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DARWINISM.

THE NOACHIAN FLOOD.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE TORQUAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,

JAN. 31ST, 1870.

BY

THOMAS R. R. STEBBING, M.A.,

Late Fellow and Tutor of Worcester College, Oxford.

London

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THE NOACHIAN FLOOD.

DARWINISM implies almost throughout that no universal Deluge has drowned our globe, either within the last ten thousand years, or even within a period indefinitely longer. Let us speak with due respect of the contrary belief. It *seems* to rest upon the testimony of a Volume the most precious in the world. It was taken for granted till a few years back as much in science as in religion. For a while, the arguments that began to be raised against it were met by counter-arguments so plausible, and the objectors differed so widely among themselves, that unscientific opinion had a kind of right and prudence in adhering to that which had been taught for centuries, and was still taught without deviation in nursery, and school, and pulpit.

We should have asserted a better right and shown a higher prudence, had we waited, in a matter which concerned science full as much as it concerned religion, till, by learning facts and weighing arguments, we had become able to form an opinion no longer unscientific, or, at the very least, to appreciate the difficulties involved in the ancient belief.

We are forced to take a controversy of this kind as it stands; otherwise, there is a simple principle which ought to make all controversy on the subject needless. All authors endowed with common sense, let alone divine inspiration, use language which their intended readers may be expected to understand, and language appropriate to the scope and design of their writings. Unless, therefore, we suppose that the Old Testament writers proposed to teach natural science to the Hebrew nation, we ought to expect from them what we actually find: as to natural phenomena, past and present, they use the language not of far-advanced knowledge and minute particular research, but simply the language current in their own day and nation.

But, setting aside the general principle, in the present instance there is a second possibility of quashing the controversy, if it can be shown or made probable that the author, whose narrative is in question, never meant to imply that which for thousands of years has been held to be his meaning.

The whole point at issue is the *universality* of the Noachian Deluge, and the narrative has been thought to be uncompromising in its declarations that all the earth, to the very mountain-tops, was indeed enveloped in water, and, excepting the handful rescued in the ark, that all men and cattle and creeping things and fowls of the air were inexorably destroyed. But to this view of the narrative there is more than one objection upon the very surface of the narrative itself. And, by way of preface, let it be remarked how vague and indefinite is

the use in ordinary language of such terms as 'all' and 'every' and 'universal.' For instance, if a popular lady gives a kettledrum, we say, 'all the world was at it,' although 500 persons could not have been squeezed into the rooms without being suffocated; or we say, 'so and so is a thing which every school-boy knows,' when we only mean that a good many lads of a particular age, in a particular rank of life, and belonging to one particular country, have most probably been taught it. And again we say, 'smoking is universal with the Dutch,' without implying that every baby in Holland has a pipe instead of a rattle. You are not to suppose that this is a view of language invented for the occasion, frivolously explaining grave and sacred composition by the trivialities of common speech. On the contrary, it is precisely to the unquestioned prevalence of such phraseology, in all but the most exact scientific writing, that the late Dr. M'Caul appealed, and appealed successfully, against more than one of the objections to the authority of the Pentateuch, which were raised some time ago by the well-known and ingenious arithmetician who presides over the see of Natal. When we read that 'there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that *all the world* should be taxed: and *all* went to be taxed, *every one* into his own city,' are we to infer either that the clever practical Roman decreed the taxation of barbarians over whom he had not the faintest shadow of control, or that every Israelite, without exception, found and visited his ancestral home in Palestine—merchants from Gades and Ophir and Tarshish, slaves and prisoners, sucking

children, bed-ridden old men, dying sufferers? We shall not, if we are wise, shut up either Cæsar Augustus or the Evangelist St. Luke to so preposterous a meaning.

