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CALENDAR FOR 1834.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
JANUARY,	-	-	-	1	2	3	4
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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FEBRUARY,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
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MARCH,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
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APRIL,	-	-	1	2	3	4	5
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MAY,	-	-	-	-	1	2	3
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JUNE,	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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AUGUST,	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
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SEPTEMBER,	1	2	3	4	5	6	6
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OCTOBER,	-	-	-	1	2	3	4
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NOVEMBER,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
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DECEMBER,	1	2	3	4	5	6	6
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	28	29	30	31			

From the London Quarterly Review.

THE UNIVERSE AND ITS AUTHOR.

From the earliest ages shepherds tending their flocks on the plains of Asia have been familiar with the more remarkable of those objects which shine by night in the sky, and to which the Persians gave the general name of stars. The word imports, in its origin, to rule or direct; those lights being often the guide of the shepherd over the spacious pastures which he had to traverse, and of the husbandman as to the seasons of the year. The stars were long supposed, and are still imagined by a great majority of mankind, to be fixed; but the telescope has enabled us to say with more certainty that many, and with a strong degree of probability that the whole are in a state of motion, although we, borne along in the train of succession ourselves, are not capable of discovering the direction in which they march round the orbit of the universe.

We are as yet, and doubtless ever shall be, without the means of numbering those tenants of the firmament. Every new improvement in the telescope brings within the range of vision countless multitudes which the human eye had never seen before.* Some stars are double and even triple, that is to say, they appear to us within a barely distinguishable distance of each other. Upwards of three thousand double stars have been already discovered, and it is justly supposed that even this number by no means exhausts the fertility of the heavens in these twin productions, some of which have been actually observed to move round each other in orbits requiring for their entire completion twelve hundred of our years. Such systems as these give the mind a faint glimmer of eternity.

Astronomers conjecture, not without reason, from the analogies of our own system, that these suns do not revolve round each other, shedding their light in vain; but that each is accompanied by its circle of planets, which being opaque bodies, would of course be forever shrouded from our view by the splendor of their respective orbs of day. This idea leads us to conclude that the stars, which are separated from each other by distances at least as great as that of Uranus from our sun—that is to say, some eighteen hundred millions of miles—have also their respective planets, their Mercuries, their Earths, their Jupiters and Saturns, and are the centres of peculiar systems throughout the whole firmament. If those planets be peopled by intelligent beings, as Earth is, and the other planets of the solar system are supposed to be, the contemplation in thought of such myriads of globes with their inhabitants overwhelms the mind.

We have no mode of ascertaining the distance of any one of the stars from the earth. We have measured the circumference which we describe in our annual journey round the sun; we take the diameter of that circle, and with it form the base of a triangle whose vertex should be at the nearest of those luminous bodies. The angle thus formed, however, at the star, would be unappreciable with the most perfect instrument of human invention. Now an angle of one second of a degree is appreciable; consequently the distance of the nearest fixed star must exceed the radius of a circle, one second of whose circumference measures one hundred and ninety millions of miles; that is, it must exceed two hundred thousand times the diameter of the earth's orbit. If the dove that returned no more to Noah, had been commissioned to bear with her utmost speed, an olive branch to the least remote of the spheres, she would therefore still be on her journey: after towering for forty centuries through the heights of space, she would not at this moment have reached the middle of her destined way.

