Miscellaneous.

THE HEAVENLY REST.

There is an hour of peaceful rest,
To mourning wand'rers given;
There is a tear for souls distrest,
A balm for every wounded breast—
'Tis found above—in heaven!

There is a soft and downy bed,
'Tis far as breath of even,
A couch for weary mortals spread,
Where they may rest their aching head,
And find repose in heaven!

There is a home for weary souls,
By sin and sorrow driven;
When tossed on life's tempestuous shoals,
Where storms arise, and ocean rolls,
And all is drear—but heaven!

There faith lifts up the tearful eye,
The heart with anguish riven;
And views the tempest passing by,
The evening shadows quickly fly,
And all serene in heaven!

There fragrant flowers immortal bloom,
And joys supreme are given;
There rays divine disperse the gloom,
Beyond the confines of the tomb,
Appears the dawn of heaven!

ASTRONOMY OF THE HINDUS.

It is evident that in remote periods the Hindus made considerable progress in astronomy, and it is very probable that to them we are indebted for much of our knowledge of the science. The Chaldeans appear to have been the first to turn their attention to the movements of the heavenly bodies. By them the practice of observing the stars was introduced into Egypt and was transferred thence into India. Remains of Astronomical and Mathematical instruments, constructed of stone, and immensely large, some of them twenty feet in height, and proportionably thick, are still to be seen at the ancient observatories in Benares and Delhi. The Signs of the Indian Zodiac are also still visible on the ceilings of many Pagodas. Besides these remnants of a once flourishing science in the East, the modern Hindus have astronomical tables which were constructed *by their ancestors many hundreds of years ago*, and by the help of which, they still calculate eclipses of the sun and moon, with much accuracy. This is now the chief and almost sole object of Hindu astronomy. It is, so far as it goes, merely *descriptive*. Of *Physical Astronomy*, they have no correct knowledge whatever. They have lost all knowledge of the *time*, and manner, in which the above tables were constructed, and say they were revealed to the sages by the gods. To these wonder-working calculations the Brahmans often triumphantly appeal in their discussions with the missionary, as an irrefragable proof of the inspiration of their Shastr For them they claim a most extravagant antiquity. No reliable record, however, of their invention exists, nor can their actual age be ascertained from the facts they furnish.

M. Bailly, a celebrated French philosopher and astronomer, endeavored, in 1795, to prove that they were constructed 4800 years ago, and to this hypothesis Professor Playfair at one time expressed himself a convert, but, some years afterwards, confessed that his confidence in Bailly's theory was much shaken. European astronomers have since shown pretty clearly, that these tables cannot be more than 800 years old. The Surya Sidhánta, which is confessedly the origin of them, was written between the year of our Lord 1000 and 1200. These tables, however, show decidedly, that astronomical *science was not in its infancy, among the Hindus* when they were constructed. Ages must have passed away, from the time the Patriarchs, while watching their flocks in the silence of starlight, beheld with the eye of contemplation and wonder, the *celestial* orbs which rolled above them, merely as so many lesser lights to rule the night, and the time when the Hindu astronomers attained that proud eminence from which they handed down their *important discoveries to the world.*

The principle Hindu systems of astronomy are the *Puranic* and *Siddhantic*, and although as antagonistic as life and death, both rest on authority, deemed divine.