In this and ten thousand other instances, our general knowledge of the attendant circumstances, or what we call 'the nature of the case,' supplies the necessary exceptions. To have them all drawn out in detail would be tedious and troublesome. Suppose a glorious comet is about to make its appearance, and some astronomer publicly advises every one to be on the look-out for it on a certain night, how ridiculous would he appear if he made express exception of persons on the other side of the globe, of persons immured in dungeons, of persons not yet born, of persons who were blind, of persons who were dead! Yet an author, writing some three or four thousand years back, and borrowing perhaps from picture-records, certainly from the traditions, however delivered, of an age long anterior to his own, when language was far less ample and precise than it has since become, is treated as though every word must bear the full and exact force which it would have in a carefully-written treatise upon logic in the present day. We may assume that the author either had sound and accurate information in the ordinary course of human tradition, or else that he was endowed with a super-human knowledge of the historical events in question. But, on either assumption, what conceivable warrant have we for imagining that he was deprived of common sense? Either he knew the contradictions which natural science offers to the belief in a recent universal deluge,

or he did not know them. If he knew them, we may infer from his silence that his narrative was not open to those contradictions; in other words, that the deluge of which he speaks was not universal. If he did not know them, his ignorance points to the same conclusion: otherwise, we shall have a divine miracle, intended for the warning and the benefit of the human race, yet so contrived that all its most surprising circumstances should be absolutely unknown to one half of mankind, and as absolutely incredible to the other half.

The historical account informs us that 'the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills that were under the whole heaven were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.' But Europe possesses mountains rising to a height of more than 10,000 cubits or 15,000 feet—one peak in Asia is 29,000 feet above the level of the sea—so that, on the common interpretation, the waters of the flood must have risen to a thickness above the ordinary sea-level of nearly 30,000 feet over the whole of the globe. But, on this supposition, the narrative is not only bewildering and morally impossible, but positively untruthful, for it declares the physical means employed in the production of the flood to be the fountains of the great deep and the rain from heaven—means entirely sufficient to produce a partial flood over a limited area, but utterly and ludicrously inadequate to produce a total deluge enveloping 'all the high hills under the whole heaven.' The notion is self-contradictory that the ocean can be employed to raise its own

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level, or that its general height can be increased by the rain which it is its own part to supply. Nor is there any indication afforded that a supernatural supply of water was added to our planet, to the extent of several hundred millions of cubic miles of liquid, which would have been required for the purpose of drowning the Caucasus and the Alps and Teneriffe and Popocatapetl and Chimilari. We must consider also the difficulty of breathing, and the intense cold that would have been experienced at that stupendous altitude. There is the old question of space in the ark; there is the old question of the food-supply, sufficient and appropriate, to be stored and sorted for its various occupants, carnivorous and herbivorous, beasts of prey, carrion-birds, and amphibious monsters. But what are these compared with the question how life could be sustained in the bitter freezing atmosphere, thousands of feet above the line of perpetual snow, by creatures accustomed to the lowlands of the tropics? Supposing, however, the atmosphere to have been completely warmed by the rise of the ocean, or even if the air within the ark was kept warm by its enormous crowd of denizens, we are confronted by a new difficulty, one that might seem laughable and improper to mention but for its vast and pressing importance in our own days, thwarting the physician, perplexing the statesman, baffling the chemist and the engineer. To this supposed epitome of the world's inhabitants, shut up for months within the ark, who were the scavengers?

But suppose every one of these problems to be solved by a miracle, although of such miracles not a hint is

given, there still remains the statement to be dealt with, that 'God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.' Surely this, if nothing else, is conclusive that the writer had all along been describing a local and partial deluge upon which a wind could have some sensible effect, not an universal flood wrapping all the mountains of the globe in water, in which case the mightiest wind that ever was, or could be dreamed of, could only have laid bare the surface of the land by piling up great hills and precipices of water upon the ocean.

When we wish to expose the miracles of a false religion or of a superstitious aberrant creed, we point out, as the case may be, that they are frivolous, useless, unmeaning, devoid of adequate motive, the end achieved and the means employed bearing no reasonable proportion; or we show that the testimony in their favour is inconsistent with itself, or that the consequences which should have flowed from the miracle, had it been genuine, are certainly wanting, unless, to bolster up one extreme improbability, a hundred others are invented and swallowed. To every one of these imputations the common theory of the Noachian Deluge lies open. But concede a few grains of common sense to the narrator; read his narrative in the spirit in which such a person must have written it; remember that he is not writing a scientific treatise, nor using the phraseology of modern Europe; bear in mind that he is speaking in an idiom no longer or now but seldom used, yet a just and noble idiom, which ascribes to God all that is done upon

earth, whether good or evil, the works of man and the common processes of nature, as well as things superhuman and miraculous; and, with these considerations before us, we shall save the venerable record from every imputation, either of folly or of falsehood.

