

late arrivals. At New Orleans the aurora created quite a sensation, the like having never been seen there before, within the memory of "the oldest inhabitant." The Editor of the *Mobile Tribune* says he has seen it once before in that city but not near so bright as on Sunday night.

Every one must have observed that the aurora on this occasion has been the harbinger of a spell of cold weather, most unusually cold for this season of the year.

What the aurora borealis really is, and what produces or causes it, are questions which science hitherto has not been able to answer very decisively. According to some, the aurora is simply the light of the sun reflected in the higher regions of the air. According to others, it is caused by magnetic influences. Euler believed it to be a nebular substance, similar to that which forms the tails of comets. Another scientific writer maintained that it was a phenomenon resulting from a mixture of the atmosphere of the sun with that of the earth. Some have been of opinion that the auroral phenomena took place entirely beyond the region of our atmosphere—others, that they were confined to the atmosphere. With the progress of accurate observation, the opinion has now come to be very generally entertained that the aurora, like lightning, is caused by atmospheric electricity, the difference being that lightning has for its field of operations the denser atmosphere near the earth, while the aurora consists of electrical discharges through the highly rarified upper parts of the atmosphere. The fact, however, that on last Thursday night, the aurora was used on several lines to send telegraphic messages, entirely superseding the usual batteries, while it establishes the identity of the aurora with electricity, or at least its possession of like qualities, at the same time destroys the theory that its manifestations are confined to the upper regions of the atmosphere.—*Upper Canada Journal of Education.*

—The Hon. J. Ferrier and his son, who have been recently traveling in the East have presented the Natural History Society of Montreal with a large collection of Egyptian curiosities. A meeting of the society, at which His Lordship the Anglican Bishop of Montreal presided, was held expressly for the reception and exposition of these antiquities, among which are several mummies and specimens of papyrus, wheat, dates, necklaces, embalmed crocodiles, images of gods, and other curious objects, found in the pyramids and other Egyptian tombs. Lectures were given by Mr. Robert Ferrier and Professor Cornish, on ancient Egypt, after which Dr. Fenwick, assisted by other gentlemen, proceeded to unfold to view one of the mummies embalmed probably thousands of years since. The *Montreal Gazette* says:

"From the great number of the wrappers in which the shrunken form was enveloped, it was a work of no little time to bring it to light, and when exposed it had much the appearance of a skeleton covered over with a very dark brown skin, with numerous pieces of what were supposed to be the spices used in embalming adhering to it, and emitting an odor heavy and disagreeable. It was an object suggestive of many thoughts, reaching back to the time when that shriveled up form and remnant of humanity was endowed with life and vitality, and was susceptible of the same feelings—feelings of fear, or love, or hate—as those who now gazed upon it with so much curiosity; thoughts reaching back to the time when Egypt was in its palmiest days, when its massy pyramids, its temples and its obelisks were reared by the proud sovereigns who ruled over it, and which now remain but as landmarks to tell of the greatness and grandeur of a people whose power and glory have passed away no more to return to them."

—What was called the *Arctic Mystery* has at last been explained. The expedition, conducted by Captain McClintock, of the *Fox*, has been the means of ascertaining the fate of Sir John Franklin and his men. The English papers are full of the details of the narrative, sent to the admiralty, by the intrepid and successful Capt. McClintock, and contain long lists of the relics found at several places by the different parties of men sent from the crew of the *Fox*. It was on the 6th of May last that lieutenant Hobson, who was leading one of those parties, round Cape Victory, on the north-western shore of King William's island, found in the ruins of a cairn, a document contained in a tin box, dated 25th April, 1848, and signed by Captain Crozier and Fitzjames, which contains the first authentic intelligence of the death of Sir John Franklin. The *Erbus* and the *Terror* had remained during the winter at Beechey's island after having gone up the Wellington channel to the 71st degree north. Sir John Franklin died the 11th June 1847. On the 22nd of April, 1848, the two vessels were left at a distance of 15 miles N. N. O. of Cape Victory, and the survivors, numbering 105 men, reached the last mentioned place under the command of Capt. Crozier. Up to that date the expedition had lost 23 men, among whom 9 officers. Clothes, tools, blankets, and a great many other relics were found lying about the cairn. Lieutenant Hobson found afterwards, in 69° 09' Lat. N. and 99° 37' Long. W., a long boat fixed on a sleigh, made for the purpose and which contained, clothes, arms, ammunition, provisions, besides two human skeletons and two double barrel guns. Capt. McClintock learnt from the Esquimaux, that the men commanded by Capt. Crozier had all died on their way to *Isle-River*. Lady Franklin who has devoted so many years of her life to the noble purpose of finding traces of her lost husband, impairing her health by anxiety, and sacrificing her fortune, has now learnt these sorrowful tidings, dispelling the hopes she might have entertained.

—Sir Isambert Kingdom Brunel, engineer of the *Leviathan*, and son of the celebrated French engineer, who made the tunnel under the Thames, died at London, at the age of 53. Besides his share in the *Great Eastern* vessel, Sir Isambert Brunel obtained part of his fame by another undertaking with almost the same name, the *Great Western Railway*. Although born in London, he was chiefly educated in France, the native country of his distinguished father. His death has almost coincided with the late accident to the *Great Eastern*, the final success or failure of which he has not been left to witness.

—Every year discoverers add planets to our system and reveal in the vast regions of space myriads of worlds scattered as dust in the firmament.

Leverrier, whose name will be placed with those of Newton and Kepler, and whose studies and observations have shed so much light on science has discovered a new planet between the Sun and Mercury. The perturbations which Leverrier had observed in the motion of Mercury and which could be accounted for, neither by the incorrectness of the instruments of observations nor by the influence of the other celestial bodies led him to suspect the existence of some other planet. Following up the laws of gravitation, he was led to place the disturbing force between the centre of our system (the Sun) and Mercury.

The existence of many other planets belonging to our solar system is suspected. Many planetoids have been discovered of late years but the discovery of a planet is not an every day event, it is one that confers more than a transient fame on the discoverer.

—Our readers feel undoubtedly some interest with regard to the fate of the *Great Eastern*, the second wonder of the age. Is she to cross the Atlantic this fall, asks the pleasure seeker? Some say yes, others no: even it has been reported that her doom is sealed, and that her funnels are never more to send forth smoke. We hope however that this continent will be gladdened with her visit, and if we despair of seeing her in America this fall, we think, if newspapers are anyways reliable, that sight seekers, and the curious of the States and of Canada will behold the *Leviathan* quietly reposing after its ocean voyage alongside the wharves of Portland next spring.

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