



THE BOOK OF THE DAMNED

CHARLES FORT

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The Book Of The Damned

1

A procession of the damned.

By the damned, I mean the excluded.

We shall have a procession of data that Science has excluded.

Battalions of the accursed, captained by pallid data that I have exhumed, will march. You'll read them—or they'll march. Some of them livid and some of them fiery and some of them rotten.

Some of them are corpses, skeletons, mummies, twitching, tottering, animated by companions that have been damned alive. There are giants that will walk by, though sound asleep. There are things that are theorems and things that are rags: they'll go by like Euclid arm in arm with the spirit of anarchy. Here and there will flit little harlots. Many are clowns. But many are of the highest respectability. Some are assassins. There are pale stench and gaunt superstitions and mere shadows and lively malices: whims and amiabilities. The naïve and the pedantic and the bizarre and the grotesque and the sincere and the insincere, the profound and the puerile.

A stab and a laugh and the patiently folded hands of hopeless propriety.

The ultra-respectable, but the condemned, anyway.

The aggregate appearance is of dignity and dissoluteness: the aggregate voice is a defiant prayer: but the spirit of the whole is processional.

The power that has said to all these things that they are damned, is Dogmatic Science.

But they'll march.

The little harlots will caper, and freaks will distract attention, and the clowns will break the rhythm of the whole with their buffooneries—but the solidity of the procession as a whole: the impressiveness of things that pass and pass and pass, and keep on and keep on and keep on coming.

The irresistibility of things that neither threaten nor jeer nor defy, but arrange themselves in mass-formations that pass and pass and keep on passing.

So, by the damned, I mean the excluded.

But by the excluded I mean that which will some day be the excluding.

Or everything that is, won't be.

And everything that isn't, will be—

But, of course, will be that which won't be—

It is our expression that the flux between that which isn't and that which won't be, or the state that is commonly and absurdly called "existence," is a rhythm of heavens and hells: that the damned won't stay damned; that salvation only precedes perdition. The inference is that some day our

accursed tatterdemalions will be sleek angels. Then the sub-inference is that some later day, back they'll go whence they came.

It is our expression that nothing can attempt to be, except by attempting to exclude something else: that that which is commonly called "being" is a state that is wrought more or less definitely proportionately to the appearance of positive difference between that which is included and that which is excluded.

But it is our expression that there are no positive differences: that all things are like a mouse and a bug in the heart of a cheese. Mouse and a bug: no two things could seem more unlike. They're there a week, or they stay there a month: both are then only transmutations of cheese. I think we're all bugs and mice, and are only different expressions of an all-inclusive cheese.

Or that red is not positively different from yellow: is only another degree of whatever vibrancy yellow is a degree of: that red and yellow are continuous, or that they merge in orange.

So then that, if, upon the basis of yellowness and redness, Science should attempt to classify all phenomena, including all red things as veritable, and excluding all yellow things as false or illusory, the demarcation would have to be false and arbitrary, because things colored orange, constituting continuity, would belong on both sides of the attempted borderline.

As we go along, we shall be impressed with this:

That no basis for classification, or inclusion and exclusion, more reasonable than that of redness and yellowness has

ever been conceived of.

Science has, by appeal to various bases, included a multitude of data. Had it not done so, there would be nothing with which to seem to be. Science has, by appeal to various bases, excluded a multitude of data. Then, if redness is continuous with yellowness: if every basis of admission is continuous with every basis of exclusion, Science must have excluded some things that are continuous with the accepted. In redness and yellowness, which merge in orangeness, we typify all tests, all standards, all means of forming an opinion—

Or that any positive opinion upon any subject is illusion built upon the fallacy that there are positive differences to judge by—

That the quest of all intellection has been for something—a fact, a basis, a generalization, law, formula, a major premise that is positive: that the best that has ever been done has been to say that some things are self-evident—whereas, by evidence we mean the support of something else—

That this is the quest; but that it has never been attained; but that Science has acted, ruled, pronounced, and condemned as if it had been attained.

What is a house?

It is not possible to say what anything is, as positively distinguished from anything else, if there are no positive differences.