That which we have described to us is a vast penal catastrophe sweeping away some great centre of civilization by means of a terrible inundation. Along some ocean-border the far-stretching plains were dotted thickly with towns and villages. There were fields waving with corn; the vine and the olive, the orange and the palm abounded; there were cattle feeding in green pastures beside the still waters; there were populous tribes and nations carrying on all the business and revelry of life; they bought, they sold, they builded, they planted, they were marrying and giving in marriage, when suddenly the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the earthquake wave rolled in upon them, and swept all the beauty and the glory and the sin remorselessly away. At the same time, the angry heavens were overcast, and the floodgates of the clouds poured down their volumes of ceaselessly-descending rain. The distant mountains were torn from the sight; nay, every high hill under the whole heaven was itself covered and enfolded in a liquid veil, for every rill was now a torrent, every tiny silver thread of a cascade now a dark unbroken avalanche of waters. One family alone, alone obedient to the warning which all had received, were saved amidst this universal ruin, and took with them into the ark of their refuge specimens of every

bird and beast and creeping thing that their own country produced, and that was in any way serviceable to man. When cloud and mist had rolled away from the mountain-tops, when the face of the ground was once more dry—with these creatures they stocked their new settlement. The well-watered plain was speedily replenished; the vine flourished; the cattle brought forth abundantly; the children of the patriarch multiplied rapidly and spread far and wide over their rich and undisputed inheritance.

Such is the narrative as it glimmers through the haze of forty centuries, only told in the original with unrivalled simplicity and force, grander than any description by forbearing to describe, told as one would tell it, who in that convulsion of nature had lost kindred, friends and countrymen, as one who had seen the whole world, so far as he knew it or cared for it, foundering in the waves, and yet had lived on through all the unutterable calamity to see himself once more surrounded by fruitful fields and smiling homesteads, and all that might make what was to him emphatically a new world the counterpart of the old.

Some may permit themselves for a moment to set aside the limitation we have suggested to the number of animals in the ark as fanciful and unwarranted. It will be proper therefore to draw out the consequences attaching to the old opinion. We find from the words of the narrative, that the patriarch Noah was intrusted with the task of collection. To achieve it, then, he must have gone in person, or sent expeditions, to Australia for the

kangaroo and the wombat, to the frozen North for the Polar bear, to Africa for the gorilla and the chimpanzee; the hippopotamus of the Nile, the elk, the bison, the dodo, the apteryx, the emeu and the cassowary must have been brought together by vast efforts from distant quarters. The patriarch or his agents must have been endowed with a supernatural knowledge of natural history far surpassing Solomon's or that of our own times, that they might properly distinguish varieties and species, so that no species might be omitted and none represented by more than one variety. To accomplish this with the minutest insects, they must have been provided with powerful microscopes. Every portion of the dry land of the globe must have been accessible to them; every jungle, cavern, and ravine. The little islands that lose themselves in mid-ocean must all have been ransacked; the search, too, that might not neglect any acre of ground in all the continents of the world, would be distracted with the most varied and incongruous pursuits. Sheep, game, caterpillars, beasts of prey, snails, eagles, fleas and titmice, must all have their share of attention. Unusual pains must be employed to secure them uninjured. They must be fed and cared for during a journey, perhaps, of thousands of miles, till they reach the ark; they must be hindered from devouring one another while the search is continued for rats and bats and vipers and toads and scorpions, and other animals which a patriarch, specially singled out as just and upright and a lover of peace, would naturally wish and naturally be selected to transmit as a boon to his favoured descendants.

