

The Eighth Wonder

By an Unpopular Philosopher

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Written in 1889¹

JUST back from under the far-reaching shadow of the eighth wonder of the World — the gigantic iron carrot that goes by the name of the Eifel Tower. Child of its country, wondrous in its size, useless in its object, as shaky and vacillating as the Republican soil upon which it is built, it has not one single moral feature of its seven ancestors, not one trait of atavism to boast of. The architectural Leviathan of 1889 is not even — in the question of usefulness — on a par with the New York Statue of Liberty, that would-be rival of the ancient Pharos. It is simply one of the latest fungi of modern commercial enterprise, grown on the soil of cunning speculation, in order to attract numberless flies — in the shape of tourists from the four points of the world — which it very conscientiously does. Even its splendid engineering does not add to its usefulness, but forces even an “unpopular philosopher” to exclaim, “*Vanitas vanitatum; omnia vanitas.*” Shall modern civilization still lift its nose and sneer at its ancient and elder sister? [356]

The wonders of the world, the seven marvels of the Pagans, will never be replaced in our days. M. de Lesseps’ admirers may look contemptuously back on the causeway built by Dexiphanes, three centuries before our conceited era, but the astral atoms of himself, as those of his son, Sostratus the Cnidian, may rest undisturbed and need feel no jealousy. The architecture of the marble tower of Pharos erected “to the gods, the Saviours, for the benefit of sailors” has hitherto remained unrivalled, in the public good derived from it, at all events. And this we may say, despite the creation of the Long Island Statue of Liberty.

¹ [This essay, as is indicated by this parenthical notation of the Editor of *Lucifer*, was written by H.P.B. soon after her return from a trip to France and the Island of Jersey, where she stayed from four to five weeks.

While at Fontainebleau, France, she wrote the greater part of *The Voice of the Silence*. This was most likely in the second half of July, 1889. Her stay in Jersey lasted until approximately the middle of August of that year, although the exact dates are difficult to ascertain from available evidence. — Boris de Zirkoff.]



For verily, all the wonders of our age are destined to become but the ephemera of the century that is slowly approaching us, while they remain but the dreams and often the nightmares of the present era. All this will surely pass away and be no more. A seismic breath in Egypt may occur tomorrow and the earth will then “open her mouth” and swallow the waters of the Canal of Suez, and it will become an impassable bog. A *terremotos*, or worse still a *succussatore*, as they are called in South America, may lift the Long Island with its “Liberty” and toss them both a hundred feet high in the blue air, but to drop them down, covering their watery grave with the never-drying salt tears of the Atlantic Ocean. Who can tell? “*Non deus praevidet tantum sed et divini ingenii viri*” saith sly Cicero in his *De divinatione*,¹ treating of cosmic phenomena. And the same thing threatens Lutetia that was, or Paris that is, and our own British Isles. No; never has God predicted as much as has the divine intellect of man; surely not. Nor would Cicero’s feelings change, had he ever read the *War Cry* in his day or entertained a couple of Adventists. And what would be [357] Cicero, after all, in the presence of a modern Materialist? How would he feel? I asked myself. Would he confess himself non-plussed, or would he remark — as Job did to the new philosopher, his persecutor — “hast thou not poured me [modern wisdom] out as milk and curdled me [it] like cheese” [*Job* x, 10], enough to show us what it is?

Where are ye, O relics of the departed Pagan glories! Shall we suspect in you solar myths, or hope that we see a reincarnation of the hanging gardens of Babylon in the glass and iron whale and its two gigantic glass umbrella sticks named the Crystal Palace building? Avaunt such insulting thoughts! The restless eidolon — if any be left — of haughty Semiramis can still admire her work in the astral gallery of eternal images, and call it “unparalleled.” The *Mausoleum* of Artemisia remains unrivalled by that of the proudest raised only “to the gods of the Stock-Exchange, the Destroyers of mutual capital.”

Fane of the Ephesian Diana, what temple shall ever equal thee in poetry! Modern statues, whether equestrian or pedestrian, that now fill the halls of the French Exhibition, which of you can ever put to blush the astral eidolon of the Olympian Jupiter by Phidias? To which of the sculptors or painters of our proud era shall a modern Philippus of Thessalonica address the words spoken to the divine Greek artist: “O Phidias, either the God has descended from heaven on earth to show himself to thee, or it is thou who hast ascended to contemplate the God!”

