

The Revelations of Astronomy.

Is there anything in modern science more staggering to our credulity than the revelations of astronomy? Somebody says that "astronomical knowledge should be acquired at the rate of a page a day. If faster than this, the mind is confused." Of all the sciences which overwhelm and confound us with their vastness, astronomy may take the palm. No wonder that it has been called *par excellence* "the sublime study," for it is too stupendous for a mind of ordinary calibre to grasp.

In a lecture at Edinburgh, Professor Grant thus spoke of the immensity of space:—"A railway train, travelling night and day at the rate of fifty miles an hour, would reach the moon in six months, the sun in 200 years, and Alpha Centauri, the nearest of the fixed stars, in 42,000,000 of years. A ball from a gun, travelling at the rate of 200 miles an hour, would not reach Alpha Centauri in less than 2,700,000 years!" What do you think of that, reader? Does it not confound all your ideas of time and space? Supposing this ball had started for Alpha Centauri at the birth of Cheops's great-grandfather, it would even now be only at the outset of its journey. Cheops's great-grandfather dandles Cheops's grandfather on his knees; he in turn grows up, waxes in years, and is succeeded by his son, who, again, is succeeded by Cheops. Cheops comes to manhood, builds the everlasting pyramids, lives to an antediluvian age, dies, is buried; successive generations appear on the earth, and pass away; empire after empire, the Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman, rise and fall, down to this present year of our Lord; and yet this ball, which has been rushing on all this time with inconceivable velocity, has advanced, comparatively, but a hop-step-skip-and-jump on its way to the nearest fixed star!

Again, the same lecturer tells us that light, which travels from one pole of the earth to the other in about the twenty-fourth part of a second, or nearly the 187,000 miles in a second—a velocity which, more than a million times swifter than a cannon ball, surpasses all comprehension—would not reach the same star in less than three years. But this is the nearest of the fixed stars. Light from some of the telescopic stars, we are told, requires 5,760 years to reach the earth; and from some of those clusters the distance is so great that light would take half a million of years to pass to the earth; so that we see objects, not as they really are, but as they were, half a million of years ago. These stars might have become extinct thousands of years ago, and yet their light might still present itself to us! Startling, amazing as this is, Camille Flammarion, in a recent number of the *Deutsche Revue*, makes a statement which overtops it and makes it seem modest in comparison. He asserts that, though light

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Mr. W. THAYER, Wright, P.Q., had **DYSPEPSIA FOR TWENTY YEARS**. Tried many remedies and doctors, but got no relief. His appetite was very poor, had a distressing pain in his side and stomach, and gradual wasting away of flesh, when he heard of and immediately commenced taking Northrop & Lyman's Vegetable Discovery. The pains have left, and he rejoices in the enjoyment of excellent health, in fact he is quite a new man.

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travels so fast, the photographic lens of a modern telescope receives impressions of stars whose thin rays of light have been millions of years travelling to the earth; rays which, perhaps, set out on their journey thitherward before this our earth had started on its appointed course; rays, some of them perhaps, of stars which have run their appointed course, which have vivified worlds like ours, and have ages ago been burnt out, and resolved into their ultimate atoms, while the rays they once shed still travel onward into space. A hundred years ago Mrs. Barbauld, roving in fancy from the earth to Mars, Jupiter, and "the dim verge, the suburbs of the system,"

"Where cheerless Saturn, midst his watery moons,

Girt with a lucid zone, in gloomy pomp,

Sits like an exiled monarch,"

and thence to the trackless deeps of space, where "ten thousand suns appear, of elder beams," suddenly paused in her "Summer Evening's Meditation," exclaiming,

"Fancy droops,

And thought astonished stops her bold career."

What if she were living to-day, and

had a peep through the Lick telescope at Alpha Lyra, a hundred billions of miles distant from the earth, and having a magnitude and splendor twenty times as great as that of our sun! Commend us to astronomy for the ease with which it handles enormous numbers! Millions, billions, trillions are to it a mere bagatelle. But think of the havoc which its calculations make of our idea of the past! "Hoary antiquity,"—departed empires looming with grandeur through the dim and spectral waste of years—become things of yesterday. As if this were not enough, Professor Barnard, of the Lick Observatory, who has been engaged in photographing in detail the Milky Way, heaps Ossa upon Pelion in his calculations. When the plates are finished, which will be some three years hence, he expects that the facts revealed by them will revolutionize the old conceptions of this phenomenon—in short, make all the old estimates of the stars it contains, stupendous as was their number, "hide their diminished heads"! 500,000,000 is the number Professor Barnard thinks the camera will show