

The Story of The Sun 1833 to 1918

How Richard Adams Locke, Young Ben Day's First Reporter, Fooled the Whole World and Set It Talking Over His Famous Moon Hoax Back in 1835. The Most Extraordinary Newspaper Joke Ever Played, the Way It Was Done and the Man Who Did It—A Wonderful Fairy Tale of the Lunar Regions and Lunar Folks

THE SUN.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 25, 1835.

[PAGE ONE CONT'D.]

615.] ED DAILY, BY HENRY DAY. CORNER OF Nassau and Spruce streets. Opposite City Hall.

GREAT ASTRONOMICAL DISCOVERIES. LATELY MADE BY SIR JOHN HERSCHEL, BART., F.R.S. &c. At the Cape of Good Hope.

Further discoveries in our solar system. Several years, however, prior to the death of this venerable astronomer, he conceived it practicable to construct an improved series of parabolic and spherical reflectors, by which, by uniting all the meridional points in the Gregorian and Newtonian systems with the highly interesting astronomical discovery of Dollond, would, in a great degree, remove the formidable obstacle of the size of the instruments, and have the search in optical science, and the most distressing difficulty in mechanical construction, but accumulating information, and eventually, prevented its experimental application. His son, the present Sir John Herschel, who had been named and cradled in the observatory, and a practical astronomer from his boyhood, was fully acquainted with the value of the theory, that he determined upon setting it at what ever cost. Within two years of his father's death, he completed his new construction and adapted it to the old telescope with nearly perfect success. His son declared that the magnifying power of 5000 times, which he applied to the most minute objects, was the result of the new construction, and that he had been able to see objects which he had never seen before, and that he had been able to see objects which he had never seen before, and that he had been able to see objects which he had never seen before.

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RICHARD ADAMS LOCKE, WHO WROTE THE MOON HOAX YARN, From an engraving in the possession of his granddaughter, MRS. F. WINTHROP WHITE of New Brighton, S.I.

EDITORIAL NOTE.—This is the second of a series of articles narrating the history of THE SUN, and giving a vital, intimate view of New York life during more than eighty eventful years. The first article, printed last Sunday, told of the founding of THE SUN by Benjamin H. Day in September, 1833, of its rapid rise to success, and of the stirring days when Horace Greeley, William Cullen Bryant and James Watson Webb were among the active journalists of New York.

By FRANK M. O'BRIEN.

The young man whom Day met at the murder trial in White Plains was Richard Adams Locke, a reporter who was destined to kick up more dust than perhaps any other man of his profession. As he comes on the stage we must let his predecessor, George W. Wisner, pass into the wings. Wisner was a good man as a reporter, as a writer of editorial articles and as part owner of the paper. His appeal for abolition irritated Mr. Day at first, but the young man's motives were so pure and his articles so logical that Day recognized the justice of the cause, even as he realized the foolish methods employed by some of the Abolitionists. Wisner set the face of THE SUN against slavery, and Day kept it so, but there were minor matters of policy upon which the partners never agreed, never could agree.

Day Buys Out Wisner. When Wisner's health became poor, in the summer of 1835, he expressed a desire to get away from New York. Mr. Day paid him \$5,000 for his interest in the paper—a large sum in those days, considering the fact that Wisner had won his share with no capital except his pen. Wisner went west and settled at Pontiac, Mich. There his health improved, his fortune increased, and he was at one time a member of the Michigan Legislature.

When Day found attending the trial of Matthias the Prophet he hired him to write a series of articles on the religious fakers. These, the first "feature stories" that ever appeared in THE SUN, were printed on that front page. A few weeks later, while the "feature" articles were still being sold on the streets in pamphlet form, Locke went to Day and told him that his boss, Col. Webb of the Courier and Enquirer, had discharged him for working for THE SUN "on the side." Wisner was about to leave the paper and Day was glad to hire Locke, for he needed a good editorial writer. Twelve dollars a week was the alluring wage, and Locke accepted it.

The Author of the Moon Hoax. Locke was then 35—ten years senior to his employer. Let his contemporary Edgar Allan Poe describe him: He is about five feet seven inches in height, symmetrically formed; there is an air of distinctness about his whole person—the "air noble" of genius. His face is strongly pitted by the smallpox, and, perhaps from the same cause, there is a marked obliquity in the eyes; a certain calm, clear, luminousness, however, about these latter amply compensates for the defect, and the forehead is truly beautiful in its intellectual quality. I am acquainted with no person possessing so good a forehead as Mr. Locke.

