

[Newspaper cutting, "Giants" (1842?) about the possibility of an ancient race of giants].

Publication/Creation

[1842?]

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All ancient writers, sacred as well as profane, concur in the existence of an ante or post-diluvian race of giants, who deviated from the law of nature, which generally unites a placable and inoffensive disposition with great personal strength, by exhibiting, upon all occasions, a most ferocious and tyrannical pugnacity. Thinking it great to have a giant's strength, they seem by no means to have been impressed with the conviction that it was "base to use it like a giant." Perhaps, indeed, they had never read Shakspeare! Caeset is of opinion that the first men were all of a strength and stature, much superior to the present races, since they lived so much longer, longevity being the natural consequence of a vigorous constitution. There is here some confusion of terms; for a little man may have as good a constitution as a giant, and there is no necessary relation between length of years and length of body. We are not told that Methuselah was proportionably taller than his successors, whose tenure of life was limited to an average of three score years and ten. We are informed, indeed, that the iron-bedstead of Og, King of Bashan, measured fifteen feet four-and-a-half inches in length; but with all due submission, this only proves the gigantic proportions of the recipient, not those of the incumbent. We have a Patagonian piece of furniture of the same description at Ware, but I never heard that the good folks of that town were much taller than their neighbours, and there is a very lofty gateway to the west front of St. Paul's cathedral, though we have no records to show that the subjects of Queen Anne were forty feet high. All these lofty personages of antiquity seem to have resembled our Monuments, not only in altitude, but in being "tall bullies," for they were perpetually at loggerheads with the rest of the world, carrying their insolence, as well as their figures, to a great height. Their Hebrew names of Nephelim and Rephaim signified violence, oppression, and outrage; and their Pagan brethren were not a whit more pacific—the Titans waging fierce war with Saturn, and the Giants with Jupiter.

Remarkable is the fact that exactly similar traditions are found in nations who can never have heard either of the Christian or Pagan mythology, and whose remoteness from each other, forbids the possibility of their belief being imparted or imported. The Indians of America, the blacks of Africa, the various Asiatic tribes, differing in every thing else, agree in claiming their descent from giants whose race has long since become extinct. Equally notable is the fact that not one of them can adduce an iota of credible evidence in support of this universal tradition. The fossil skeleton found in the cliffs of Gaudaloupe, whether of recent or remote formation, did not exceed the average size: the mummies, our most ancient specimens of humanity, are generally beneath the modern standard of height—and although we may occasionally have disinterred the remains of a single giant, we have never stumbled upon the cemetery of a gigantic race. The analogy of nature, if we are to draw inferences from the animal world, would indeed afford some support to the tradition; for many of the existing Saurians and quadrupeds of comparatively small dimensions have indisputably descended from, or at all events present exactly the same type and structure as fossil predecessors of stupendous size. The mammoth, the Megatherium, the Iguanodon, and similar monsters of the former world, have left living representations, dwindled into insignificance when measured with their colossal originals, but that these latter once overshadowed the earth, or oppressed the waters, is demonstrated beyond contradiction by the remains scattered over the various regions of the globe; which have been collected and classified by the researches of geologists. When we discover the Goliath-like skeletons of men, in equal quantities, we may believe that the world was once peopled by a race of giants. Until then it would be more in accordance with the progress of the animal creation to suppose that man, a comparatively recent inhabitant of the earth, has been first found his largest type, and that he is destined to diminish like the Saurian and other tribes, until the lords of the creation will be little better than a people of pygmies.

The late Colonel S —, so well known for his Patagonian size and burly deportment, being once importuned by a diminutive tailor for payment of a bill petulantly exclaimed,

"If you were not such a little reptile, I would kick you down stairs."

"Little reptile!" remonstrated the dun; "and what if I am? Recollect, Colonel, that we can't all be great brutes!"

Russian Periodicals.—The Augsburg Gazette of the 12th inst. enumerates the periodical publications and journals in the Russian Empire as follows: 98 in the Russian language, 22 in German, 8 in French, 4 in English, 3 in Polish, 1 in Italian, 3 in the Teutonic; total 139. Last year there were but 134.