No machinery has yet been invented, indeed it seems at present impossible that we should ever devise any means, by which we might estimate the magnitude of even the least of the stars, since we never behold their discs. We become sensible of their existence by rays of light which must have taken, in some instances, probably a thousand years to reach our globe, although light is known to travel at the rate of one hundred and ninety-two thousand miles in a second. Sirius, the brightest, because perhaps the nearest to us of those luminaries, is conjectured by Dr. Wollaston to give as much light as fourteen suns, each as large as ours. Magnificent, therefore, as the system must be of which Sirius forms the centre, yet we behold no part of it. The planet Saturn, with its appendages of rings and satellites, exhibits, when its rings are visible, a spectacle, which seen through a telescope of moderate power, we imagine that a half-crown piece would cover.† But an individual gazing through a similar instrument from a planet of Sirius to our sun, might suppose, in the same manner, that he could cover our entire system with a spider's thread. He would set down the sun in his map as a fixed star, but to his eye it would present no variation, as the largest than a hundredth part of the sun's surface, and could not therefore produce any loss of its light of which he could take an estimate. For him, this globe of ours, immense as to our finite faculties it seems to be, would have actually no existence. It would find not even a point's place on his chart, and if it were blotted out of space to-morrow, it would never be missed by any of the probably fifty worlds that are bathed in the floods of light which Sirius pours forth. Whose eye is it that watches over our sphere? Whose is the ever-extended arm that maintains it?

The star called Omicron, in the constellation of Cetus, appears to us only twelve times in eleven years. It is seen during its greatest brightness during a fortnight; it then decreases gradually during three months when it disappears. After an interval of five months it again becomes visible, and continues increasing during the three remaining months of its period. Another star, that called Aigol, or B Persie, continues visible during a period of sixty two hours, when it suddenly loses its splendor, and, though a star of the second magnitude, becomes reduced to the fourth magnitude in the course of two or three hours. It then begins to increase again, and in three hours and a half resumes its wonted lustre. Goodricke, who discovered ‡ this remarkable fact in 1782, suggests, and his idea is now generally adopted by astronomers, that this variation must be caused by the revolution around Aigol of some opaque body, a planet of its own, which when interposed between us and the star, cuts off a large portion of its light. It is highly probable that a similar arrangement periodically affects the light of Omicorn, though upon a different scale. There are eleven other stars that exhibit analogous phenomena, some of them at intervals of five hundred years, to which we may look forward without danger of mistake—thus opening a vista of futurity. When we reflect upon these facts—and upon the circumstance that the rays, by which we may to night behold the Pleiades, must have left their sources in the time of our Heptrachy, or before it—we feel that the mind which is in this manuer enabled to comprehend the existence of myriads of peopled worlds besides our own, and to glance to the past with more than the speed of light itself, must be the creation of some superior Spirit dwelling in eternity.

Placed as we are according to the opinion of astronomers, in the middle of the strata of systems which animate all space, and favored though we be by supernatural disclosures and by great scientific acquirements; we are nevertheless prone to question whether such systems exist of their own innate vigor, or whether they have been created by a power extrinsic to themselves. If they are discovered to be self existent, it follows that they must be imperishable. But if they are proved to be perishable, it follows that they cannot be self-existent, and then they must have been created by an extrinsic power, which power must be omnipotent from the very nature of its productions.

The same power must be self-existent, therefore, since no agency inferior to Omnipotence could have given such a Being birth; and it must be Eternal, as an Omnipotent, Self-existent Being can know neither infancy or age. Here then, upon an inquiry of the greatest importance to mankind, astronomical facts come to our assistance, which carry with them a force of conviction as strong as any demonstration in mathematics, and stronger than most of the evidences upon which the history of human transactions are founded. The stamp of mortality, the finger of death itself, had been traced upon some of the brightest worlds which we have ever yet seen in the firmament.

In the year 125, B. C., an extraordinary luminary attracted the attention of Hipparchus, which induced him to frame a catalogue of stars, the earliest on record; that star in his time disappeared from the heavens. In A. D. 389, a star blazed forth near (a) Aquilæ, remained three weeks as bright as Venus, and then died away. In the year 1572, Tycho Brace returning home one evening from his observatory to his dwelling house, was surprised to see a group of people looking in astonishment at a bright star, which he with all his scrutiny of the heavens had never seen before.

It shone in the constellation Casciopeia, was then as bright as Sirius, and for a while was visible even at mid-day. It began to fade in December of the same year, and after exhibiting all the changes of conflagration, disappeared in March, 1574. Was this a satellite of some fixed star, which caught fire, and thus prefigured to us the fate, that, according to the declarations of the prophets, awaits our own world?

