

Venus Must Be Inhabited.

We recollect that in spite of the feebleness of their respective densities, Saturn weighs ninety-two times more than the earth, Jupiter three hundred and nine times more, that other planets surpass ours in weight and volume, and yet all these enormous masses together would make only the seven-hundredth part of the weight of the sun.

Thus, when a geometrician, wishing to give us an idea of the mass of the globe, tells us that it would take ten milliards of teams, each consisting of ten milliards of horses to move the earth on a ground like that of our ordinary roads, we find that the application of this calculation to the sun shows us that it would require 3,550,000 milliard teams to draw the sun—and yet this is the heavenly body that the ancients imagined to be drawn by four horses! Its actual weight is estimated at 2,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 kilograms. So it would take 324,000 earths in the scale of a balance to equal the weight of the sun.

Let the reader himself draw his conclusions from these considerations—for we only want deductions of common sense—and, following the philosophical march of modern science, he will see that from the time when the movement of the earth and the volume of the sun were known, astronomers and philosophers thought it strange for the centre of the solar system to be used only for lighting and warming a world so small as to be of no account, and quite imperceptible from a great number of other worlds under its supreme rule. The absurdity of such an opinion was still more striking when it was found that Venus is a planet of the same dimensions as the earth, having also mountains, plains, seasons, years, days and nights. This analogy led to the conclusion that the similitude of the conformation of these worlds must extend to their role in the universe. If Venus were not inhabited, the earth would not be so either, and vice versa, if the earth be inhabited, then Venus must be also.

And if we consider the conditions of time as well as of space, we reach the same conclusion. Our own epoch is no more important than our position in the solar system. The present is preceded by the past, and it will be followed by the future. Worlds not inhabited now, have been, or probably will be, for life is a law of Nature. Probably the moon is dead, while Jupiter and Saturn are the worlds of the future.

The Supreme Purpose of Matter.

Is it not clear that the absurdity of supposing the earth to be fixed is perpetuated in a form a thousand times more extravagant by the distortion of the doctrine of final causality which places our world in the first rank of celestial bodies? and is it not evident that this world of ours was thrown, without any distinction, into the planetary system, and that it is no better equipped than the others for being the exclusive seat of life and intelligence?

The physiological point of view is certainly a very important matter of consideration here; and the first thing which strikes us, as we shall see, is that life is the supreme aim of the existence of matter, and that the forces of Nature tend everywhere and always to the formation, maintenance and conservation of organized beings. The objections that can be made to this supreme tendency, are easily refuted by logical inference; and not only do we easily realize the possibility of existences quite incompatible with terrestrial life, but we have only to cast a glance at our own abode to realize that other planets may be peopled quite differently from ours, for, indeed, it is almost impossible for any of them to be inhabited by beings like those which live on earth. But do we not see diversity in life in our own planet? What an infinite difference there is, for example, between joyous creatures flying in the air and those crawling on the earth or those plunging their way through the ocean! What a difference in their organizations, in their functions, in their mode of life, in their language! Who knows the many steps of this ladder of life, beginning with the zoophytes of primitive times on the lowest rungs and ending with man on the topmost?

And in humanity itself, what a differ-

ence between the constitution, character, customs, habits, and physical and moral power between a European, whose will transforms empires, and the Esquimaux unable to express his own thoughts!

Even if we pass over the inexhaustible variety of vegetable species, the mere sight of the diversity of zoological life is sufficient to convince us of the powerlessness of the obstacles due to biological conditions when opposed to the fertility of Nature.

If the Human Race were Wiped Out?

Moreover, the hundred thousand species of plants on the terrestrial surface show us the earth's prodigious fertility. Perhaps we shall be told that the same mode of creation has presided over the establishment of all beings upon earth; perhaps it will be objected that this countless number of diverse beings does not prevent their general organization being based on one and the same principle—that of being adapted to the conditions of life under which every production of the earth is nourished. That is true, but it must be added that any other conditions of life would perform the same functions as ours, even were it composed of elements totally unlike our own. We say that in every world every being is necessarily organized according to its environment, whatever be its nature.

How unfounded is the egotism which leads us to think that the universe is created for our sake, and that if we were to disappear from the scene, this vast universe would fade like a place deprived of light! If none of us woke up tomorrow, and if the coming night were to close the eyelids of human beings forever, can one think that the sun would cease to shed its rays and heat, and that the forces of Nature would stop their eternal movement?

The Insignificant Earth.

The earth we inhabit is but one of the smallest planets grouped around the sun; there is nothing to distinguish it. Imagine yourself, reader, for an instant, from its fellows as regards inhabitability, in a spot from which you could command a view of the whole solar system, and imagine that the planet in which you were born is unknown to you. Be very sure that in forming a right judgment on this question you would not consider the earth as your country, nor would you give it a preference to the other abodes; but you would contemplate with an unprejudiced, ultra-terrestrial eye all the planetary worlds circulating round the hearth of life!

If, then, from this supreme point of contemplation you doubted the phenomena of existence, if you imagined certain planets to be inhabited, and if you had been taught that life made choice of certain worlds in which to deposit the germs of its productions, would you, with good faith, credit this little earth with inhabitants before creating superior worlds with the marvels of creation?

Or, if you were in a position to choose a heavenly body whence you could view the splendors of the heavens, and whence you could enjoy the benefits of a rich and fertile nature, would you choose this little earth, which is eclipsed by so many resplendent spheres?

For all answer, reader, the simplest and the least contestable conclusion we can draw from the preceding considerations is, that the earth has no sign of pre-eminence to mark it as the only inhabited world, and that the other planets have, at least, equal importance in the general destiny of the solar system.

Quite Reasonable.

A unique temperance sermon comes to us from one of the cities of the United States. A poor, sad-faced woman stood near the Judge who was about to pass sentence on her husband for drunkenness. The Judge said to her: "I am sorry, but I must lock up your husband." She replied sadly, "Your honor, would it not be better for me and the children if you locked up the saloon and let my husband go to work."

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