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JACQUES LOEB AND HIS PERIOD¹

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JACQUES LOEB was born in Germany in 1859, within a few miles of Strasbourg, or in a region in which French and German culture had long mingled. His forebears were among the intellectuals who during the persecutions attendant on the Inquisition were driven out of Portugal and compelled to seek asylum in a more liberal country. They migrated from Lisbon to Amsterdam, and in later and quieter times settled in Alsace. Thus, along with an inheritance distinctly intellectual, Loeb profited by contact with one of the richest European cultures during his formative period. The intellectual cosmopolitanism which moulded his growth into physical maturity served him well throughout his varied life. He was easily at home in the sophisticated intellectual atmosphere of Europe and in the younger but rapidly developing intellectual atmosphere of the United States, where he passed the years from 1891 to 1924.

The influence of the French environment on Loeb's mental growth is shown by the part the writings of Voltaire and the French encyclopedists played in it; and the influence of German surroundings is shown equally by the German *Gymnasium* and university training. Loeb attended three German universities—Berlin, Strassburg and Würzburg. It was at Strassburg and Würzburg that he met the conditions which were to guide his subsequent scientific undertakings. But his emotions toward humanitarianism was fed by the French philosophers, and he always looked to these writers as among the great intellectual and spiritual liberators of all time. In his book, "The Organism as a Whole," published during the great war, his tormented mind returns to them in the search for an anchor and haven of hope. "This book is dedicated to that group of free thinkers, . . ., who first dared to follow the consequences of a mechanistic science, . . ., to the rules of human conduct and thereby laid the foundations of that spirit of tolerance, justice, and gentleness which was the hope of our civilization . . .," until swept away by the great war.

But it was the advanced system of scientific training

¹ Based on an address made at the exercises held at the Marine Biological Laboratory, Woods Hole, Massachusetts, on August 4, 1927, in connection with the erection of a tablet to Jacques Loeb.

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