A barn is a house, if one lives in it. If residence constitutes houseness, because style of architecture does not, then a

bird's nest is a house: and human occupancy is not the standard to judge by, because we speak of dogs' houses; nor material, because we speak of snow houses of Eskimos—or a shell is a house to a hermit crab—or was to the mollusk that made it—or things seemingly so positively different as the White House at Washington and a shell on the seashore are seen to be continuous.

So no one has ever been able to say what electricity is, for instance. It isn't anything, as positively distinguished from heat or magnetism or life. Metaphysicians and theologians and biologists have tried to define life. They have failed, because, in a positive sense, there is nothing to define: there is no phenomenon of life that is not, to some degree, manifest in chemism, magnetism, astronomic motions.

White coral islands in a dark blue sea.

Their seeming of distinctness: the seeming of individuality, or of positive difference one from another—but all are only projections from the same sea bottom. The difference between sea and land is not positive. In all water there is some earth: in all earth there is some water.

So then that all seeming things are not things at all, if all are inter-continuous, any more than is the leg of a table a thing in itself, if it is only a projection from something else: that not one of us is a real person, if, physically, we're continuous with environment; if, psychically, there is nothing to us but expression of relation to environment.

Our general expression has two aspects:

Conventional monism, or that all "things" that seem to have identity of their own are only islands that are projections

from something underlying, and have no real outlines of their own.

But that all "things," though only projections, are projections that are striving to break away from the underlying that denies them identity of their own.

I conceive of one inter-continuous nexus, in which and of which all seeming things are only different expressions, but in which all things are localizations of one attempt to break away and become real things, or to establish entity or positive difference or final demarcation or unmodified independence—or personality or soul, as it is called in human phenomena—

That anything that tries to establish itself as a real, or positive, or absolute system, government, organization, self, soul, entity, individuality, can so attempt only by drawing a line about itself, or about the inclusions that constitute itself, and damning or excluding, or breaking away from, all other "things":

That, if it does not so act, it cannot seem to be;

That, if it does so act, it falsely and arbitrarily and futilely and disastrously acts, just as would one who draws a circle in the sea, including a few waves, saying that the other waves, with which the included are continuous, are positively different, and stakes his life upon maintaining that the admitted and the damned are positively different.

Our expression is that our whole existence is animation of the local by an ideal that is realizable only in the universal:

That, if all exclusions are false, because always are included and excluded continuous: that if all seeming of

existence perceptible to us is the product of exclusion, there is nothing that is perceptible to us that really is: that only the universal can really be.

Our especial interest is in modern science as a manifestation of this one ideal or purpose or process:

That it has falsely excluded, because there are no positive standards to judge by: that it has excluded things that, by its own pseudo-standards, have as much right to come in as have the chosen.

Our general expression:

That the state that is commonly and absurdly called "existence," is a flow, or a current, or an attempt, from negativeness to positiveness, and is intermediate to both.

By positiveness we mean:

Harmony, equilibrium, order, regularity, stability, consistency, unity, realness, system, government, organization, liberty, independence, soul, self, personality, entity, individuality, truth, beauty, justice, perfection, definiteness—

That all that is called development, progress, or evolution is movement toward, or attempt toward, this state for which, or for aspects of which, there are so many names, all of which are summed up in the one word "positiveness."

At first this summing up may not be very readily acceptable. At first it may seem that all these words are not synonyms: that "harmony" may mean "order," but that by "independence," for instance, we do not mean "truth," or

that by "stability" we do not mean "beauty," or "system," or "justice."

I conceive of one inter-continuous nexus, which expresses itself in astronomic phenomena, and chemic, biologic, psychic, sociologic: that it is everywhere striving to localize positiveness: that to this attempt in various fields of phenomena—which are only quasi-different—we give different names. We speak of the "system" of the planets, and not of their "government": but in considering a store, for instance, and its management, we see that the words are interchangeable. It used to be customary to speak of chemic equilibrium, but not of social equilibrium: that false demarcation has been broken down. We shall see that by all these words we mean the same state. As every-day conveniences, or in terms of common illusions, of course, they are not synonyms. To a child an earth worm is not an animal. It is to the biologist.

By "beauty," I mean that which seems complete.

