

Thursday, July 2, at half-past nine o'clock, the comet will be easily seen by the naked eye in the northwestern sky (no other description will be needed) with a tail about five degrees in length. On succeeding evenings the nucleus will move towards the south, while the tail will increase in length, so as to bring its extremity gradually northward. On the 14th of July the head of the comet will have reached the horizon in the northwest at the end of twilight, so that it will not easily be visible after that date: but the tail will extend nearly to the pole-star. Donati's comet had a retrograde motion, and when the earth met it, and the tail was most brilliant, it was placed nearly at right angles with the line of vision. On the other hand this comet, whose perihelion distance is very little greater, coming just within the orbit of Venus, moves in the same direction with the earth, and nearly with the same velocity (reduced to the plane of the equator), in consequence of which the tail, which is now nearly at right angles with the line of vision, will gradually turn towards us, still apparently pointing nearly in the same direction. It will be remembered that Donati's comet was curved like a soldier's plume; but Coggia's is now and will remain nearly straight, because the curvature will be directly from us, and therefore imperceptible. Another striking difference from the tails of comets generally is that it will be so foreshortened as to be remarkably wide at the end. On July 16 the tail will extend far beyond the pole and develop a new characteristic, tapering off rapidly towards the end. Within three or four days after the 16th the tail will have become so expanded in the neighbourhood of the pole as to fill a large part of the northern heavens. Yet it will not be a conspicuous object, because it will be so faint as to look rather like an immense cloud or a new milky way than what it really is. By this time we shall have solved the question whether the tail is hollow or has a radiated structure or what is its constitution.

Of the way in which this will end it is not safe yet to speak with definiteness; for although, if the tail were straight, we should be almost certainly near the middle of it on July 20, yet its curvature will probably delay it two or three days, and even until the earth has passed beyond its path. Taking the best value I can from the records of previous comets, I should expect the earth on July 22 to be wholly within the eastern edge of the comet's tail, and I will assume this to be the case. The comet will then disappear to us; but then the inhabitants of the Southern Hemisphere, who may be ignorant of the cause of luminosity of the evening sky, will see it gradually rise and pass away, and will be amazed by the sudden apparition of a comet of extraordinary size and unusual brilliancy, which will burst upon their vision as unforeseen as the great comet of 1861. The gradual diminution and final disappearance of the comet will be so nearly the converse of what we shall have witnessed here that it needs no description. What will be the effect upon the earth? I dare not predict the effect upon the minds of men, especially of the ignorant; but I do not anticipate any appreciable physical effect further than possible electrical phenomena like the aurora. It will, of course, leave a portion of its atmosphere when it departs, but, probably, not enough to affect the barometer, or to come within the cognizance even of scientists. But there may be, by possibility, one permanent effect of scientific interest and curiosity. If the earth should not entirely escape, the moon will also probably be involved, and it will also retain a portion of the cometary substance. As the amount of the atmosphere upon the moon's surface is now so small—if, indeed, there is any at all—that it is unrecognizable by the nicest astronomical scrutiny, perhaps after the passage of the comet we shall find that henceforth the moon will have an atmosphere, of greater or less density, which will materially modify the phenomena of occultations and solar eclipses. I will add that Venus is safely out of the way, so that the transit expedition will not be interfered with by the great comet of 1874.

Mr. Parkhurst's speculations in regard to the comet's leaving a part of its tail to form an atmosphere for the moon seem to be a little aside from observed facts. All spectroscopic analysis of the matter of comets' tails has hitherto seemed to point to the conclusion that they were some attenuated form of carbon unknown to terrestrial chemistry. It has even been asserted that, if all the matter of a comet's tail were reduced to the same density as the carbon we know, in the form of charcoal or coke, it would not exceed a few ounces, or might be carried in the waistcoat pocket. Whether it would be proper to speak of such a substance as likely to form a possible "atmosphere" for the moon is open to question. However, all Mr. Parkhurst's speculations are matters of extreme interest, and we hope that this whole subject will receive a rigid investigation at the hands of our scientists.