It might be asked how, with the supernatural knowledge requisite for collecting all the terrestrial animals of the globe, and the unique opportunity for observation afforded by a residence of some months with them in the ark, no more scientific classification was arrived at than that into birds and beasts and creeping things? But letting this pass, or scattering it and other objections to the winds by inventing a miracle to explain the gathering together of the animals, we shall then have to give some account of their re-distribution. Instead of worrying ourselves with the problem, shall we at once solve it by asserting that they were miraculously re-transferred to the habitations from which they came? This will be a highly satisfactory plan, if only it will stop the mouths of those inquisitive persons who never know when they are beaten in an argument. But one cavil may easily be foreseen, requiring a new miracle to satisfy it; for many of the animals must either have been miraculously supplied with provisions, or miraculously enabled to do without them; or else, to take a single instance, two spiders would have been limited to a couple of flies, and when the flies had become extinct, because devoured by the spiders, the spiders also would have become extinct through having no more flies to devour; and thus their preservation in the ark, at the expense of a great many unrecorded and highly improbable miracles, would have been utterly useless.

Suppose, however, that they were spread over the earth again by the slow process of natural distribution. Certain perplexities, indeed, may have arisen when they

first issued from the ark, when the cobra and the rattlesnake, the hungry wolf and the relentless tiger were let loose upon the impoverished world and its defenceless inhabitants. For at that conjuncture to have destroyed even one cruel and venomous beast might have blotted out a whole species. It is surely a little remarkable that ravenous beasts and birds of prey should have been limited, even while in the ark, to feeding upon animals in a ceremonial or ecclesiastical sense clean ; but if, after they had left the ark, and had once more to provide for themselves, the wily panther and the treacherous hyena must be imagined debating before every meal whether their victim belonged to the sevens of the clean or the couples of the unclean animals, shall we not turn in pity and vexation from any view that involves and admits so monstrous a supposition ?

But we will concede that every creature bore a charmed life, that it might not perish by famine or violence till it had propagated its kind. We should then expect to observe that species had distributed themselves over the globe in lines either tortuous or direct, single or branching, broad or narrow, but all diverging from a common centre. Yet nothing of the kind is found. On the contrary, the species of the new world differ from those of the old, the species of one continent from those of another^a. The marsupials of Australia and Polynesia are generically distinct from all other animals on the globe except the opossum. The elephant of Africa is not the same species as the elephant

^a Lyell, Principles of Geology, ii. 332.

of India: so with the lion, so with the rhinoceros. The apes and baboons of the old world are nowhere to be found in America, nor the American monkeys anywhere in the old world. In Madagascar, separated from Africa by less than the breadth of England, all the species except one, and nearly all the genera, are peculiar^b. Everywhere species are found limited in their range by natural barriers, such as climate, rivers, mountains, oceans. Are we to suppose that the prisoners could scramble into their prisons, and then suddenly became incapable of scrambling out again? Everywhere, as a rule, this range is consistent with the hypothesis of an origin central to the range, inconsistent with that of an origin distant from it. Where, as on mountain ranges, we find, contrary to the general rule, the same species in different localities, the migration from the door of the ark loses all semblance of probability, unless we are pleased to imagine that creatures, now without the instinct of migration, for a long time possessed it, and roamed about the world through many a sultry plain to pick out a hill-side here and there with a temperature suited to their constitutions. But the exceptional phenomenon, otherwise so hard to account for, Darwin has admirably explained, by pointing out that species adapted to a low temperature would naturally have occupied lowlands in the Glacial Period, from which, as the cold gradually grew less and less intense, they would as naturally have retired, some of them northwards, others to the cool heights of various mountains.

^b Lyell, ii. 344.

That there was a Glacial Period, when great icebergs travelled over England, a period geologically as but of yesterday, though enormously more remote than any historical dates, is now beyond all question. Equally beyond question is it that countless ages and generations of living beings on the earth preceded that Glacial Period. And, added to this, we find that there are forms of life just where they would have been left by the effect of that period, had there been an unbroken succession from that time to this, and just where it is most unlikely they should be found, had they been forced to travel to those habitations from the door of the ark within the practically insignificant period of 4300 years.

But still further, we may compare the world of life before the Flood with the world of life since. And here surely it needs not the genius of Darwin or Lyell or Owen to perceive the conclusiveness of the argument which their genius has pointed out and enforced. For instance, where the marsupials now live, there lived marsupials in ages long before Noah, as the fossil remains testify. The fossils are fossil marsupials, but marsupials of species now extinct. So that the 'door of the ark' theory requires us to believe that the marsupials found their way to Australia, leaving no traces of their route on land, crossing seas which they never subsequently re-crossed, and planting themselves precisely in that region which other marsupials, generically the same but specifically different, had occupied before them.