Obversely, that the incomplete, or the mutilated, is the ugly.

Venus de Milo.

To a child she is ugly.

When a mind adjusts to thinking of her as a completeness, even though, by physiologic standards, incomplete, she is beautiful.

A hand thought of only as a hand, may seem beautiful.

Found on a battlefield—obviously a part—not beautiful.

But everything in our experience is only a part of something else that in turn is only a part of still something else—or that there is nothing beautiful in our experience: only appearances that are intermediate to beauty and ugliness—that only universality is complete: that only the complete is the beautiful: that every attempt to achieve beauty is an attempt to give to the local the attribute of the universal.

By stability, we mean the immovable and the unaffected. But all seeming things are only reactions to something else. Stability, too, then, can be only the universal, or that besides which there is nothing else. Though some things seem to have—or have—higher approximations to stability than have others, there are, in our experience, only various degrees of intermediateness to stability and instability. Every man, then, who works for stability under its various names of "permanency," "survival," "duration," is striving to localize in something the state that is realizable only in the universal.

By independence, entity, and individuality, I can mean only that besides which there is nothing else, if given only two things, they must be continuous and mutually affective, if everything is only a reaction to something else, and any two things would be destructive of each other's independence, entity, or individuality.

All attempted organizations and systems and consistencies, some approximating far higher than others, but all only intermediate to Order and Disorder, fail eventually because of their relations with outside forces. All are attempted completenesses. If to all local phenomena there are always outside forces, these attempts, too, are realizable only in the state of completeness, or that to which there are no outside forces.

Or that all these words are synonyms, all meaning the state that we call the positive state—

That our whole "existence" is a striving for the positive state.

The amazing paradox of it all:

That all things are trying to become the universal by excluding other things.

That there is only this one process, and that it does animate all expressions, in all fields of phenomena, of that which we think of as one inter-continuous nexus:

The religious and their idea or ideal of the soul. They mean distinct, stable entity, or a state that is independent, and not a mere flux of vibrations or complex of reactions to environment, continuous with environment, merging away with an infinitude of other interdependent complexes.

But the only thing that would not merge away into something else would be that besides which there is nothing else.

That Truth is only another name for the positive state, or that the quest for Truth is the attempt to achieve positiveness:

Scientists who have thought that they were seeking Truth, but who were trying to find out astronomic, or chemic, or biologic truths. But Truth is that besides which there is nothing: nothing to modify it, nothing to question it, nothing to form an exception: the all-inclusive, the complete—

By Truth I mean the Universal.

So chemists have sought the true, or the real, and have always failed in their endeavors, because of the outside relations of chemical phenomena: have failed in the sense that never has a chemical law, without exceptions, been discovered: because chemistry is continuous with astronomy, physics, biology—For instance, if the sun should greatly change its distance from this earth, and if human life could survive, the familiar chemic formulas would no longer work out: a new science of chemistry would have to be learned—

Or that all attempts to find Truth in the special are attempts to find the universal in the local.

And artists and their striving for positiveness, under the name of "harmony"—but their pigments that are oxydizing, or are responding to a deranging environment—or the strings of musical instruments that are differently and disturbingly adjusting to outside chemic and thermal and gravitational forces—again and again this oneness of all ideals, and that it is the attempt to be, or to achieve, locally, that which is realizable only universally. In our experience there is only intermediateness to harmony and discord. Harmony is that besides which there are no outside forces.

And nations that have fought with only one motive: for individuality, or entity, or to be real, final nations, not subordinate to, or parts of, other nations. And that nothing but intermediateness has ever been attained, and that history is record of failures of this one attempt, because there always have been outside forces, or other nations contending for the same goal.

As to physical things, chemic, mineralogic, astronomic, it is not customary to say that they act to achieve Truth or Entity, but it is understood that all motions are toward Equilibrium: that there is no motion except toward Equilibrium, of course always away from some other approximation to Equilibrium.

All biologic phenomena act to adjust: there are no biologic actions other than adjustments.

Adjustment is another name for Equilibrium. Equilibrium is the Universal, or that which has nothing external to derange it.

