

With H. B. Witton's Compliments

SELENOGRAPHY.

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BY H. B. WITTON.

Except the sun itself, none of the heavenly bodies has attracted so much attention as the moon. Her apparent size and nearness to the earth, the subdued splendor of her light, her erratic course in the heavens, the rapid change and frequent recurrence of her phases, and the weird effect of her eclipses, have made her moon, from time immemorial, an object of intense interest. Literature, ancient and modern, bears witness to the truth of this. The Vaidic hymns shew that in the early dawn of Indogermanic civilization the phases of the moon were personified, and her influence was invoked with solemn rites. In many languages her name is given to one of the days of the week; this indicates how long she has been held in veneration, as Laplace has shewn names of the week-days are among the most ancient monuments of astronomical knowledge. Poetry, too, has thrown over the earth's satellite graceful veils of myth and fancy; while the most prosaic utilitarianism, in the interests of commerce, has been fain to do her honor. Pythagorus, in his system of cosmic harmony, credits the moon with contributing the highest note to the music of the spheres; and our own less imaginative forefathers, by such names as lunar caustic, selenite—thought to be moon-froth—and lunatic, have left a legacy to our vocabulary shewing their faith in the potency of the moon's influence.

In these latter days, that peculiar veneration the moon formerly commanded no longer obtains. The age of faith in her occult powers expired with the astrologer and alchymist, to be succeeded by an age of inquiry and knowledge which, rejecting the superstition of the old learning, still cherishes some measure of its devotion. Though we no longer plant and sow, herd our cattle, prune our vines, and gather in our harvests in awe of her sovereignty, yet our

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