

## A CHRISTIAN CROSSLESS CANNOT BE.

(From the German of Benjamin Schmolke.)

REV. J. E. HANKIN, D. D.

A Christian crossless cannot be!

Then, why this perturbation,  
When God, with grief and pain seeks thee,  
Thou child of his salvation!

The more the smart,

Dearer thou art:

The strokes that fall upon thee,  
Display the love that won thee.

A Christian crossless cannot be!

Than this, God wills, the rather,  
That grief and pain thyself should see,  
Come down from God the Father.

Since it is so,

'Tis well I know:

His love's own hand extending,  
No plagues can he be sending.

A Christian crossless cannot be!

Whence comes the art of praying?  
How from the world's vain pomp to flee,  
The soul on Jesus staying?

Fling it not off!

With bitter soot,

As though to God no debtor:  
It comes to make thee better.

A Christian crossless cannot be!

Else what would us awaken  
When floating soft on sin's smooth sea,  
Untroubled and unshaken?

Down comes the blight

Of death's dark night;

The last great trumpet calling,  
Wakes us to woes appalling.

A Christian crossless cannot be!

Thy hateful sins eschewing,  
It brings thee humbly to the knee,  
Thy love to God renewing.

Vain world aside,

Let God abide!

Bethink thee! Ah, it moves thee;  
Eternal Goodness loves thee.

Without a cross, nor would I be!

I'll bear all that God sends me;  
The strokes that come, I will not flee,  
For still his wing defends me.

Then, welcome fall

His chast'nings all;

With Christ, now uncomplaining,  
At last, forever reigning!

## THE PLANET VENUS AND THE STAR OF THE MAGI.

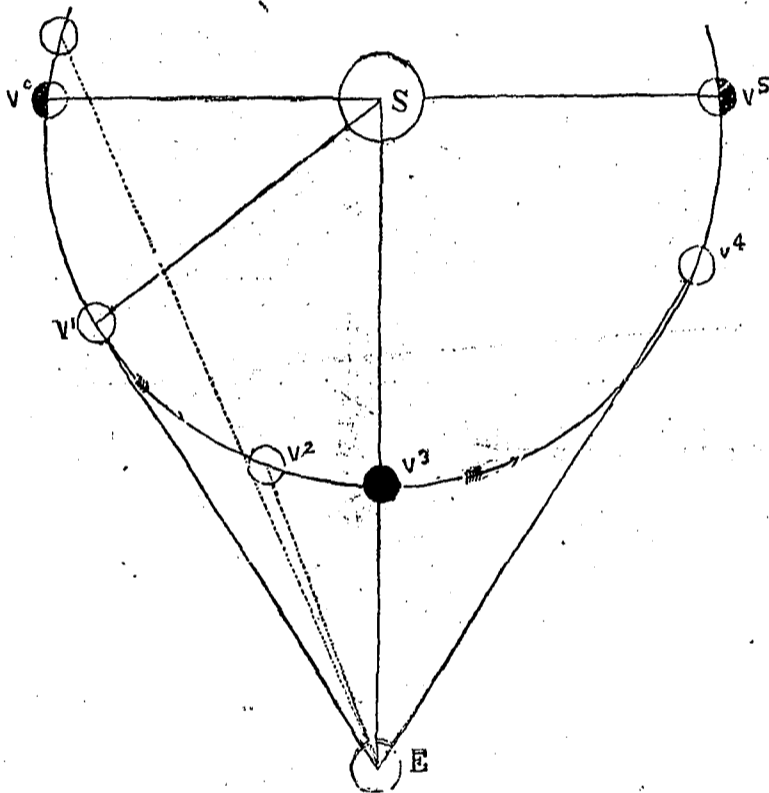
Most of our readers probably know by this time that the planet Venus has been receiving more than a usual amount of attention during the last few weeks. How it comes to pass, I do not know, but it seems that an idea has recently obtained amongst some people, that the star of the Magi has again made its appearance, and been seen in the eastern morning sky; and further, it seems that the planet Venus has been taken to be this star. Briefly let me explain, that there is no connection whatever between the two, nor, may I say, between the star of the Magi and any heavenly body known to astronomers.

Any good almanac (Whitaker's, for example,) furnishes us with the information that in the month of December, Venus was a morning star, that she was at her greatest elongation east on July 13th, at inferior conjunction with the sun of September 21st, and her greatest elongation west, on December 2nd.

I will try and justify the statement I have made by reference to a few astronomical facts. And first let me explain the terms I have used, with which some readers are possibly not familiar.