AN EXTRAORDINARY CHARACTER.

A very old and famous spectacle called "Le Pied de Mouton," has been reproduced at Paris with a certain amount of success. It was written by an extraordinary man called Martainville, who got into trouble with his pen at the early age of 15, and was only saved, like Abbé Maury, of lamp-post celebrity, by his wit. Just out of school, he wrote a criticism on the financial measures of the Convention, and was consequently arrested and tried before the odious Fouquier Tinville who seldom spared prisoners on account of either sex or age. When he appeared before the revolutionary tribunal the President called the future author of "Le Pied de Mouton" de Martainville instead of plain Martainville. "Citizen President," said the lad, laughing, "I am not de Martainville, but simple Martainville. Do not forget that you are here to shorten, not to lengthen me." The joke raised a laugh, and saved the boy's life. The de belongs to aristocratic families, and would have been fatal, and in the slang of the day to be "shortened" meant to be guillotined. A little later he nearly got into fresh trouble. Having been suddenly called upon in a tavern to sing a Republican song he was obliged to acknowledge that he knew none. The company demanded that he should improvise, so mounting on a table he bawled out:—

Embrassons-nous, chers Jacobins,
Longtemps je vous crus des mutins,
Et de faux patriotes.
Oubliions tout et désormais,
Donnons-nous le baiser de paix,
J'oterais mes culottes.

The sans-culottes were highly indignant, but though the

cried out "throw him into the water," Martainville was allowed to escape. He was an inveterate Royalist all his life, and fought several duels with old officers of the Empire who insulted Louis XVI. When the Bourbons were driven from the throne, to his great grief, Martainville ejaculated "Jesus Christ said the lilies toll not neither do they spin; alas we have caused the scripture to speak falsely—for we have made the lilies spin or run away." Martainville died shortly after this a poor man.

This admirable story about Martainville has a sequel. When his life was saved by his presence of mind in so wittily disclaiming the aristocratic prefix *De*, an unknown jester remarked, "*Sa décapitation a empêché sa décapitation*"—a joke which may be thus translated (not translated) into English—"His being de-headed has prevented his being de-headed."

Another story of the same revolutionary epoch may be given in this connection. When the Marquis de St. Janvier appeared before the tribunal, and gave his name in full, he was told, first, that since the Revolution the title of *Marquis* like other titles, had been abolished; second, that, in like manner, the prefix *de* was obsolete; third, that there were no longer any *Saints*; fourth, that *Janvier* (January) had become *Pluviose*. Thus "*Le Marquis de St. Janvier*" was reduced to "*Citoyen Pluviose*."

From the French *De* to the Irish *O'* there is a natural transition. When O'Connell, whose name appeared on his college books as Connell, first assumed the *O'*, a wag of Trinity quoted most aptly from the Latin Grammar the well-known (but untranslatable) line:—

"O datur ambiguis: Prisci brivare solebant."

FLUKES.

There are philosophers who decline to believe in such a thing as a "fluke," so far as the ordinary occurrences of our common daily life are concerned. The fact that the apparently stupid man often succeeds in making headway when the seemingly clever man fails to do so they account for by assuming that appearances are deceptive. To assert that the apparently stupid man is greatly favoured by circumstances over which he has not the slightest control, and that the seemingly clever individual receives the scurviest treatment at the hand of that fickle dame Fortune, is about the very last thing they would think of doing. Firmly believing in the axiom that success is the index of merit, they just as resolutely hold the opinion that failure always results from incapacity or something a great deal worse. It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to remark that the people holding these views are, for the most part, those who have been prosperous, and who are prosperous themselves. The man who has made a big pile of money rarely, if ever, fails to consider himself a very smart fellow. As a rule, indeed, he flatters himself that he is very much superior to those who make brilliant reputations for themselves, but fail to secure the possession of a very great deal of cash. The individual, he will tell you, who gets on in life so that he can clothe his wife in silks at a guinea a yard, live in a fine house, drive his carriage, and allow his children money in order that they may show they are able to get through it quite as easily as he is able to get it, must possess solid acquirements very different and very much superior to the meteoric attributes which some falsely called—because unsuccessful—men of genius are in the habit of priding themselves upon having. It is not necessary for a person nowadays to possess a well-cultivated intellect, to be good mannered, or to be ingenious in order to convince himself and others that he is clever, i.e., provided he be rich. Shakespeare has written that there is a tide in the affairs of man which if taken at the flood will lead to fortune—in other words, that every man has opportunities presented to him, and upon his own head is the blame if he fails to avail himself of them and turn them to some good account. This is the doctrine which people of the comfortable sort devoutly hold, and they complacently plume themselves upon the possession by them of that cleverness and worth which are borne evidence to by the position in life which they have made for themselves.