“No doubt but we are (not) the people, and Wisdom was (not) born with us,” nor shall it die with us, let us add.

¹ [This passage has remained untraced in spite of thoroughgoing search through the text of this essay attributed to Cicero. Its translation would be: “Not a god alone, but men gifted with godlike ability can foresee.” — Boris de Zirkoff.]



Long rows of pottery and bronzes, of cunning weapons, toys and shoes and other wares are daily inspected by admiring crowds on the Exhibition grounds. Well, the [358] “unpopular philosopher” would unhesitatingly exchange all these for a glance at the collection of Mr. Flinders Petrie now to be viewed at Oxford Mansions. Those unique treasures have been just exhumed on the site of the Kahun, of the twelfth dynasty. Between the industry of the XIXth century A.D., and that of the XXVIth B.C. (accepting, to avoid a quarrel, the chronology of the modern antiquarians and excavators) the palm must be awarded to the latter, and it is easy to show why. All these weapons, domestic and agricultural implements, foreign weights, necklaces, toys, coloured threads, textiles, and shoes, now on view, have that unique feature about them that they carry us back to the days of Enoch and Methuselah, on the authority of Biblical chronology. The exhibits, we are told, relate to the twelfth dynasty 2,600 years B.C., if we have to believe archaeological calculations, *i.e.*, they show to us what kind of shoes were worn 250 years before the deluge. The idea alone that one may be gazing at the very sandals that have, perhaps, dropped from the feet of the first Grand Master and founder of Masonry, Enoch, when “God took him,” must fill the heart of every Masonic believer in *Genesis* with reverential delight. Before such a grand possibility, into what pale insignificance dwindles down the pleasure of inhaling the smell of Russian leather, in the shoe gallery at the Paris Exhibition. No believer in “godly Enoch, the first born of Cain-Seth-Jared,” Khanoch the Initiator, no true Mason ought to run over to gay Paris, with such a treasure within his reach.

But we have still the Pyramids of Egypt left to us to admire and unravel — if we can. The pyramid of Cheops is the sphinx and wonder of our century, as it was that of the age of Herodotus. We see only its skeleton, whereas the “Father of History” examined it with its outer coating of immaculate marble. It was defiled, however, with the record of 1,600 talents¹ spent only in radishes, onions and garlic [359] for the workmen. Let us pause, before we turn our olfactory organ from the emanations of such unpoetical food. For with the ancients was wisdom, though it passeth now our understanding. Let us hesitate before we pass judgment lest we should be caught in our own craftiness. The said onions and garlic may be as symbolical as the Pythagorean beans. Let us humbly wait till better understanding descends upon us. *Quiēn sabe?* The beautiful outer casing of both the pyramids — of Cheops and Sen-Saophis — has disappeared, engulfed in the palaces of Cairo and other cities. And with them are gone inscriptions and engraved records and cunning hieratic symbols. Does not the “Father of History” confess his dislike of speaking of things divine, and does he not avoid dwelling on symbology? Let us seek light and help from the great learned Orientalists, the artificers of Greek Speech and Akkadian Lampesuk. We have hitherto learnt many a strange story. Perchance we may be yet told that these “radishes, onions and garlic” are but so many “solar myths” and — blush for our ignorance.

¹ £ 444,000 in English money.



But what was the fate of the last of the Seven Wonders of the World? Where are we to look for the relics of the brazen giant, the Colossus of Rhodes, whose mighty feet trod upon the two moles which formed the gate of the harbour and between whose legs ships passed full sail, and sailors hurried with their votive offerings? History tells us that the *chef-d'œuvre* of the disciple of Lysippus, who passed twelve years in making it, was *partially* destroyed by an earthquake 224 B.C. It remained for about 894 years in ruins. Historians are not in the habit of telling people what became of the remains of the six wonders; nor that every great nation possessed its seven wonders — witness China, which had its porcelain Tower of Nankin,¹ now, as says a writer, only “found piecemeal in walls of peasants’ huts.” [360] Yet it is rumoured in some old chronicles that the poor Colussus was sold to a Jew.