We are to believe this of countless other species in all parts of the world. We are to believe that they slowly

and in many generations worked their way back to these quasi-ancestral homes, and yet neglected to occupy vast tracts equally or even better adapted to their wants. We must believe also that some of the fleetest, strongest, and most sagacious animals, as the horse and the elephant, failed to trace out the abodes of their ancient representatives, since America, when discovered a few years ago, possessed these quadrupeds only in fossil and in no living species ^c.

There is indeed one animal, whose powers of contrivance would account for its distribution over the globe, even supposing it to have begun with a single family, not more than 4300 years ago, and to have ranged from a single centre. Man is that animal. Yet, if all the other facts that bear on the universality of the Noachian Deluge were in an agreement with it as entire as their irreconcilability is utter and complete, still the circumstances of the human race alone would disable us from believing that the Flood of Noah's epoch extended over all the globe. With other animals it might be advanced that the different species and main varieties had been represented in the ark and were thence disseminated; but in the case of man we are precluded from such an explanatory device by the express terms of the diluvian record. If the Noachian Flood was universal, then from Noah alone must be descended all the races of man now upon the earth: all the great and curious variations they display must have been evolved, not in countless generations as Darwinism supposes, but in some two or

^c Lyell, ii. 336.

three hundred or less. From Noah alone must have sprung within a mere handful of centuries races so widely unlike one another as Greeks and Negroes, Jews and Egyptians, Saxons and Ojibbeways, Caffirs and Hot-tentots, Fuegians and Patagonians, Californians and Chinese, Arabs and Esquimaux. In the same archipelago we have the Malay, the Papuan, and the dwarf snub-nosed Negrito^d. To give the contrast between the two former in the words of Mr. Wallace^d:—‘The Malay is of short stature, brown-skinned, straight-haired, beardless, and smooth-bodied. The Papuan is taller, is black-skinned, frizzly-haired, bearded, and hairy-bodied. The former is broad-faced, has a small nose and flat eyebrows; the latter is long-faced, has a large and prominent nose, and projecting eyebrows. The Malay is bashful, cold, undemonstrative and quiet; the Papuan is bold, impetuous, excitable and noisy. The former is grave and seldom laughs; the latter is joyous and laughter-loving,—the one conceals his emotions, the other displays them.’ Such is the description and contrast of two types of mankind geographically separated from one another by an interval of not more than 300 miles; yet the line which separates these two races of the human family is almost exactly coincident with that deep-sea line which forms the boundary between two great zoological provinces. Either, then, in these two distinct but neighbouring localities, the whole multitude of species, man included, must have been undergoing variation simultaneously for tens of thousands of years,

^d ‘The Malay Archipelago,’ vol. ii. p. 448.

or else the differences in the whole multitude, man included, must have been already established, or nearly so, when first they stepped forth in singular procession from the door of the ark. But the former alternative, which is the Darwinian, is consistent with the record of the Noachian Flood in implying that the inundation was only partial; while the latter alternative contradicts the record in an essential point on which it is perfectly explicit, by necessitating the presence in the ark of more than one human family.

As long as we are content to speak of 4000 years or so, some one might be tempted to fancy, however erroneously, that such a period would be adequate to produce the existing varieties of mankind, because there is some evidence of comparatively rapid changes of colour having taken place under the influence of climate, and because a new type of features appears to be forming itself with a noticeable progress under the absolutely unique circumstances which have governed the recent colonization of North America. Unique those circumstances are, because never before has there been so much mingling of the blood of different nations and races in a new and unoccupied field, with much to stimulate and nothing to curb or repress variation. Never before have men's minds and bodies in every faculty been so taxed and strained to activity by the very superabundance of their resources, the virgin soil of a new country, an inherited civilization, enormous and ever-enlarging facilities for doing, for living, moving, and learning—facilities sometimes that cannot be declined or escaped from,

though they 'fret the pigmy body to decay, and o'er-inform the tenement of clay.'