'Similar phenomena,' says Sir John Herschel, 'though of a less splendid character, have taken place more recently, as in the case of the star of the third magnitude discovered in 1670, by Antheim, in the head of the Swan; which, after becoming completely invisible, re-appeared, and after undergoing one or two singular fluctuations of light, during two years, at last died away entirely, and has not since been seen. On a careful re-examination of the heavens, too, and a comparison of catalogues, many stars are now found to be missing; and although there is no doubt that these losses have often arisen from mistaken entries, yet, in many instances, it is equally certain that there is no mistake in the observation or entry, and that the star has really disappeared from the heavens. —Treatise on Astronomy, p. 384.

The existence and death of Alexander the Great—the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, —the destruction by earthquake or volcano, of cities, which were once the seats of commerce and the arts, have been handed down to us upon evidence, in no respect whatever better entitled to our belief, than that upon which the astronomical facts here related by Sir John Herschel stand recorded. Men who have made it their peculiar occupations for years to observe the changes in the firmament agree in stating that, in many instances, stars which were once familiar to the eye, have ceased to appear, and that, too, for periods which clearly indicate their annihilation. The consequence is obvious and inevitable; those bodies must have been created, otherwise they could not have been liable to decay. They performed their appointed revolutions, and they perished—just as man lives his predestined number of years, and dies. If created, then there must be some power which gave them existence, and prescribed the laws by which that existence was carried to its close.

*For instance in Orion, which is marked South and Herschel's catalogue as containing two distinct sets of atars, each set triple, as appears in Mr. Barlow's flud-refracting telescope, is composed of two quadruple sets, with two very fine stars between them, which, as well as the fourth star in each set, had previously escaped the power of the most finished instruments. Mr. Barlow's telescope has also enabled him to exhibit, in Perseus, marked double in the same catalogue, as a collection of no few than six stars! See Phil Trans. 1831. p. 1. We trust that Mr. Barlow's efforts for the improvement of his telescope may meet with the support which the importance of the subject demands. Were its powers increased or fifty-fold, it is not improbable that, instead of six he might discover a hundred stars, where only one now appears to the unassisted eye.

†The rings have been gradually opening since the 13th of June. In 1839 they will afford as magnificent a spectacle as they did in 1825.

‡The same discovery appears to have been made nearly about the same time by Palitzch, near Dresden—a peasant by station, an astronomer by nature—who from his familiar acquaintance with the aspect of the heavens, had been led to notice, among so many thousand stars, this one as distinguished from the rest by its variation, and had ascertained its period. The same Palitzch was also the first one to discover the predicted comet of Halley, in 1759, which he saw nearly a month before any of the astronomers, who, armed with their telescopes, were anxiously watching its return. These anecdotes bring us back to the age of Chaldean shepherds.'—Sir John Herschel's Treatise on Astronomy, p. 381, n.

‖We forget whence we extracted the following quaint but expressive lines:—
'Quench'd volcanoes, rifted mountains,
Oceans driven from land,
Isles submerged and dried up fountains,
Empires—whelmed in sand;
What?—though her doom be yet untold—
Nature like time is waxing old.'

STEAMBOAT ACCIDENTS.

When the resolution offered by Mr. Webster on this subject, came up for consideration in the Senate on Monday the 23d the following remarks were made by that gentleman and Mr. Benton.