In the accompanying diagram, which makes no pretension to be according to scale, let the circle S represent the sun, E the earth, and the large curve V, V<sup>3</sup>, V<sup>4</sup>, be the path of Venus in her tour, or properly, orbit round the sun. By elongation, is meant the distance a planet appears to the people on the earth to be from the sun. This distance is therefore to be measured by the opening or angle between the line S.E., and a line from the earth to Venus, wherever she may be in her orbit. I think it is evident, that the greatest elongation is reached when she is at V<sup>1</sup> and V<sup>2</sup>. In the year 1887 she was in the position of V<sup>1</sup> on July 13th, and V<sup>2</sup> on December 2nd. A planet is said to be in conjunction with another heavenly body when the two are seen together in the heavens, and a straight line joining them reaches the earth when produced. Such would be the case when Venus is in the position V<sup>3</sup>, and also when she is in the diametrically opposite part of

her orbit. In the latter case the conjunction is called superior, in the former, inferior, and this was the phase Venus passed on September 21st. Now with regard to her brilliancy. When she is in the positions V<sup>0</sup>, V<sup>5</sup>, we see half her surface illuminated, just as we see the moon at her first and third quarters; but as Venus approaches the position V<sup>1</sup>, we see less of her illuminated surface, and might therefore expect her to appear less brilliant. This is not the case, however, because she is also approaching us, and therefore what light she reflects we see more of. Her brilliancy decreases, owing to the fact that the visible illuminated area gets less and less as she approaches the position V<sup>3</sup>, and increases because she is all the while approaching the earth, the result of which being that she shines most brilliantly about the middle of August. When she comes to the position V<sup>3</sup>, or between us and the sun, we lose sight of her, because she is entirely overwhelmed by the light of that luminary. Occasionally Venus passes exactly between us and the sun, or makes a transit of the sun's disc, when she is seen as a black spot passing across the sun's face. On leaving the position V<sup>3</sup>, we soon see her as a very thin crescent in the early morning getting brighter as she approaches the position V<sup>4</sup>, or greatest elongation west. By the time she reaches the position of superior conjunction, the whole side turned to us is illuminated, or she is, as it were, full Venus. As, however, she is so very much farther



from us in this position, she appears as a quite insignificant object. The curve V<sup>1</sup>, V<sup>3</sup>, V<sup>5</sup>, or orbit of Venus, is not circular, but what is called elliptic. Her distance therefore from the sun is not uniform. It averages about 66 millions of miles.

Now these few remarks apply, not only to the movements of Venus for the year 1887, but also for many thousands of years previous. (The days of her conjunctions, etc., alter from year to year.) If this is the case, it is actually impossible that Venus can have been the star of the Magi, for in St. Mathew's Gospel we read that the star went before them. I take this to mean that the star had an especial movement for them, and if so, it is manifest that it must of been only a comparatively few yards above the surface of the earth. The star of the Magi, moreover, has never been identified by astronomers. Efforts have been made by some to show that it was a comet, by others, that two planets in conjunction blended into one great light; but all these efforts have failed. Speaking generally, I may say that astronomers have entirely failed to find a place in any map of the heavens for the star of the Magi. It may not be out of place to remark here, that the word aster used in the Greek Gospel, means a luminous body, and not necessarily a star.

There are many people who think that what is called the laws of nature are competent to account for and explain all the unusual phenomena described in the Bible. They think that all God's works must be

performed through the operation of what they call natural laws. Possibly this may be the case, but until we know all the laws of nature—which are simply God's laws for the physical universe—we are not in a position to speak of the results of these laws. Many of God's works may be the uncalculated results of laws, some of which we know, and some we do not know. With our very limited knowledge of anything, we can only confess that the Creator of all things can alter, interrupt, or revoke any of his own laws, but a time will come when we shall understand all things perfectly.

The star of the Magi cannot be referred to any known phenomenon in nature, and therefore, I say it was a miracle. Some people have supposed that the star which appeared in the constellation of Cassiopeia in A.D. 1572, was the Bible star; others give the same honor to a star that appeared in Serpentarius, in A.D. 1604, but these people can have no notion of the stupendous distances of the stars. No star in either of these constellations is nearer to the earth than three hundred thousand times 91 millions of miles. The sun is nearly 92 millions of miles from the earth, and I think it must be quite evident to any thinking persons, that it is impossible to fix any particular spot as being under the sun, in the sense conveyed in St. Mathew 2.9. Still more evident is it that it would be impossible for a house or a village to be under a star 300,000 times the distance of the sun. I think it is right to infer from

