

that the display was considerably more splendid at that place than here. The whole number of meteors counted from 3 o'clock, to fifteen minutes past 6, was *two hundred and fifty-three*. An auroral arch which appeared in the north between the hours of 4 and 5, followed by auroral streamers, enhanced the interest of the meteoric exhibition. As was observed here, the meteoric emanated from a common radiant situated in the Constellation Leo.

This notice has been delayed in the hope of being able to add some particulars respecting the succeeding nights; but these have proved unfavorable for observation, with the exception of the night of the 15th, when the heavens were attentively observed from half past 2, to half past 3 o'clock. Only six meteors were noticed, of which two only left trains. These proceeded from a common point near the western horizon of the Great Bear,—a position at least fifteen degrees north of the radiant observed on the 13th.

Yale College, Nov. 13.

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FIRE-SIDE TOPICS.—THE FIRE.

It is a common saying, that in winter, 'the fire is the finest flower of the garden;' and in so far as the climate of the British Islands is concerned, the saying is literally true; so true, that there are, perhaps, more happy faces around English firesides on December nights, than there are in all the gardens of the world during the choicest month of the summer's bloom. It is customary for those who depict the beauties of nature, to speak of the 'language of flowers;' and some of them contrive to make those lovely things of the season discourse right eloquently. So let us see whether we cannot, in homely and fireside phrase, find some 'voice' in this flower, which cheers and benefits us so much in hall, in parlour, and in kitchen.

In the first place, when we think of it, the possession of the fire is the grand and distinguished physical characteristic of man, and the one which at once puts the sceptre of dominion into his hand, and makes him the lord of the nether world. When seamen traverse the wide-encircling sea, and come to islands previously untrodden by an European foot, if the night is diversified by sparkling flames, or the day by curling smoke, peeping through the openings of those lovely groves which nature's own hand plants in the lands of the sun, then he instantly says within himself, "Here are the dwellings of my fellow men; and whatever may be his colour or his habits, within the shades of those forests I shall find a man and a brother." No doubt there are accidental fires and volcanic ones, in the lighting up of which man has no concern; but these have peculiar characters by which they can

readily be distinguished; and they are, generally speaking, upon such a scale as that man cannot avail himself of them, for any useful purpose.

When we consider the peculiarity of the human structure, the rank which man holds in creation, and the height to which he may rise, if he hide not his talent in the earth of indolence or dissipation, we are speedily brought to the conviction that "the gift of fire" is the best as well as the most universal of those which a bountiful Creator has bestowed upon man. He has not the wings of eagles, the fierceness of lions and tigers, or the strength of elephants; but he has more: he can rub one dry stick against another, until the action of fire is elicited, and, marching forth armed with his firebrand, he can make the most powerful and the most ferocious tenants of the forest tremble at his approach. It seems, too, that the whole constitution of man's nature is so framed as to impel him on to the discovery and use of this grand engine of his physical power.

It is probable that the natives of New Holland when first visited by Europeans, were the rudest race upon the surface of the globe, or were equalled in this respect only by the same black people which are found in the central forests of Borneo, and several of the other large islands on the south-east of Asia. Generally speaking, they had no clothing and no habitations; their historical knowledge did not extend farther than their own memories, and their geographical knowledge only to a few miles. On some of the more fertile spots, they made a sort of bark huts, about the same size as those which the gipsies erect in our green lanes; and in some places they also had very rude canoes, in which they could paddle for a short distance across the water. In other places they had nothing of this kind, but performed their trifling navigations, which amounted only to passing from one side of a creek to the other, upon logs of light wood, astride which they sat with their feet clasped round, and paddling themselves along with their hands—so that these logs were the real, and the only real, sea horses. But still, whether in canoe or on log, or whether uprond with plaited bark or absolutely naked, not one of those rude savages was without his fire-stick, consisting of a little disc of wood, with a hollow in it, and a short piece of stick, by pressing the end of which against the hollow, and twirling it round between his hands at the same time, he could contrive very speedily to ignite some light vegetable matter, and from that very soon kindle a fire, for protection or for cooking, as the case might be.

Thus we see, from the case of these people, that fire is the very first discovery of mankind; and the very simple fact of its being so is sufficient to establish the truth of its being the most useful, and the one which

is capable of being applied to the greatest number of purposes. When we further consider that no creature on earth except man has any knowledge of fire, or any capacity of producing it, but that in their wild state it is an object of terror to the whole of them, we cannot fail to be further convinced of the great advantages which man derives from it, and consequently how very useful the knowledge of it must be to everybody, more so indeed than anything else that we could name; for, as we have already mentioned, it is the first possession which rude man acquires; and when we look around us, we shall not fail to discover that it is the grand instrument in the very highest improvement which the arts have acquired in civilized society.

Secondly, look around, and reflect what England would be without fire, both in respect of direct comfort and of useful application. Fire forms our substitute for the light and heat of the sun, at those seasons when these are withdrawn from us, in order to afford the beauty of summer and the plenty of autumn to the southern hemisphere. The modifications are endless, and so are the applications and the advantages; but the process is every where substantially the same. We warm ourselves by means of fire; we prepare our provisions by means of fire; we light our houses and streets and roads by means of fire; our steam-ships defy and defeat both wind and tide by means of fire; our steam-carriages transport goods and passengers at the rate of a mile in two minutes, by means of fire; and our steam-engines perform, by means of fire, ten times the mechanical labour which could be performed by all the men, women, and children, and all the horses and other working animals, now living on the face of the earth.

The fire which so cheers us on a winter night is, therefore, a whole library of knowledge, a whole museum of nature, and a machine of art, to the capacity of which no bounds can be set. How exceedingly desirable, then that we should be well and thoroughly acquainted with its nature!

THE MAN CATCHER.

During Baxter's residence in Coventry, he, in company with several of the ejected ministers who resided there, commenced preaching in a house by the side of a common, not many miles from the city. The time of service being rather early in the morning, Baxter set out for the place the preceding evening. The night being dark, he missed his way, and after wandering about for a considerable time, espied a light on a rising ground at some distance; to which he immediately bent his steps. On his arrival, he found it emanated from the window of a gentleman's house.