Mr. Webster addressed the Senate. It was, he believed, the general expectation of the country, that Congress would take up the subject to which this resolution referred. The history of the last two or three years (said he) exhibits a vast amount of property, and a startling list of human lives, lost by the explosion of the boilers and flues of Steamboats. These frequent occurrences have occasioned the existence of so much fear and terror, as to be a serious diminution of the convenience and comfort of that mode of conveyance. At present the whole subject is without any regulation whatever, by public authority, and no authority but that of Congress seems competent to establish proper regulations. Of the power of Congress there can be no doubt. Steamboats are generally, licensed vessels, and they engage extensively in the coastwise commerce of the country. They may be registered vessels also, and may engage in its foreign commerce. On the same ground that laws of Congress regulate the number of passengers in merchant vessels, and make it necessary that such vessels should have medicine chests, for the preservation of the lives and health of persons on board, with divers other provisions, for the same or similar objects, it is plainly in the power of Congress to adopt any regulations for the government of steam vessels, which security to life and property may appear to require. It is with Congress to make these regulations, or they cannot be effectually made at all.

It is the general opinion, I believe, not only of practical engineers, but of the public also, that nearly all their accidents have arisen from negligence; and some of them from a very highly criminal degree of negligence. Indeed, it may be well doubted whether a still more positive criminal offence has not in some instances, occasioned the disaster. Steamboat racing for example, a practice by which the lives of hundreds of persons are put into imminent danger, without the slightest knowledge, on their part, of the existence of any such cause of danger, is such a wanton, intentional and reckless exposure of human life, as that it may well be regarded as a higher offence than even extreme negligence. But negligence itself is criminal, highly criminal, where such effects to life and property follow from it. Those who carry passengers for hire, by means of such a mighty agent as steam—an agent so useful and powerful when kept under proper management, and so destructive when it is allowed to overcome its just restraints—are bound in duty, and should be bound, by law, to apply to their business the strictest attention and the utmost degree of diligence.

I am not prepared to say, definitely, what legal provisions it may be proper to adopt. It will be the business of the committee to consider and arrange such provisions. They will have the benefit of the legislation of other countries on the same subject, and may readily command the assistance of whatever skill and experience our own country affords, in aid of their labors.

Some general ideas upon the proper remedy, suggest for consideration.

The law, as it seems to me, might be of two-fold character. It might prescribe certain regulations, the violation of which, whether accidents happened in consequence or not, should incur a penalty; and it might further provide, that, in case of accident, although all prescribed regulations should have been previously complied with, yet, if the accident happened from culpable negligence at the moment, that negligence should be severely punished. As to previous and prescribed regulations, the first and most important, doubtless, should be, that every boiler, intended for a steamboat, should be tried and proved by some public authority, and restrained, in its future use, to one-third, or, at most one-half, the degree of pressure or tension which it should have been proved to be capable of bearing. A safety valve, out of the reach of the firemen, a proper apparatus to show at all times the level of the water, and also the intensity or heat of the steam, and this apparatus so arranged as that its indications may be seen from without, are among the preventitive remedies to which the attention of the Committee will probably be called.

But I look with more confidence of beneficial results from certain other provisions which I trust will receive the consideration of the committee. Fully believing that these accidents generally result from negligence, at the time, by those who have the charge of the engine, penalties, I think, ought to be enacted against such negligence, and legal means provided, by which, when lives are lost by such occurrences, an immediate inquisition, investigation and trial, should be secured; and the culpable negligence, if there be such, adequately punished. And, in the first place, I think the boat itself should be made subject to forfeiture, whenever lives were lost through the negligence of those conducting it. There is nothing unreasonable in this; analogous provisions exist in either cases. The master of a merchant ship, for instance, may forfeit the ship by a violation of law, however innocent the owners may be; even though the law be only a common regulation of trade and customs. There is, at least, quite as much reason for saying that whosoever builds or buys a steamboat, and proposes to carry passengers therein for hire, shall be answerable to the amount of the value of the boat, for the sobriety, diligence and attention of those whom he appoints his agents to navigate it, as there is, in revenue cases, to impose such liability for smuggling, or illegal landing of goods. To enforce this liability, I should propose, that whenever an explosion takes place, causing the loss of the lives of passengers, the boat should be immediately seized by the Collector of the District, and the persons navigating her detained for examination; a trial should be had,