

## ABOUT GIANTS.

BY LAWRENCE IRWELL.

Primitive traditions are as full of accounts of men of enormous stature as they are of dwarfs. The poets, and some of the historians of antiquity, lead us to suppose that the human race did not begin to deteriorate until the time of Homer. There is not, however, any proof that races of men of gigantic size ever existed at all, although sculptures are preserved which represent combats between men and giants. One of these may be seen in the British museum, and others are to be found in the few Greek temples which have escaped destruction. Pliny says that upon the occasion of a terrible earthquake in Italy, a fissure opened, revealing the skeleton of a man embedded upright in the earth, measuring about twenty-six feet in height. Plutarch goes further, for he declares that a skeleton was found by Sertorius at Tangier, in Mauritania, (Morocco), which measured about forty feet! Phlegon, of Lydia, in his "Treatise on Wonders," says that there were discovered in Africa a vast number of skeletons between twelve and fifteen feet in height.

The information afforded by the Bible is scanty. The height of Og, king of Bashan, is not given; we are merely told that his bedstead was "of iron, nine cubits (about thirteen and one-half feet) long, and four cubits broad." Josephus, however, says that the length of this remarkable bed was four cubits and a span—about eight feet, nine inches. Certain tall races referred to in Scripture unquestionably contained men "of lofty stature;" and the report of the great height of the Anakim terrified the Israelites in the time of Moses; but in the time of Joshua, the Anakim were almost "extinguished as a people" by the Israelites. There is no proof whatever that this tribe was of superhuman height.

## Patagonian Giants.

The traveler Magellan records in his travels, written in 1520, that in latitude 34, near the mouth of the Plata river, he met with a gigantic tribe of Patagonians. He says that he measured many of them, and that they exceeded seven feet in height. Whether Magellan's measurements were wrong, or whether these people are degenerating, I cannot say; but it is certain that, at the present time, an average Patagonian measures about five feet, ten inches, and that there is no reliable evidence that any man of this nation ever exceeded six feet, four inches. Nobody doubts, of course, that the Patagonians, taken as a whole, are a very tall people.

At all times and in all countries, prior to the eighteenth century, kings and nobles had a fancy for including among their retainers either a giant or a dwarf—and sometimes both. Frederick the

Great had his corps of gigantic grenadiers; and in the Tower of London may be seen some enormous armor of sixteenth century work, which must have belonged to men of great size. James I had attached to his person a porter named Parsons, commonly called "the Staffordshire giant," who had commenced life as a blacksmith; he measured—so report says—seven feet, seven inches. Parsons lived on into the reign of Charles I, and was two inches taller than his predecessor.

## Cromwell's Giant Valet.

Cromwell had a valet named Daniel, who was seven feet, six inches tall, but of weak intellect. He, unfortunately, ended his days in a lunatic asylum, having become possessed with the idea that he had been sent on the earth to prophesy coming events. Contemporary with Daniel, lived Anthony Payne, a Cornish farmer. He was as remarkable for his wit as for his strength and stature, which exceeded seven feet. I understand that the English counties of Cornwall and Yorkshire have been famous for their big men for many generations past, although tallness is not specially noticeable today among the inhabitants of the cities. After a long, military career in the Stuart service, Payne died at a good old age.

In 1686, two negroes of very great stature were exhibited in England. They were said to be the sons of the kings of two African tribes, and were captured by slave-dealers, who brought them to Europe. One was called Giolo, and he was supposed to be the son of the king of the Moangi tribe. The other was known as "the Black Prince," and became converted to Christianity. He was taken care of by a Nottinghamshire family, who christened him Joseph. His height is believed to have been seven feet.

Giants are seldom gifted with any more beauty than their opposites in the world, and they are generally more remarkable for their awkwardness and their stolid appearance than for any natural grace or intellectual qualities. There was, however, an exception to this general rule in a person named Maximilian Muller, a German giant, who traveled about Europe in the reign of the English king, George II. The accounts describe him as being a man of splendid build and noble proportions, with a handsome and striking countenance. He measured seven feet, eight inches. His hand was twelve inches long from the wrist to the tip of the middle finger. He died in 1735, at the age of sixty, not long after Hogarth had introduced his portrait into his famous picture of "Southwark Fair."

## The Habitat of the Giant.

It is a curious fact that the population of France has rarely produced a giant,

while Germany, Poland, Great Britain and Switzerland carry off the palm. The United States, while not famous for giants, has produced one of the tallest and one of the heaviest men of whom we have an authentic account. Miles Darden was born in North Carolina in 1798, and he lived until 1857. He was seven feet, six inches in height, and in 1845 weighed 871 pounds. At his death, his weight was a little over a thousand pounds. Until 1853, he was active and able to work, but after that time he was obliged to stay at home, or to be taken about in a two-horse wagon. His coffin was eight feet long, thirty-five inches deep and thirty-two inches across the breast.

It has been suggested that the prevalence in France of a vegetarian diet, which, it is said, does not tend to develop to so great an extent the growth of muscle as does the stronger diet of meat, may explain the apparent absence of giants. But if this were the correct hypothesis as to the cause of giantism, then men and women of great height ought to be very numerous, both here and in England. Scientific opinion, however, seems to regard enormous size as a diseased condition, and the corpses of many giants have, upon dissection, been found to possess an abnormal brain characteristic. The curious body found at the root of the nose, known as the hypophysis, or pituitary, is enlarged to such a degree that it must be regarded as evidence that the deceased was a victim of the terrible disease called acromegaly. The normal function of the hypophysis is not known.

The eighteenth century, to judge by its literature, seems to have been more than usually prolific of giants, both male and female. Horace Walpole mentions a giant and giantess, who were on view in London. They were both, it seems, well-proportioned persons, and without the usual awkward ungainliness of their fraternity—if that term is permissible. At this time, also, there appeared a young Italian giantess, seven feet in height, who is reported to have been the admiration of most of the crowned heads of Europe. Her appearance was followed, about 1740, by Cajanus, the Swedish giant, commonly known as "the living Colossus," who attracted a great amount of attention all over the old world. He was the son of a minister of a little village in Finland. The minister and his wife were normal individuals, but their son stood eight feet, four inches without his shoes. In 1755, Bernardo Gogli came to the front. He measured eight feet in height, and the extraordinary proportion of his limbs seems to have been a veritable gold mine to him.

## Ireland's Celebrities.

But no giant ever created quite as much sensation as Charles Byrne, "the Irish monster," who lived from 1761 to