But that all that we call "being" is motion: and that all motion is the expression, not of equilibrium, but of equilibrating, or of equilibrium unattained: that life-motions are expressions of equilibrium unattained: that all thought relates to the unattained: that to have what is called being in our quasi-state, is not to be in the positive sense, or is to be intermediate to Equilibrium and Inequilibrium.

So then:

That all phenomena in our intermediate state, or quasi-state, represent this one attempt to organize, stabilize, harmonize, individualize—or to positivize, or to become real:

That only to have seeming is to express failure or intermediateness to final failure and final success:

That every attempt—that is observable—is defeated by Continuity, or by outside forces—or by the excluded that are continuous with the included:

That our whole "existence" is an attempt by the relative to be the absolute, or by the local to be the universal.

In this book, my interest is in this attempt as manifested in modern science:

That it has attempted to be real, true, final, complete, absolute:

That, if the seeming of being, here, in our quasi-state, is the product of exclusion that is always false and arbitrary, if always are included and excluded continuous, the whole seeming system, or entity, of modern science is only quasi-system, or quasi-entity, wrought by the same false and arbitrary process as that by which the still less positive system that preceded it, or the theological system, wrought the illusion of its being.

In this book, I assemble some of the data that I think are of the falsely and arbitrarily excluded.

The data of the damned.

I have gone into the outer darkness of scientific and philosophical transactions and proceedings, ultra-respectable, but covered with the dust of disregard. I have descended into journalism. I have come back with the quasi-souls of lost data.

They will march.

As to the logic of our expressions to come—

That there is only quasi-logic in our mode of seeming:

That nothing ever has been proved—

Because there is nothing to prove.

When I say that there is nothing to prove, I mean that to those who accept Continuity, or the merging away of all phenomena into other phenomena, without positive demarcations one from another, there is, in a positive sense, no one thing. There is nothing to prove.

For instance nothing can be proved to be an animal—because animalness and vegetableness are not positively different. There are some expressions of life that are as much vegetable as animal, or that represent the merging of animalness and vegetableness. There is then no positive test, standard, criterion, means of forming an opinion. As distinct from vegetables, animals do not exist. There is nothing to prove. Nothing could be proved to be good, for instance. There is nothing in our "existence" that is good, in a positive sense, or as really outlined from evil. If to forgive be good in times of peace, it is evil in wartime. There is nothing to prove: good in our experience is continuous with, or is only another aspect of evil.

As to what I'm trying to do now—I accept only. If I can't see universally, I only localize.

So, of course then, that nothing ever has been proved:

That theological pronouncements are as much open to doubt as ever they were, but that, by a hypnotizing process, they became dominant over the majority of minds in their era:

That, in a succeeding era, the laws, dogmas, formulas, principles, of materialistic science never were proved, because they are only localizations simulating the

universal; but that the leading minds of their era of dominance were hypnotized into more or less firmly believing them.

Newton's three laws, and that they are attempts to achieve positiveness, or to defy and break Continuity, and are as unreal as are all other attempts to localize the universal:

That, if every observable body is continuous, mediately or immediately, with all other bodies, it cannot be influenced only by its own inertia, so that there is no way of knowing what the phenomena of inertia may be; that, if all things are reacting to an infinitude of forces, there is no way of knowing what the effects of only one impressed force would be; that if every reaction is continuous with its action, it cannot be conceived of as a whole, and that there is no way of conceiving what it might be equal and opposite to—

Or that Newton's three laws are three articles of faith:

Or that demons and angels and inertias and reactions are all mythological characters:

But that, in their eras of dominance, they were almost as firmly believed in as if they had been proved.

Enormities and preposterousnesses will march.

They will be "proved" as well as Moses or Darwin or Lyell ever "proved" anything.

We substitute acceptance for belief.

Cells of an embryo take on different appearances in different eras.

The more firmly established, the more difficult to change.

That social organism is embryonic.

That firmly to believe is to impede development.

That only temporarily to accept is to facilitate.

But:

Except that we substitute acceptance for belief, our methods will be the conventional methods; the means by which every belief has been formulated and supported: or our methods will be the methods of theologians and savages and scientists and children. Because, if all phenomena are continuous, there can be no positively different methods. By the inconclusive means and methods of cardinals and fortune tellers and evolutionists and peasants, methods which must be inconclusive, if they relate always to the local, and if there is nothing local to conclude, we shall write this book.