Charles James Fox when he entered Parliament. Martin Luther had become largely distinguished at 24, and at 36 had reached the topmost round of his world-wide fame. Of Napoleon it is superfluous to say that at 25 he commanded the army of Italy. At 30 he was not only one of the most illustrious generals of all time, but one of the great law-givers of the world. At 46 he saw Waterloo. Wellington, be it remembered, was born the same year. From the earliest years of Queen Elizabeth to the latest of Queen Victoria, England has had scarce an able statesman who did not leave the university by the time he was twenty, and many of them left at an earlier age. Lord Bacon graduated at Cambridge when sixteen, and was called to the bar at twenty-one. The great Cromwell, by all measure the ablest ruler that England ever had, left the University of Cambridge at eighteen, was a student at law in London at twenty. John Hampden, after graduating at Oxford, was a student at law in the Inner Temple at nineteen. William Pitt entered the university at fourteen, was Chancellor of the Exchequer at twenty-two, Prime Minister at twenty-four, and so continued for twenty years, and when twenty-five he was the most powerful uncrowned head in Europe, and like his great father, Lord Chatham, he was charged with "the atrocious crime of being a young man." Charles James Fox was in Parliament at nineteen. Peel was in Parliament at twenty-one and Palmerston was Lord of the Admiralty at twenty-three. Gladstone was in Parliament at twenty-two, and at twenty-four was Lord of the Treasury. John Bright, one of the ablest statesmen of England, never was at any school a day after he was fifteen years old. The late Lord Beaconsfield left the cloister and entered the great world early—as did John Bright—and commenced his political career by writing a book at 19, in which he predicted that he would be Prime Minister.

Washington was distinguished as a colonel in the army at 22, commander of the forces at 43, and president at 57. Webster was in college at 15, gave earnest of his future before he was 25, and at 30 was the peer of the ablest man in Congress. Henry Clay was in the Senate of the United States at 29; contrary to the constitution. William H. Seward commenced the practice of law at 21; at 27 was president of a state convention, and at 37 governor of the great State of New York. John Quincy Adams, at the age of 14, was secretary to Mr. Dana, then minister at the Russian Court; at 30 he was himself Minister to Prussia; at 35 he was Minister to Russia; at 48 he was Minister to England; at 50 he was secretary of state, and president at 57. General Grant was but 39 years old when he gained his victory at Fort Donelson, and only 41 when he took Vicksburg. Jonathan Edwards acquired early renown as the greatest metaphysician in America, and as unsurpassed by any one in Europe. He commenced the reading of Latin when six years old. At 10 he wrote a remarkable paper upon the immortality of the soul. At the age of 13 he entered Yale College, where he graduated four years later. Before he was 17 he had completely reasoned out his great doctrine concerning the freedom of the will. Before he was 19 he commenced preaching at one of the first churches of the city of New York. At 24 he was installed over the church in Northampton. From Leo X. down to General Grant and Prince Bismarck there is not one name of large renown in war, church, or state whose career of greatness did not conspicuously begin in very early manhood. Goethe was a marvel of precocity. When but six years and two months old the terrible earthquake which destroyed Lisbon occurred, and he amazed the people of his native town by his discourse upon the event as against the goodness of Providence. Before he was nine years old he could write in several languages, including French, Latin and Greek. He was in the university at 16, and was made a doctor of laws before he was 22. At 25 he projected the writing of "Faust," and published the first part of it twenty-seven years before he finished the play.—Youth.

Life is not an idle re,  
But iron dug from the trial gloom  
And heated hot with burning years  
And dipped in hissing baths of tears  
And battered with the shocks of doom.

the Gospel narrative, that only the faithful wise men saw the star; but whether or no such was the case, it is certain that the star which guided the Magi to the Saviour of the world was one which no man in our day has ever seen.

P.S.—In the month of December, nearly eighty letters were received at the Greenwich Observatory, requesting information on the subject in question.—"A. I."

## GREAT MEN BEGIN EARLY.

BY EDWARDS PIERREPONT.

The strong man who has not made his mark before he is 45 will never make it; and the young man who has not set his ambitious foot upon "the ladder leaning on a cloud," before he is 25, will never ascend it. Look back 300 years and more, and you will not find a single instance of a man, illustrious in great affairs, who did not early begin his great career. Gustavus Adolphus ascended the throne of Sweden at 16; before he was thirty-four he was one of the great rulers of Europe. Conde conducted a memorable campaign at 17 and at 22, he, and Turenne also, were of the most illustrious men of their time. Maurice of Saxony died at 32, conceded to have been one of the profoundest statesmen and one of the ablest generals which Christendom had seen. The great Leo X. was Pope at 38; having finished his academic training he took the office of cardinal at 18—only twelve months younger than was