

are the theatres of organic life. The disappearance of a star from the firmament, therefore implies the extinction of a sun: and, as a consequence, the virtual annihilation, in all probability, of many worlds like our own, peopled with millions of sentient and intelligent beings. Are we prepared, then, to admit the *extinction of forty four suns, which may be equivalent to the destruction of twenty times as many inhabited worlds!*—and this too only in a part of the heavens, and within a limited period, and exclusively among stars from the first to the seventh magnitude? How many would be found missing if we could examine the whole heavens and all the stars down to the sixteenth magnitude? The Association's catalogue was compiled from the older catalogues of Flamsteed, Bradley, Lacaille, Mayer, Piazz, &c., and can contain no entries dating further back than those of Hevelius, about 170 years ago. If so many stars have "shot madly from their spheres" in that short period, how many more must have vanished from the sky in the 1800 years between Hevelius and Hipparchus? Changes on so grand a scale, threatening to dispeople the sidereal heavens of their hosts (at least to the naked eye) within some thousand years must tax the faith of astronomers, and cannot fail to give a powerful impulse to inquiry and investigation. Practical astronomers are the only competent judges of the phenomena; and we cannot help wishing that Professor Smyth, deeply skilled as he is in the science, in sending Captain Jacob's abstracts to the *Edinburgh Philosophical Journal* had accompanied it with a more ample commentary. In the meantime we learn from the excellent "Outlines" of Sir John Herschel that phenomena of an analogous character are not unknown in astronomy. First, he gives a list of more than forty "variable" stars, which undergo a marked change of magnitude; and among these there are sixteen which *become periodically invisible*, and after remaining so for a certain number of days, months or years, reappear. Secondly, eight or ten cases are on record of "temporary stars"—that is, of stars which appeared suddenly, blazed for a while, and then vanished. Three such were observed in the years 945, 1264, and 1572, and as they were all in one region of the heavens, the second and third are conjectured to be reappearances of the first at an interval of 312 years. Thus the stars described as "temporary" and "missing" may be merely *periodical*, like those of the "variable," but with long terms of obscurity. It would be too much however to say that all the stars which have disappeared belong to the periodical category. "On a careful re-examination of the the heavens," says Sir John Herschel, "and a comparison of catalogues, many stars are now found to be missing; and though there is no doubt that these losses have arisen in the great majority of instances from mistaken entries and in some cases from planets being mistaken for stars, yet in some it is equally certain that there is no mistake in the observation or entry and that the star has really been observed, and as really has disappeared from the heavens." It will probably turn out that nearly all the missing stars are variable ones, with long periods of invisibility. The study of their changes, however, their appearances and disappearances, their variations of lustre, colour or place, cannot fail to give us new insight into the architecture of the heavens. In this as in some other branches of physical science, what were at first puzzling anomalies, may become the harbingers of grand discoveries.—*Scotsman*.

[There are more things, even material things, in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. As science goes on expanding (and perhaps it is as yet only making a beginning) the more is unfolded to us of the boundless meaning of such passages of Scripture as these:—Great and marvellous are Thy works Lord God Almighty. O Lord how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all. The earth is full of Thy riches. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handy work. When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained. What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?]

DURHAM.—PERILS IN THE WILDERNESS.

The Editor of the *Free Church Ecclesiastical and Missionary Record*, giving an account of his recent tour to the Owen Sound district, says, under date 13th Aug. : "We left the stage about seven miles from Durham, and preached on the following