. Starting from the now acknowledged facts as to the earth's origin, and going as far with DARWIN as to refer the appearance of man to evolution from the lower animals, Mr. DENTON finds his first point of difference in the unqualified adhesion which he gives to the theory of spontaneous generation. Apart from the known facts, we have ever considered that this is the only logical end, or rather beginning, of the doctrines of evolution. If man by a series of natural operations is the legitimate descendant of the *protozoa*, from what came these *protozoa* themselves? And conversely, if an external power (call it what you please) created the *protozoa*, how is it more unreasonable to suppose that the same power was capable of creating, or did, in fact, create man?

But unfortunately it does not seem within the province of physiologists to be logical. Of Mr. DENTON's failure in this respect, more hereafter. Meanwhile, those who deny the possibility of spontaneous generation find a strong support in the experiments of Professor TYNDALL, which, viewed by the rules of strict evidence, seem to outweigh those of WYMAN and others, and for this reason. Granting that the conditions in both cases were equally perfect, it is yet more reasonable to suppose that an accident may have introduced the germs of life into a