But, in truth, there is no question of 4000 years in the matter; for there were black people in the time of Herodotus and in the time of Solomon. Already in the time of Moses there existed a race in Palestine so different from the Israelites, that the first Hebrew explorers were daunted by the sight of them, although, in fact, they were looking on a race no longer in its prime, but one that was dying out. Egyptian monuments, dating back to the same period and earlier, give representations of Africans, Asiatics and Europeans, with their physical characteristics then as now unmistakeably distinct; they portray the Negro as the Negro still is both in colour and in features^e.

If it took only 800 years, then, which is the interval between the Flood and the birth of Moses, to originate and establish types so distinct as Jews, Egyptians, Negroes, and Anakim, all gathered together in a little corner of the world, might not Nature, having done so much in so short a time for the highest animal, do a little more in a longer time for lower animals, and so supply that origin of species by variation for which Mr. Darwin contends? Would not the obvious inference be that Nature had done so, if it were not fancied that such an origin of species was still more repugnant to the Book of Genesis than even a limitation of the area covered by the Flood? But the Darwinian theory,

^e 'Genesis of the Earth and of Man,' p. 117; quoted in Sir J. Lubbock's 'Prehistoric Times,' p. 314.

happily for itself, is not dependent upon any supposition so incredible as one which would warrant us in expecting among the descendants, for example, of William the Conqueror, people as little like one another as John Bull and John Chinaman, Uncle Sambo and the last of the Mohicans. There are circumstances of immense weight to convince us that certain marked divisions of mankind originated in the regions which they are now occupying. There are other circumstances preponderating for the common origin of mankind. Darwinism has at length shown how these phenomena can be reconciled, by simply connecting the history of man with that vast duration of life upon the globe which geological science has unveiled. The likenesses among races of men demand a common parentage for all those races; the unlikenesses can only be accounted for on the view of an isolation immensely protracted of one race from another. Thus the primary origin is common to all; the secondary origin is peculiar to each: but now that the primary origin has been proved to be so vastly more remote than was once supposed, the secondary origin recedes of itself into a far distant past, to give time for differences to arise and develope, since, if the actually existing unlikenesses were only skin deep, instead of affecting, as they do, the bones of the skeleton and the whole fibre of the mind, they would still be too great to admit a common derivation of the whole human family from the patriarch Noah.

What Geology teaches to demonstration is, that all parts of the dry land have been not once only but many

times under the waters of the ocean ; but it teaches likewise to demonstration that at least for many and many an age, almost beyond our powers of conceiving duration of time, there has been no total submergence of the land. That interchange of lake and sea with isle and continent which is now going on under our eyes, has been going on for ages innumerable. By this and kindred means human beings, like all kinds of animals and all kinds of plants, have at intervals experienced severance into groups and isolation. Thus has mankind been broken up into distinct families, at first with no line of demarcation except the geographical, but gradually in successive generations becoming more and more unlike in manners, morals, language, features, intelligence, and civilization. But since the era of the Noachian Deluge neither has there been time for Nature, with her slow though certain processes, to effect so great a reconstruction of barriers as to break up the human family, if till then continuous and united ; nor, if there had been time for the geographical severance, would there have been time for the constitutional changes.

Among the ancients some believed that the sun, moon, and stars were in reality about the size which they appear to the unassisted eyesight ; others supposed the vault of the sky to be a revolving dome of solid crystal pierced with little holes through which men saw in starry shapes the fire of the ethereal region beyond it. Persons with such ideas of space and physical science might not readily have accepted on the moment the Copernican

system of astronomy. In the same way persons with a narrow and limited view of the duration of time may find a difficulty in receiving arguments based on or implying the enormous extent of it, which all sciences are now combining to demonstrate. But this mental incapacity, the result of false education and early prejudice, may be defied to resist any real investigation of the facts or study of what has been written upon them. Let any man of mature mind and average intellect read through Sir John Lubbock's 'Prehistoric Times,' Mr. Darwin's 'Origin of Species,' and Sir Charles Lyell's 'Principles of Geology,' and retain if he can the opinion that our globe was first peopled about 6000 years ago, and subsequently all but depopulated by an universal Flood. Let him see, indeed, whether he can read Sir Charles Lyell's account of the progress of opinion and controversy on these subjects and refrain from blushing. He will recognize in that account a turmoil and clamour of fools and philosophers, of laymen and divines. He will have to set to the credit of intelligent humanity and enlightened Christendom a long tissue of pious frauds, jesuitical defences, arguments based on imaginary facts, and facts perverted by imagination, till he comes down to the present time and finds a great multitude of all classes at length agreed in affirming that life has endured on the globe with unbroken continuity through a past as yet unfathomable. His own mind, he will perceive, has actually reached maturity without having admitted the voice of this multitude, although to apply almost

literally the words of his great Master, 'If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out^f.'