People, however, not of the comfortable sort are addicted to holding very different views from the above in reference to the matter under consideration. The man who is unprosperous will be delighted to point out to you how fortunes have been made by "flukes," and how they have frequently been lost owing to the action of a number of adverse circumstances over which their owners have had no control. There certainly appears some ground for the contention of these latter. It is well known, for instance, that many inventors have almost starved themselves while working out their pet theories, which have proved of infinite advantage to mankind, and yet, these same inventors have been deprived of the fruits of their labour which have been enjoyed by others. Again, Milton got but a few shillings for his masterpiece, "Paradise Lost," which is, without doubt, the grandest poem in the English language, a striking instance that luck was decidedly against him. Chatterton put an end to his own existence because he found it painfully difficult to live, and yet he had done good work, and gave promise that he would attain still better results in the future than he had done in the past. Fortune, however, was evidently against him. Many more cases of a similar character might be cited were it worth while to adduce them, which, however, it is not. Examples of how men may be raised by an unexpected turn of Fortune's wheel are constantly presenting themselves to us. Many owners of property have purchased estates, in the bowels of which valuable minerals have subsequently been found. The finding of these minerals has often been with them a lucky fluke, for which they have to thank no one, perhaps, so little as themselves. Men who have been led to speculate, and have proved successful, will tell you that they had beforehand an intuitive perception that they were bound to do so; but this "intuitive perception," it may be remarked, often proves as delusive as otherwise, and is possessed alike by unfortunate and fortunate men. Therefore, the speculator who is fortunate is, in nine cases out of ten, only prosperous owing to a fluke. People may talk about judgment; but it may be logically maintained that, in matters of speculation, pure and simple, judgment can be exercised little, if at all, seeing that everything turns upon chance. In the most trivial every-day affairs luck seems to be constantly showing itself kindly towards some and unkindly towards others, entirely irrespective of their merits. B, for instance, wants a situation under Government, but is un-

fortunate enough to call upon the man through whose influence it is obtainable when the latter happens to be in an indignant temper, owing to the fact that he is suffering from indigestion. The consequence is, that B does not get the office which he aspires to fill, and the duties of which he is really very well able to perform. C, on the other hand, calls upon the influential party after the latter has dined to his satisfaction and is disposed to be amiable. Hereupon C gets what he wants; at the same time his talents may be nil. The truth appears to be that all but very strong-willed men are drifted about just as circumstance listeth. Nine out of ten human beings find themselves placed in a certain groove not by their own choosing, and it does not always rest with themselves whether they run in it smoothly or otherwise. It is a mistake to suppose that life resembles a blank sheet of paper to those who are beginning it, and that they may write thereon what they please. In the majority of cases they simply do what necessity compels. At the same time it must be stated that very few people in England need be hard pressed if they will only be provident and conduct themselves properly. A terrible number of lives are marred by indifference, insolence, and a general don't-careishness. Absolute laziness, and vice, too, are fruitful sources of what is often erroneously described as misfortune. It should be remembered that it is much easier for a man to be made wealthy by a fluke for which he is not responsible than it is for him to be reduced to abject poverty by the same means.—*Liberal Review*.

BRIC A BRAC.

