

MESSENGERS FROM THE SKIES.

Read before the Hamilton Association, February 25th, 1892.

BY H. B. SMALL.

There is an old Norse legend, still retained in parts of Europe, that when a child is born, the Goddess of Destiny spins a thread and hangs a star thereon, which continues to shine whilst life lasts, but at the approach of death the thread of destiny breaks, and the stars fall headlong to the earth, and is extinguished. To this legend may be traced the not uncommon remark amongst the country folk of the Mother country at the present day when they see a fallen star, that "A life is going out."

All sorts of superstitions have been attached to meteors in by-gone days, and they have been regarded as omens of some great event or some dire calamity. We find in the Scriptures, associated with the calamities that were to befall Jerusalem, the expression, "The stars shall fall from heaven," and in Revelations, amidst all the tearful events described, are "The stars of heaven fell upon the earth," and "There fell a great star from heaven, burning, as it were a lamp."

In an old Latin chronicle, by Baldric, occurs the following passage, quoted in the Journal of the French Academy of Science, as adding testimony to the superstition regarding them. Baldric says, "Already, before the Council of Claremount, the stars had announced the progress of Christianity, for innumerable eyes in France saw them fall from Heaven, as thick as hail, on the 25th of April, 1095."

Ignorance is always the parent of superstition, and we have all probably read of the extreme terror the great November meteor shower of 1833 created amongst the Negroes of the South, who were convinced that it heralded the end of the world.

Virgil alluded to meteors as indicating storm, the passage translated by Dryden being as follows :—

To the
morrow from

In some
ally those of
shooting stars
substance that
they fell, cal
plained by

One of
November
vant, a new
fodder catt
stopped the
when talked
she thought
morning in

The ph
are more ge
the format
of man. C
server may
minutes, an
as to have
apparently
of space k
stellation, v
point, but
These are s
ing bodies,
and in thei
are then r
and gravita
ing, our at
become sel
atmospheric