The world and its wonders are of no mushroom growth, although even the mushroom, which is commonly supposed to spring up in a single night, requires a much longer period, often many weeks, for its production^g. The Book of Genesis itself most clearly warns any careful reader against attempting to build a chronology upon the brief memoranda of names and dates which for other reasons are inserted in it. For, taking them simply as they stand, Shem, the son of Noah, is represented as long surviving the birth of Isaac, while Abraham, the father of Isaac, appears as the contemporary of a vast number of different and strange tribes and nations, Egyptians, Philistines, Canaanites, Syrians, and many more, besides the Chaldeans, from among whom he came. To find a parallel to all this, we should imagine our own Edward III, instead of dying in 1377 as he did, living on and on to the present day, a forgotten old man, not noticed in the page of history throughout 500 eventful years, during which the whole of Europe was becoming peopled with descendants of himself and his father, men speaking languages mutually unintelligible, holding creeds mutually abhorrent, with strange diversities in dress, manners and government, and some prevented by national custom from even eating at the same table with

^f A religious and supremely orthodox poet of the last century enquires, 'Where is the dust that has not been alive?'—Young, 'Night Thoughts,' Night IX, l. 87.

^g 'Mushrooms and Toadstools.'—Worthington E. Smith, p. 17.

guests of another neighbouring and kindred tribe. In vain should we search through history for any actual parallel, for any instance of developments so extraordinary, and estrangements so complete, occurring within a space of only 500 years. If all the nations spoken of as contemporary with Abraham were only 500 years distant from the Flood, as the Book of Genesis shows them to have been, we may be certain that they could trace back their lineage, independently of Noah and his family, far beyond the era of the Deluge. The monumental evidence of Egyptian chronology carries us back to a Pharaoh reigning some three or four hundred years before that date^h. The Book of Genesis introduces us to another Pharaoh reigning some 400 years after it. Are we to set aside the monumental evidence, and make this later Pharaoh a descendant of Noah, reigning as a powerful monarch, while Abraham, the rightful heir of a patriarchal monarchy over all the earth, was nothing but a wandering shepherd? Religion, morals, civilization, as far as we know anything about them in those ages, whether we regard their advancement in some quarters or their decay in others, all protest against having their progress cramped into those four or five hundred years. They protest against being ascribed with all their conspicuous diversities to the offspring of one man, whose son, grandson, great-grandson and great-great-grandson, Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, and Eber, were actually still living during all these supposed revolutionsⁱ.

^h 'Genesis of the Earth and of Man,' pp. 113, 114.

ⁱ Genesis, chap. xi.

Indeed, if we go back from our 400 to our 4000 years, the protests on these points are almost equally forcible. In the matter of language, estimate how many generations must have passed away before the children of a common parent came to vary in speech as much as Chinese, Russians, Englishmen, and clucking Hottentots. Form some estimate of the time required for the rise and growth of civilization, not only in the old-world centres of Nineveh and Babylon and Egyptian Thebes, but in the separate and independent centres of Mexico and Peru. Explain, moreover, what, on the hypothesis of a common Noachian descent, must be called the rise and growth of barbarism. Show, if it be possible, how, amidst the rapid strides of civilization, side by side with the advancement of taste, literature and science, the descendants of Noah in some cases degenerated from all culture, sank away from all morality, lost all religion, forgot all useful arts, even those most essential to the lowest degree of comfort, the kindling of fire, the use of metals, the construction of dwellings, while they learned the habits, and acquired something more than the innocent shamelessness of brutes—learned to prefer the flesh of their own species to any other, learned to make a duty in some regions of putting their parents to death, in others, of eating their dead bodies^k. Such customs we have on record four centuries before Christ, such customs on record as existing nineteen centuries after. Will any one attempt to persuade us that the savages of

^k Sir John Lubbock, 'Prehistoric Times,' pp. 338, 346, 452; Herodotus, iv. 26.

