

MISSING METEORS.

The Heavens Mainly Obscured During the Night.

BRIEF GLIMPSES OF CLEAR SKY.

No Signs of a Fulfillment of Professor Proctor's Prediction.

PROFESSOR PARKHURST'S MATHEMATICAL ESTIMATES EXPLAINING WHY THE METEORS MIGHT NOT APPEAR.

THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—

There are three reasons why we should not confidently expect to be able to see the approaching shower of meteors and on," as suggested by Mr. Proctor in the Herald of the 24th inst. First, the brightness of the moon; second, that the meteors usually become visible after they enter our atmosphere, from their own combustion, and are so small as to reflect very little light from the sun, whence we conclude that there must be an immense number of them within a very small field to make it possible to see them even with the telescope; third, the angle of the orbit of the meteor to the earth's orbit is such that the earth can only be approximately in the line of the train for a few hours; and if the train should be in the line of the earth's orbit, before the meteor would have passed the point of crossing, it would probably be so near that the individual meteors would be too scattered to be visible. A few computations will show that even in the absence of the moon, and with the telescope directed toward the approaching train, the chances would be against its being visible; though there remains, perhaps, some interesting phenomena as this would be, making visible the connection between the comets and the showers of meteors which astronomers have demonstrated to exist.

REASONS FOR THE FAILURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—

The great interest among astronomers which attaches to the shower of meteors predicted for it, arises from the supposed connection of the meteoroids which compose it with Biela's comet, whose orbit is known to be in exceedingly close proximity to the position of the earth at the present time. A star shower at any time is a striking spectacle, but in former ages the magnificent displays of meteors which took place from time to time excited a degree of superstitious terror of which we can form no adequate conception; a terror not wholly removed when, as now, the laws of these strange bodies are partly understood. It is believed that there exists no authentic record of destruction of life or property resulting from the fall of meteors during a star shower, though history mentions some instances where such damage has resulted from the fall of fire balls or bolides, and meteoric masses deeply imbedded in the earth are undoubtedly found from time to time.

THE METEORS, HOWEVER, WHICH COMPOSE A STAR SHOWER ARE AS BEING OF ONE KIND, AND DIFFERENT FROM THE METEORS WHICH SOMETIMES SUCCESS IN PENETRATING OUR ATMOSPHERE WITHOUT ENTIRE DESTRUCTION OF SUBSTANCE.

No matter what their original constitution, their first impact in the upper regions of the atmosphere would generate an amount of heat which would be sufficient to vaporize the hardest rocks. Consequently we see them as brilliant streaks, projected against the nocturnal sky. Some of these meteors are known to enter the earth's atmosphere at a velocity of more than forty miles a second. It is perfectly well known from the mechanical theory of heat that a body moving at this rate of speed in our atmosphere would produce a degree of heat and light utterly unapproachable by artificial means, and which would render mineral masses, originally smaller than a man's fist, visible for scores and even hundreds of miles, dissipating them instantly into impalpable vapor.

FORMER METEORIC SHOWERS.

It is only when the original mass of a meteor amounts to several tons that a small residuum of the whole finally reaches the earth. It is supposed, on the testimony of observations, that meteors first become visible at an altitude of about one hundred miles above the surface of the earth, and, consequently, that they descend to the earth at a great height. But it may be asked, "What becomes of this intense heat and what is its effect on our climate?" It may be answered that while any one person on our clear night will see an average of five or six of these objects in an hour's watch and consequently that the earth encounters millions of them annually, their total mass is so exceedingly small, relatively to the mass of the earth, that no appreciable effect on the general temperature of the earth is produced by their passage. Yet there are those who are led to a contrary opinion, and the theory is even held by certain astronomers of high rank that it is to the impact of myriads of meteors against the atmosphere of the earth that we owe our present life-giving heat. Professor Newton, of Yale College, was the first to point out in a definite manner the probable connection of meteoroids with comets, and the night of November 12, 1779, Humboldt witnessed from the Andes a meteoric display of great magnitude, which was described as a shower of the most startling description was witnessed by inhabitants of this country in 1833. The meteors rained down from the south, and the "terrible negroes" of the South, where the phenomenon was most striking, were convulsed with agonies of fear. The earth was covered with stones, tears and groans, and many days elapsed before the excitement subsided.

MEANWHILE ASTRONOMERS HAD BUSIED THEMSELVES WITH OBSERVATIONS OF THE METEOR STREAKS, AND THE RESULTS OF THEIR RESEARCHES HAVE LED TO ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DEDUCTIONS OF MODERN ASTRONOMY, SINCE IT WAS BY THEM THAT PROFESSOR NEWTON WAS ABLE TO SHOW THAT THE APPEARANCE OF THESE METEORIC SHOWER PERIODS IS PERIODIC, AND THAT EVERY THIRTY-THREE YEARS, AND THAT THIS PERIODICITY IS PROBABLY CAUSED FROM THE FACT THAT THE ORBIT OF BIELA'S COMET IS SUCH THAT IT IS NEARLY IN LINE WITH THE ORBIT OF THE EARTH, AND THAT THE PERIOD OF BIELA'S COMET IS SUCH THAT IT IS NEARLY IN LINE WITH THE ORBIT OF THE EARTH, AND THAT THE PERIOD OF BIELA'S COMET IS SUCH THAT IT IS NEARLY IN LINE WITH THE ORBIT OF THE EARTH.

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Prominent Financiers on the Transfer of New York Central Stock.

MR. FIELD IN GOOD HUMOR.

An Apparently Successful Bid for Business Popularity.

The excitement in financial circles over the sale of 250,000 shares of New York Central Railroad stock yesterday confirmed, owing to the holiday character of the day, to the gatherings at the clubs and in hotel corridors. Wall street and most of the prominent resorts of stock speculators were deserted, and it was hard to find any of the operators who make a conspicuous figure on the Stock Exchange during other days of the year. But here and there along the uptown and downtown way, and among the neighborhood of Madison square, especially at the Brunswick and Fifth Avenue hotels, and even as far up as the Windsor, occasional groups of well known Wall street men might be seen discussing the situation, and to all appearances they were more or less pleased with the turn in affairs. The general impression appeared to be that Mr. Vanderbilt's sale would help the market more than it would injure it. His motive in relinquishing an enormous block of stock was variously criticized, but many were found to give him credit for what he said—that he did it in deference to the popular feeling, which he apprehended was averse to his absolute control of New York Central.

MR. VANDERBILT'S SINCERITY.

Mr. Cyrus W. Field was sitting on a lounge in the handsome parlor of his residence, facing Gramercy Park, when the reporter called upon him last evening. He was waiting to join in the Thanksgiving family dinner. Whether the prospect of the touchsome and savory turkey or the recent operation of the syndicate in New York Central was the cause, it is certain that Mr. Field was in a happy mood and disposed to make all around him happy. "Do you think, Mr. Field," asked the reporter, "that Mr. Vanderbilt was sincere in making this sale?" "I think he was. Why should he not be sincere? He had more stock than was useful, and he doesn't number himself without losing a penny."

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"You are satisfied, Mr. Field," continued the reporter, "that Mr. Vanderbilt has done a judicious thing?"

"Undoubtedly. He has widened the basis of a great property so that people everywhere may invest in it with an assurance that their money is safely and profitably placed."

"Will it be placed upon the London market right away?"

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"How is rapid transit stock?"

"It is a very interesting question, and I am sure that Mr. Field, as he started off to his Thanksgiving supper on the best of terms with himself and the whole world."

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THE "WALK" OF THE STOCK.

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