

This was absurd : Haeckel has shown it to be absurd. So I halted the camel and got out my sweater, and buttoned my jacket over it, and continued the journey.

Why did I feel uncomfortable ? Why did I perspire ? My friends, I cannot tell !

The night brought counsel. In the morning I attacked Hassan's position with horse, foot, and artillery.

"How dare you ?" I said. "We have an instrument for registering degrees, the thermometer. Produce your thermometer !"

Hassan seemed abashed ; he only wiped his brow.

"No !" I continued, "you are an impudent fellow, a pretender to knowledge, a sophist, a scholiast, and several other things ending in 'ast,' I dare say, if the truth were known !"

The victim hummed some rubbish about "the eyes of Arabi," which he thought superior to a gazelle's ; but I did not take his point.

"Hassan !" said I, "you know absolutely nothing. You do not know that heat is a vibration of molecules, that heat is molecular motion ! And is this perceptible even to feeling ? Perish the thought ! By feeling, who would ever have found out about molecules ? Understand then, once and for all, that heat as such cannot be felt !"

The poor man was by now, metaphorically speaking, a mere pulp. The volcanic grey matter of his Arab brain sizzled under the cold spray of my intellectual acumen.

He hit the camel repeatedly and gave his wheezy whistle.

I had won ; the rest of the day's march was for me a smiling silence.

Yet night found me disturbed. On what profound metaphysical conceptions (I mused) rest our simplest certainties ! Think of Huxley, and the smashing blows that he delivered at "commonsense" metaphysics ; how they crumbled to powder before him !

If I contemplate "the sun," how rapidly it becomes a mere subjective phenomenon, a puppet of the ego, or at least a strange, mystical, unknown, perhaps unknowable being. Subjective or objective, certainly my idea of it is dependent upon me ; it is the objective school (surely !) that insists that things exist without my co-operation. Yet is not that the very proof that the object must be conjoined with my sense before it exists for me ? Then "the sun" means "the relation of some unknown thing with my organs of sight."