The former, like every thing contained in the Puráns, is a mass of absurdity, *defying all description*. They tell us the *earth rests on a tortoise*, and that this is supported on the back of a *boar*, what supports this upholder of all things, it would be folly to inquire;—that the terrestrial world is a plane figure, surrounded by seven seas of milk, butter, nectar, and other fluids,—that the golden mountain *Sumeru*, rises and gleams in the *centre*; that it is 756,000 miles above the earth, and 144,000 below its surface; that the Ganges falls from heaven on its summit, and flows thence to the surrounding world in four streams; that when the sun passes to the north of this mountain, darkness settles on the earth, and when it again appears in the south, it becomes day. They tell us that the sun is between the earth and the moon, and the former much smaller than the *latter; than when an eclipse of either takes place, it is caused* by a dragon's head attempting to swallow them. But in justice to the Hindus, we must not confound this system of the Puráns, or poetical fabulists, with that of the Siddhánt, or mathematical astronomers, though the latter are few in number compared with the believers in the Puráns. But *to the Siddhántists* such a confusion would be as unjust as to make our nursery stories about the man in the moon with a bundle of sticks on his back, a part of our Copernican or Newtonian system, and yet many such mistakes are made by Europeans on the subject of Hindu science. We hope the day is not far distant when the Puráns, with all their degrading, superstitious divinations, incantations and astrology, will be numbered with the monstrosities of the past. The educated Hindus in Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, are becoming ashamed of their stupid, disgusting mythology, and are endeavouring to resuscitate the obsolete pantheistic system of the Veds, as more rational. This feeling of dissatisfaction with the present popular religion in India is also spreading over the whole land, and pervading all ranks; *a something more adapted to the spirit of the age is a* great desideratum—a something that will not destroy the foundations of Hindúism. But so closely is the religion of the Puráns interwoven with the present system of Hindúism, and the whole frame-work of society, that with the abolishing of it, away would go at one sweep, all distinction of caste, the worship of idols, of *Krishna*, with his obscene rites, of Ram Chandr, and of Mahadev, in all its disgusting forms. This would be a step in the right direction, but it would be far short of the goal. The system of the Veds is not one of monotheism, but of pantheism. The Vedantist considers himself identical with God—every thing is God. Such a *system is a poor substitute for idolatry. The gospel* is the only remedy.

But I must now notice the *Siddhántic* system of astronomy. This is nearly the same as the Ptolemaic, which was universally adopted until the sixteenth century, when it was refuted by Copernicus, who proved that the earth, and all the planets, moved around the sun as a centre. According to the *Siddhánt*, the *earth is placed in the centre of the universe*, and around it revolve the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. The sun, you perceive, is considered one of the planets by the Hindus, as also the moon. Besides those mentioned, they know nothing of any other planets. They have no telescopes, to reveal those which move beyond the reach of unassisted human vision. Nor are they aware of the vast dimensions of those they behold, nor of their immense distance from the earth. They are not in possession of suitable instruments for making such observations, nor have they that thirst for knowledge and enterprise, requisite for using them when provided.

The Brahmans have divided the Zodiac, as we do, into three hundred and sixty degrees, and twelve signs, but in addition to this, they have subdivided it into twenty-seven lunar stations, which they call *nakshatras*. To each of these they allow thirteen degrees and twenty minutes. The twelve constellations they have distinguished by the figures of various animals, and other imaginary similitudes, which nearly all correspond *with our own nomenclature.*

To each of those solar stations thirty degrees are allotted. The *Nakshatras* have also their appropriate names given, in conformity to the theogiphic taste of the ancients. From twelve of these asterisms, the twelve Indian months are denominated. Although these months are the *same in number as ours, they do not correspond with them as to the division* of the year. The Hindu year commences when the sun enters Aries, which according to their time, is about the tenth of April. The length of their months is regulated by the time which the sun occupies in passing from one sign to another. They have no fixed number of days for each month as we have, and it is *only by consulting the Brahmans*, or the calenders, which they prepare annually, that the people can find out the length of each month.

The Hindu also reckon time by lunar months, each of which consists of *thirty tithis*, or lunar days. They contrive so far to reconcile the lunar and solar years, as to make them proceed almost concurrently. In order to remedy as much as possible the irregularity between the solar and lunar year, the Brahmans have added to every third year an intercalary month, as we, every fourth year, add an additional day to February, to remedy the irregularity occasioned by the difference between our solar and astral year. This however, is but one approximation to accuracy. The lunar year of 360 days is more ancient in India than the solar. This may be inferred from the fact that the names of the months are taken from the lunar stations.

It is supposed by some astronomers, that the Hindus derived their knowledge of the Zodiack from the Greeks and Arabs. The reason assigned is that the solar division of it in India is the same as that of the Greeks, and the lunar similar to that of the Arabs. It is, however, more probable that this knowledge was received from an older nation than either the Greeks or Arabs. The precession of the equinoxes, as calculated by the Hindus, is something more than ours. "From the best observations, *it appears that the equator cuts the ecliptic every year, 50.25* more to the westward than the year before." But the Hindus make it 54. This, in 600 years, would amount to a difference of 34 in the position of each of the heavenly bodies.

It is a remarkable and interesting fact, that in India, the days of the week are arranged as in Egypt and Greece, according to the number of the planets, and called by similar names. Nor is the resemblance between the most of our Gothic days of the week, and those of the Hindus, which are dedicated to the same celestial objects, less extraordinary. Sunday is called *Itwár* (the day of the sun); Monday, *Sombár*, (the day of the