If it function as an expression of its era, it will prevail.

All sciences begin with attempts to define.

Nothing ever has been defined.

Because there is nothing to define.

Darwin wrote *The Origin of Species*.

He was never able to tell what he meant by a "species."

It is not possible to define.

Nothing has ever been finally found out.

Because there is nothing final to find out.

It's like looking for a needle that no one ever lost in a haystack that never was—

But that all scientific attempts really to find out something, whereas really there is nothing to find out, are attempts, themselves, really to be something.

A seeker of Truth. He will never find it. But the dimmest of possibilities—he may himself become Truth.

Or that science is more than an inquiry:

That it is a pseudo-construction, or a quasi-organization: that it is an attempt to break away and locally establish harmony, stability, equilibrium, consistency, entity—

Dimmest of possibilities—that it may succeed.

That ours is a pseudo-existence, and that all appearances in it partake of its essential fictitiousness—

But that some appearances approximate far more highly to the positive state than do others.

We conceive of all "things" as occupying gradations, or steps in series between positiveness and negativeness, or realness and unrealness: that some seeming things are more nearly consistent, just, beautiful, unified, individual, harmonious, stable—than others.

We are not realists. We are not idealists. We are intermediatists—that nothing is real, but that nothing is

unreal: that all phenomena are approximations one way or the other between realness and unrealness.

So then:

That our whole quasi-existence is an intermediate stage between positiveness and negativeness or realness and unrealness.

Like purgatory, I think.

But in our summing up, which was very sketchily done, we omitted to make clear that Realness is an aspect of the positive state.

By Realness, I mean that which does not merge away into something else, and that which is not partly something else: that which is not a reaction to, or an imitation of, something else. By a real hero, we mean one who is not partly a coward, or whose actions and motives do not merge away into cowardice. But, if in Continuity, all things do merge, by Realness, I mean the Universal, besides which there is nothing with which to merge.

That, though the local might be universalized, it is not conceivable that the universal can be localized: but that high approximations there may be, and that these approximate successes may be translated out of Intermediateness into Realness—quite as, in a relative sense, the industrial world recruits itself by translating out of unrealness, or out of the seemingly less real imaginings of inventors, machines which seem, when set up in factories, to have more of Realness than they had when only imagined.

That all progress, if all progress is toward stability, organization, harmony, consistency, or positiveness, is the attempt to become real.

So, then, in general metaphysical terms, our expression is that, like a purgatory, all that is commonly called "existence," which we call Intermediateness, is quasi-existence, neither real nor unreal, but expression of attempt to become real, or to generate for or recruit a real existence.

Our acceptance is that Science, though usually thought of so specifically, or in its own local terms, usually supposed to be a prying into old bones, bugs, unsavory messes, is an expression of this one spirit animating all Intermediateness: that, if Science could absolutely exclude all data but its own present data, or that which is assimilable with the present quasi-organization, it would be a real system, with positively definite outlines—it would be real.

Its seeming approximation to consistency, stability, system—positiveness or realness—is sustained by damning the irreconcilable or the unassimilable—

All would be well.

All would be heavenly—

If the damned would only stay damned.

2

In the autumn of 1883, and for years afterward, occurred brilliant-colored sunsets, such as had never been seen

before within the memory of all observers. Also there were blue moons.

I think that one is likely to smile incredulously at the notion of blue moons. Nevertheless they were as common as were green suns in 1883.

Science had to account for these unconventionalities. Such publications as *Nature* and *Knowledge* were besieged with inquiries.

I suppose, in Alaska and in the South Sea Islands, all the medicine men were similarly upon trial.

Something had to be thought of.

Upon the 28th of August, 1883, the volcano of Krakatoa, of the Straits of Sunda, had blown up.

Terrific.

We're told that the sound was heard 2,000 miles, and that 36,380 persons were killed. Seems just a little unscientific, or impositive, to me: marvel to me we're not told 2,163 miles and 36,387 persons. The volume of smoke that went up must have been visible to other planets—or, tormented with our crawlings and scurryings, the earth complained to Mars; swore a vast black oath at us.