Queer volumes may be found at times in the shops of old Russian dissenters at Moscow. One of such is a thick in folio in the Slavonian language called, “The acts, clerical and lay, from the Chronicles of Baronius, collected in old monasteries; translated from the Polish and printed in the metropolis of Moscow, in the year of the Lord 1791.” In this very curious volume full of archaic facts and statements, historical and long forgotten records beginning with the year 1, one can read under the year A.D. 683, on page 706, the following: —

The Saracen having destroyed and despoiled the Roman land ceaseth not his wicked depredation even on the sea.² Their leader Maguvius, strong and terrible, returneth to Rhodos the island, marcheth to the brazen idol, whose name was Colossus (*sic*), the idol exalted as the seventh World-Wonder, and which stood over the Rhodos harbour. His height was twenty-an-one-hundred feet (*stopa*).³ Soil-covered and moss-grown was the idol since its upper part fell to the ground, but he had remained otherwise whole to that very day. Maguvius overthrew the trunkless legs and *sold them with the rest to a Jew*. Sad was the end of that world wonder.

And elsewhere the chronographer adds that the Jew’s name was Aaron of Edessa. He is not the only one to volunteer the information. Other old writers add that the Jew having broken up the Colossus, with the help of the Saracen warriors, into pieces, loaded 90 camels with them. The value of the brass material reached £ 36,000 English money in the Eastern markets. *Sic transit gloria mundi*.

Before the Jew and the Mussulman, moreover, the Rhodians themselves are said to have received large sums of [361] money from pious donors to repair and put up the Colossus anew. But they cheated their gods and their fellow-men. They divided the money, the honest trustees, and put an end to legal enquiry by throwing the blame on the Delphic oracle, which had forbidden them, as they averred, to restore the Co-

¹ C.A.F. Guetzlaff, *Hist. China*, Vol. I, p. 372. [This reference has not been identified. — Boris de Zirkoff.]

² The original of this passage being written in old Church Slavonian can hardly be translated in all its originality, which is very queer.

³ Some classics give it only 105 feet or 70 cubits.



lossus from its ruins. And thus ended the last of the Wonders of the old Pagan world, to make room for the wonder of the Christian era — the ever-speculating, money-making Jew. There is a legend in Slavonian Folklore — or shall we say a prophecy? — that after the lapse of untold ages, when our globe will have become decrepit and old through wear and tear, underground speculation and geological zeal, this “best of the possible worlds” — in Dr. Pangloss’ estimation — shall be bought at auction by the Jews — broken up for old metal, pounded into a formless head, and rolled into balls as shares. After which the sons of Jacob and Abraham will squat around the sorry relics on their haunches, and hold counsel as to the best means of transferring it to the next Jewish bazaar and palming off the defunct globe on some innocent Christian in search of a second-hand planet. Such is the legend.

*Se non è vero è ben trovato.*¹ At any rate the prophecy is suggestive even if allegorical. For indeed, if the Colossus of Rhodes could be sold for old brass to one Jew with such facility, then every crowned Colossus in Europe has reason to tremble for his fate. Why should not every Sovereign thus pass, one after the other, into the hands of the Jew in general, since they have been in that clutching grasp for some time already? If the reader shakes his head and remarks on this that the royal Colossi are not made of brass, but occupy their respective thrones “by the Grace of God” and are “God’s anointed” — he will be meekly told that as “the Lord giveth, so the Lord taketh” and that he is “no respecter of persons.” Besides which there is somehow or somewhere Karma involved in that business. Few are those Potentates who do not find themselves head over [362] ears — golden thrones and breadless subjects — in debt with one or other king of Jewry. After all, the “Lord,” by whose grace they are all enthroned, from the late King Soulouk to the latest Prince of Bulgaria, is the same El-Shaddai, the omnipotent, the mighty Jehovah-Tsabaoth, the god whom they, or their fathers — which is all one to him “to whom a thousand years are as one day” — have unlawfully carried off from his “Holy of Holies” and confined in their own altars. The sons of Israel are, in fact and justice, his legitimate children, his “chosen people.” Hence it would only be a piece of retributive justice, a kind of tardy Nemesis, should the day come when the Jew, claiming his own, shall carry off as old material the last of the kings, before he proceeds to paint afresh, as new goods, the globe itself.

H.P.B.

¹ [Italian proverb, *i.e.*, “Even if it is not true, it is well conceived.” Probably from the Greek, “Και αν δεν είναι αλήθεια, καλώς επινοήθηκε.” — ED. PHIL.]