Locke was nine years older than Poe, who at this time had most of his fame ahead of him. Poe was quick to recognize the quality of Locke's writings; indeed, the poet saw, perhaps more clearly than others of that period, that America was full of good writers, a fact which the general public was neglectful. This was Poe's tribute to Locke's literary gift: His prose style is noticeable for its

condition, luminosity, completeness—each quality in its proper place. He has that method, so generally characteristic of genius proper. Everything he writes is a model in its peculiar way, serving just the purposes intended and nothing to spare. The Sun's new writer was a collateral descendant, John Locke, the English philosopher of the seventeenth century. His contemporaries (including Poe) who mentioned his birthplace wrote it down New York. He was of English birth, however, and Poe and the rest told a kind lie in order that Locke might not be barred from certain New York clubs where a prejudice against Englishmen lingered. Born in 1800, he was educated by his mother and by private tutors until he was 19, when he entered Cambridge. While still a student he contributed to the Bee, the Imperial Magazine and other English publications. When he left Cambridge he had the hardihood to start the London Republic, the title of which describes its purpose. This was a failure, for London declined to warm to the theories of American democracy, no matter how scholarly their exposition.

Abandoning the Republic, young Locke devoted himself to literature and science. He ran a periodical called the Cornucopia for about six months, but it was not a financial success, and in 1830 he came to New York. Col. Webb saw his merits and put him at work on the Courier and Enquirer. Locke could write almost anything. In Cambridge and in Fleet street he had picked up a wonderful store of general information. He could turn out prose or poetry, politics or pathos, anecdotes or astronomy.

How Locke Got His Idea. While he lived in London Locke was a regular reader of the Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal and he brought some copies of it to America. One of these, an issue of 1829, contained an article by Dr. Thomas Dick of Dundee, a pious man but inclined to speculate on the possibilities of the universe. In this article Dr. Dick suggested the feasibility of communicating with the moon by means of great stone symbols on the face of the earth. The people of the moon—if there were any—would fashion the diagrams and reply in a similar way. Dr. Dick explained afterward that he wrote this piece with the idea of satirizing a certain coterie of eccentric German astronomers.

Now it happened that Sir John Herschel, the greatest astronomer of his time and the son of the celebrated astronomer Sir William Herschel, went to South Africa in January, 1834, and established an observatory at Feldhausen, near Cape Town, with the intention of completing his survey of the sidereal heavens by examining the southern skies as he had swept the northern, thus to make the first telescopic survey of the whole surface of the visible heavens. Locke knew about Sir John and his mission. The Matthias case had blown over, the big fire in Fulton street was almost forgotten and things were a bit dull on the Island of Manhattan. The newspapers were in a state of

THE SUN IN WHICH THE FIRST INSTALLMENT OF THE MOON HOAX WAS PRINTED.

armed troops. As Locke and his fellow journalists gathered at the American Hotel bar for their after dinner brandy it is probable that there was nothing, not even the great sixth recently arrived at the American Museum, to excite a good argument. After solemnly dwelling on the awe which mortal man must feel upon peering into the secrets of the sky, the article declared that Sir John "showed above them, there has been no accession to human knowledge at all comparable in sublime interest to that which he has been able to reveal to us. He has made the soul of the cabinet which contained it, he has honored the age, he has made the world more acquainted with the secrets which had been hid from the eyes of all men that had lived since the birth of time." At the end of a half column of glorification the writer got down to brass tacks: To render our enthusiasm intelligible, we will state at once that by means of a telescope, of vast dimensions and an entirely new principle, the younger Herschel, at his observatory in the southern hemisphere, has already made the most extraordinary discoveries in every planet in our solar system, and that he has discovered a new theory of planetary phenomena in other solar systems; has obtained a distinct view of objects in the moon, fully equal to that which the unaided eye could see of the terrestrial objects at the distance of one hundred yards; has affirmatively settled the question whether this satellite is inhabited, and by what order of beings; has firmly established a new theory of cometary phenomena, and has solved or corrected nearly every leading problem of mathematical astronomy. A Mystery Explained. And where was the Journal of Science getting this mine of astronomical revelation for its supplement? The mystery is explained at once: We are indebted to the devoted friendship of Dr. Andrew Grant, the pupil of the elder, and for several years past the inseparable coadjutor of the younger Herschel. The amanuensis of the latter at the Cape of Good Hope, as a first-rate defensible superintendent of his telescope during the whole period of its construction and operations, Dr. Grant has been able to supply us with intelligence in general interest at least to that which Dr. Herschel himself has transmitted to the Royal Society. For permission to indulge his friendship in communicating this invaluable information to us, Dr. Grant and ourselves are indebted to the magnanimity of Dr. Herschel, who has graciously consented to our alterations, has thus signally honored and rewarded his fellow laborer in the field of science. Regarding the illustrations which, according to the implications of the text accompanying the supplement, the writer was specific. Most of them, he stated, were copies of "drawings taken in the observatory by Herbert Home, Esq., who accompanied the last powerful series of reflectors from London to the Cape. The engraving of the belts of Jupiter is a reduced copy of an imperial folio drawing by Dr. Herschel himself. The segment of the inner ring of Saturn is from a large drawing by Dr. Grant."



A CHOICE BIT OF LUNAR SCENERY. THE LANDSCAPE AND PEOPLE OF THE MOON, AS EXHIBITED AT HANNINGTON'S DIORAMAS, CITY SALOON, OPPOSITE ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, SIX WEEKS AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF LOCKE'S HOAX.—ADMITTANCE 50 CENTS CHILDREN HALF PRICE.

From The Sun of October 16, 1835.

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