In all text-books that mention this occurrence—no exception so far so I have read—it is said that the extraordinary atmospheric effects of 1883 were first noticed in the last of August or the first of September.

That makes a difficulty for us.

It is said that these phenomena were caused by particles of volcanic dust that were cast high in the air by Krakatoa.

This is the explanation that was agreed upon in 1883—

But for seven years the atmospheric phenomena continued —

Except that, in the seven, there was a lapse of several years —and where was the volcanic dust all that time?

You'd think that such a question as that would make trouble?

Then you haven't studied hypnosis. You have never tried to demonstrate to a hypnotic that a table is not a hippopotamus. According to our general acceptance, it would be impossible to demonstrate such a thing. Point out a hundred reasons for saying that a hippopotamus is not a table: you'll have to end up agreeing that neither is a table a table—it only seems to be a table. Well, that's what the hippopotamus seems to be. So how can you prove that something is not something else, when neither is something else some other thing? There's nothing to prove.

This is one of the profundities that we advertised in advance.

You can oppose an absurdity only with some other absurdity. But Science is established preposterousness. We divide all intellection: the obviously preposterousness and the established.

But Krakatoa: that's the explanation that the scientists gave. I don't know what whopper the medicine men told.

We see, from the start, the very strong inclination of science to deny, as much as it can, external relations of this earth.

This book is an assemblage of data of external relations of this earth. We take the position that our data have been damned, upon no consideration for individual merits or demerits, but in conformity with a general attempt to hold out for isolation of this earth. This is attempted positiveness. We take the position that science can no more succeed than, in a similar endeavor, could the Chinese, or than could the United States. So then, with only pseudo-consideration of the phenomena of 1883, or as an expression of positivism in its aspect of isolation, or unrelatedness, scientists have perpetrated such an enormity as suspension of volcanic dust seven years in the air—disregarding the lapse of several years—rather than to admit the arrival of dust from somewhere beyond this earth. Not that scientists themselves have ever achieved positiveness, in its aspect of unitedness, among themselves—because Nordenskiöld, before 1883, wrote a great deal upon his theory of cosmic dust, and Prof. Cleveland Abbe contended against the Krakatoan explanation—but that this is the orthodoxy of the main body of scientists.

My own chief reason for indignation here:

That this preposterous explanation interferes with some of my own enormities.

It would cost me too much explaining, if I should have to admit that this earth's atmosphere has such sustaining power.

Later, we shall have data of things that have gone up in the air and that have stayed up—somewhere—weeks—months

—but not by the sustaining power of this earth's atmosphere. For instance, the turtle of Vicksburg. It seems to me that it would be ridiculous to think of a good-sized turtle hanging, for three or four months, upheld only by the air, over the town of Vicksburg. When it comes to the horse and the barn—I think that they'll be classics some day, but I can never accept that a horse and a barn could float several months in this earth's atmosphere.

The orthodox explanation:

See the *Report of the Krakatoa Committee of the Royal Society*. It comes out absolutely for the orthodox explanation—absolutely and beautifully, also expensively. There are 492 pages in the "Report," and 40 plates, some of them marvelously colored. It was issued after an investigation that took five years. You couldn't think of anything done more efficiently, artistically, authoritatively. The mathematical parts are especially impressive: distribution of the dust of Krakatoa; velocity of translation and rates of subsidence; altitudes and persistences—

Annual Register, 1883-105:

That the atmospheric effects that have been attributed to Krakatoa were seen in Trinidad before the eruption occurred:

Knowledge, 5-418:

That they were seen in Natal, South Africa, six months before the eruption.

Inertia and its inhospitality.

Or raw meat should not be fed to babies.

We shall have a few data initiatorily.

I fear me that the horse and the barn were a little extreme for our budding liberalities.

The outrageous is the reasonable, if introduced politely.