What Thackeray rather irreverently termed gimcockery fetches the most extraordinary fancy prices at auctions, and the mania for various kinds of old saucers and dishes exceeds even the famous rage for Dutch tulips of a bygone time. Old Sevres, Dresden, Majolica, Wedgwood ware, old Chelsea, old Bristol, have become familiar names even to people who prefer dining off a plate to framing it and hanging it on the wall as a work of art. Not to be learned in Venetian glass is to betray ignorance of a recognized topic of conversation; to be unable to appreciate a choice Japanese jar as it ought to be appreciated is to confess to a want of enlightenment which implies quite a slovenliness in social culture. The curiosity shops must drive a roaring trade. Not only ladies but gentlemen have become admirers and purchasers of porcelain, of pottery in its different varieties, and of ivory carvings from the persevering hands of Oriental craftsmen. It would be a cruel and a sorry proceeding to cast any reflection upon the bowl of unequalled rarity which our collecting friends and acquaintances put before us. It has been obtained, after vigorous competition and brisk bidding, at the distribution of the effects of a nobleman lately deceased. The defunct dilettante enjoyed such a reputation for care and taste in the occupation for which he is chiefly remembered that everything belonging to him attracts an offer far above the intrinsic value of it. A couple of vases are estimated at the price of a small freehold estate; a simple jug goes for more than many a rector pays annually to his working curate; a triplet of "rose du Barri jardinières, with subjects of peasants in borders" (the peasants the happiest of agricultural labourers), fetches several hundreds of pounds. Few of these expensive luxuries are of modern date; or composition. They must have the interest of age or of certain artistic associations attached to them to render them completely available for the uses and requirements of fashionable collectors. It is not only the gems of pottery which are highly coveted by the modern virtuosi. We hear every day of the enormous sums paid for pictures. It is impossible at times not to suspect that there is some "ring" managing the market in which there is such a sudden and almost unaccountable fever. At any rate, it is not necessary for us to dwell on the point here. Three small jars were sold at an auction a few days ago for more than ten thousand guineas. The statement almost takes one's breath away. The ware was, indeed, old Sevres, the colour the cherished rose du Barri, the gilding excessively rich, and the flower and subject painting by Morin; but even when all this has been said the announcement is sufficiently startling. The sale was in a crowded room by public auction, and it is not too much to say that agents and brokers from every capital in Europe were present. It was before such an assembly that the coveted jars were put up, and the bidder at £10,650 was then and there declared the buyer. Other pieces of China were sold the same day, and prices obtained for them, not indeed so high, but yet not unworthy of this famous collection. The first thing that strikes one from such quotations is the enormous wealth which must be diffused amongst purchasers to allow of such competition, for we must remember that the taste for old china is almost entirely an acquired one.

FRENCH NEWSPAPERS.

The principles upon which French newspapers are managed are exceedingly curious, and no doubt differ entirely from our system. The journals which have the largest circulation in Paris do not trust to their political, social, financial, and commercial articles to procure them a large sale. The editor of the *Figaro* admitted a short time ago that in order to make a sober leading article go down he was obliged, to suit the taste of his readers, to give them so much chit-chat and scandal. The other day, following close on an article advocating the cause of the Comte de Chambord came a string of fashionable *on dits*, gossip, and such anecdotes as this:—"The other day a little girl, reading the history of England, came to the part where it was said that Henry II. never laughed after the death of his son. The child looked up and said, 'But, mamma, what did he do when they tickled him?'"

In addition to the above attractions, editors offer the most tempting inducements to subscribers. At the present moment the *Figaro* is offering to its subscribers for the small sum of 30 francs a handsome watch, and the *Paris Journal* is giving a watch to every one who will subscribe for a year—the yearly subscription being under £3. A few years ago I remember the *Figaro* offering a box of oranges to its subscribers, and a rival paper instantly tendering baked apples. There is a small satirical paper called *Polichinelle*, which professes its readiness to take all who will subscribe on a trip to Enghien, a few miles from Paris, to row them about on the lake, give them refreshments, and treat them to the theatre in the evening.