Andaman and the Feejee Islands are cousins, through an ancestor no more remote than Noah, of Chatham and Wilberforce, and Lesseps and Brunel?

Traditions of a Deluge, it is true, are found almost everywhere. The reason doubtless is that almost everywhere some tremendous calamity of this description has at one time or another occurred. Inundations on a small scale are common and frequent, but on a scale great enough to surprise the imagination and become traditional in the memories of a people, they would naturally be rare and infrequent in the extreme, so that the fact of such an experience belonging to the history of so many different races, is but another proof, or at least another indication, of the antiquity of man. If stress is to be laid on the points of similarity between the traditions, as proving that every land has been ravaged by the waters of a flood, equal stress may in fairness be laid on the points of difference, as proving that not one common universal Deluge is spoken of, but many separate and partial floods, distinct in time, in place, and in results. If stress again is to be laid on the tradition because it is common to so many tribes, let equal importance be granted to the traditions of time among the Chaldeans and the Egyptians, the Chinese and the Hindus, who reckon the years of their uninterrupted histories by tens of thousands¹.

Finally, we may ask, where are the traces of so tremendous and unparalleled a convulsion as one that could wrap the whole globe in water, and hold all its dædal beauty

¹ See Mill's 'History of British India,' book ii. ch. i. and notes.

for many months in that drowned condition, till a tempest still more furious and unparalleled drave heaven and earth, the clouds and ocean, once more asunder? We know how the little trilobite in the Devonian seas behaved in its hour of peril millions of years back; we know what food men ate long ages before the Flood, what weapons they used, what houses they built, what animals they tamed; but what became of man and beast and bird and forest in the supposed universal Deluge no one knows. The signs and natural monuments of the catastrophe, which should have been visible or discoverable on every side, can nowhere be ascertained,—things that the waters should have swept away or torn down they have left undisturbed, shell-mounds and glacier moraines and boulderstones on the mountain-side; while the great museum of the dead which they should have formed, one would think, over all the earth, to constitute one striking and indisputable geological date, as well as a world-wide monument of religion, is nowhere to be found.

What became of flower and herb, of creatures that live between the zones of high and low water, of mollusk and coral and fish that require an appropriate depth and a fitting temperature in their liquid homes, it will be useless to speculate, if, after all that has been urged upon other points, there are some who still think that the description in Genesis is the description of a Flood that prevailed over all the world, and intend still to believe in such a Flood, and to teach it as a part of religious doctrine, notwithstanding any argument or scien-

tific proof to the contrary. For them we can do no more than commend to their daily reflection a few lines from the lives of two famous men:—‘In spite,’ says Dr. Wilson, ‘alike of the science and the devout religious spirit of Columbus, the Salamanca divines pronounced the idea of the earth’s spherical form heterodox, and a belief in antipodes incompatible with the historical traditions of our faith: since to assert that there were inhabited lands on the opposite side of the globe, would be to maintain that there were nations not descended from Adam, it being impossible for them to have passed the intervening ocean. This would therefore be to discredit the Bible, which expressly declares that all men are descended from one common parent^m.’ And thus another author describes a well-known incident in the life of Galileo:—‘Clad in a penitent’s sackcloth, the mighty, self-relying philosopher and genius fell upon his knees, and, with his hands laid on the Holy Evangelists, declared that he abjured, detested, and would never again teach the doctrine of the sun’s stability and the earth’s motion. Having confirmed his oath in writing, and promised to perform the enjoined penance, he rose from his knees a pardoned man; and turning about to one of his friends, stamped on the ground and pronounced in an emphatic whisper, “Eppure si muoveⁿ,”—but still it *does* move.’

As the antipodes exist, as the earth goes round the sun, and as the Bible continues to be true, in spite of

^m ‘Prehistoric Man,’ Dr. Daniel Wilson, p. 101.

ⁿ ‘The Daughter of Galileo,’ by the author of ‘Mary Powell,’ p. 283.

the theologians and inquisitors at Salamanca and at Rome, so will it continue to be true and full of truth, when at length it shall be acknowledged, as it will be, that there is nothing universal about the Noachian Deluge except the disbelief in its universality.



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