Hailstones, for instance. One reads in the newspapers of hailstones the size of hens' eggs. One smiles. Nevertheless I will engage to list one hundred instances, from the *Monthly Weather Review*, of hailstones the size of hens' eggs. There is an account in *Nature*, Nov. 1, 1894, of hailstones that weighed almost two pounds each. See Chambers' Encyclopedia for three-pounders. *Report of the Smithsonian Institution*, 1870-479—two-pounders authenticated, and six-pounders reported. At Seringapatam, India, about the year 1800, fell a hailstone—

I fear me, I fear me: this is one of the profoundly damned. I blurt out something that should, perhaps, be withheld for several hundred pages—but that damned thing was the size of an elephant.

We laugh.

Or snowflakes. Size of saucers. Said to have fallen at Nashville, Tenn., Jan. 24, 1891. One smiles.

"In Montana, in the winter of 1887, fell snowflakes 15 inches across, and 8 inches thick." (*Monthly Weather Review*, 1915-73.)

In the topography of intellection, I should say that what we call knowledge is ignorance surrounded by laughter.

Black rains—red rains—the fall of a thousand tons of butter.

Jet-black snow—pink snow—blue hailstones—hailstones
flavored like oranges.

Punk and silk and charcoal.

About one hundred years ago, if anyone was so credulous
as to think that stones had ever fallen from the sky, he was
reasoned with:

In the first place there are no stones in the sky:

Therefore no stones can fall from the sky.

Or nothing more reasonable or scientific or logical than
that could be said upon any subject. The only trouble is the
universal trouble: that the major premise is not real, or is
intermediate somewhere between realness and unrealness.

In 1772, a committee, of whom Lavoisier was a member,
was appointed by the French Academy, to investigate a
report that a stone had fallen from the sky at Luce, France.
Of all attempts at positiveness, in its aspect of isolation, I
don't know of anything that has been fought harder for
than the notion of this earth's unrelatedness. Lavoisier
analyzed the stone of Luce. The exclusionists' explanation
at that time was that stones do not fall from the sky: that
luminous objects may seem to fall, and that hot stones may
be picked up where a luminous object seemingly had
landed—only lightning striking a stone, heating, even
melting it.

The stone of Luce showed signs of fusion.

Lavoisier's analysis "absolutely proved" that this stone had not fallen: that it had been struck by lightning.

So, authoritatively, falling stones were damned. The stock means of exclusion remained the explanation of lightning that was seen to strike something—that had been upon the ground in the first place.

But positiveness and the fate of every positive statement. It is not customary to think of damned stones raising an outcry against a sentence of exclusion, but, subjectively, aerolites did—or data of them bombarded the walls raised against them—

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"The phenomenon which is the subject of the remarks before us will seem to most persons as little worthy of credit as any that could be offered. The falling of large stones from the sky, without any assignable cause of their previous ascent, seems to partake so much of the marvelous as almost entirely to exclude the operation of known and natural agents. Yet a body of evidence is here brought to prove that such events have actually taken place, and we ought not to withhold from it a proper degree of attention."

The writer abandons the first, or absolute, exclusion, and modifies it with the explanation that the day before a reported fall of stones in Tuscany, June 16, 1794, there had been an eruption of Vesuvius—

Or that stones do fall from the sky, but that they are stones that have been raised to the sky from some other part of the earth's surface by whirlwinds or by volcanic action.

It's more than one hundred and twenty years later. I know of no aerolite that has ever been acceptably traced to terrestrial origin.

Falling stones had to be undamned—though still with a reservation that held out for exclusion of outside forces.

One may have the knowledge of a Lavoisier, and still not be able to analyze, not be able even to see, except conformably with the hypnoses, or the conventional reactions against hypnoses, of one's era.

We believe no more.

We accept.

Little by little the whirlwind and volcano explanations had to be abandoned, but so powerful was this exclusion-hypnosis, sentence of damnation, or this attempt at positiveness, that far into our own times some scientists, notably Prof. Lawrence Smith and Sir Robert Ball, continued to hold out against all external origins, asserting that nothing could fall to this earth, unless it had been cast up or whirled up from some other part of this earth's surface.

It's as commendable as anything ever has been—by which I mean it's intermediate to the commendable and the censurable.

It's virginal.

Meteorites, data of which were once of the damned, have been admitted, but the common impression of them is only a retreat of attempted exclusion: that only two kinds of