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AN AMERICAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY.

For many years the science of astronomy has been cultivated in this country with no small measure of energy and success. American astronomers, professional and amateur, have won by their intelligent labors and brilliant discoveries an honorable rank in the scientific world.

While we have no great observatory in New York, there are here and in this vicinity several private observatories better known, perhaps, abroad than at home. There are many isolated observers, some of world-wide reputation; and the popular interest taken in courses of astronomical lectures—like the admirable series now being given by Professor Young—shows that there is no lack of material here for the nucleus of an American Astronomical Society which shall be worthy of the name.

A CURE FOR SEASICKNESS AT LAST.

In our report of the proceedings of the New York Academy of Sciences mention is made of a paper read by the Rev. Mr. Thwing describing a new and peculiar method of curing seasickness, which the author has tried with success in several instances.

He approaches the sufferer unawares from behind, places his hand upon the patient's head, and speaks in an assuring tone of voice. This puts the passenger into a trance, his sickness is ended, he is supremely happy. The doctor then pronounces the words "all right," which instantly restores the sick man to sense and health, enabling him thereafter to enjoy full meals of victuals without let or hinderance.

We have heretofore heard of advantages claimed to arise from preaching and the laying on of hands; but this, we believe, is the first example of the practical application of the system to seasick passengers on board of Atlantic steamers.

THE ADIRONDACK WILDERNESS.

The need of saving the woodlands of the Adirondack wilderness, out of which flow the Hudson River and other streams of great commercial, manufacturing and sanitary value to the State, has long been recognized by observing and thoughtful citizens. The outer and more accessible portions of the original forest region have long been stripped of their timber, and vast areas of little use for agriculture have thus been made treeless and barren.

There is no question that the general clearing of the Adirondack region of its protecting forests would produce effects of the most disastrous character to the valleys of the streams flowing therefrom: effects like those which, during the past few months, have brought death and desolation to so many European river valleys. The rainfall of the Adirondack region is great; the drainage slopes steep; and without the controlling and restraining influence of the existing swamps and forests about their sources, the rivers which drain this northern wilderness would show only great and sudden alternations of flooded and empty channels, destructive at once to the agriculture of their valleys, to the manufacturing interests which cluster along their banks, and to the commerce of the Hudson, the channel of which has already been seriously obstructed by the detritus washed in from unprotected hill slopes and other spaces stripped of their original forests.

It is gratifying to note that the State Legislature, or rather the Senate, has taken ground against the further invasion of the Adirondack forests, at least for that part of the region under State control; and it is much to be hoped that the Assembly will do as well. Senator Frederick Lansing's bill, forbidding the sale of 660,000 acres owned by the State in the Adirondack region, was passed by a vote of 24 to 5, January 23. It is a good indication of increasing public appreciation of the need of preserving the wooded character of that part of the State. The timber there, if cut at all, should be cut only under rigid control, and with the most careful provisions for immediate rewooding of the cleared ground.

THE STARLIT SKY IN FEBRUARY.

If, facing the south, we raise our eyes to the starry heavens at nine o'clock on the 11th of February, we cannot fail to see on the meridian a very brilliant star, intensely white, with a sapphire tinge. It is Sirius, the leader of the host of heaven, a glorious object, far exceeding our sun in size and splendor. It is the leading brilliant in Canis Major, and, though classed as a star of the first magnitude, gives four times as much light as any other star visible in our latitude. It would be natural to infer that this star is nearer to us than its companions. Such is not the case. Several smaller stars are nearer to us than the brilliant orb that holds a place in the heavens at a distance of at least a million times our distance from the sun.

It is so far away that light is twelve years in spanning the distance. The flashing light that now comes from the star is twelve years old, and if it were this night blotted from the sky, it would continue to shine there for twelve years to come. Its dimensions have been approximately measured, and it is found to be a magnificent sun, at least two hundred times as large as our sun. Inequalities in its motion were long observed, and were attributed to the attraction of a companion. But no one succeeded in detecting the disturbing element until 1862, when the son of Mr. Alvan Clark, the famous telescope maker, in testing a powerful new instrument, turned it upon Sirius, and beheld a tiny point near the star that proved to be the long looked for companion. Sirius belongs to the highest order of stars, known as white stars. Its color has changed, for Seneca describes it as ruddier than Mars, and Ptolemy classes it with Antares. It has been seen with the naked eye in broad sunshine, and it is brilliant enough to cast a shadow.

Taking Sirius for a starting point, we will explore some of the leading stars and constellations in the vicinity. Northwest of Sirius, and an hour past the meridian, is the finest constellation in the heavens, the superb Orion. Its outlines are easily traced: an elongated parallelogram of four bright stars, a row of three stars in the center, and an oblique row running from the central band form the framework. The poetic imagination of the Greeks surrounded and interwove with this starry framework the giant stature and majestic proportions of Orion, the mighty hunter, brandishing a club in his right hand, and holding in his left a lion's skin for a shield. Betelgeuse and Bellatrix, the two upper stars of the parallelogram, shine brightly on his shoulders; Rigel and Saiph, the two lower ones, sparkle on his left foot and right knee. The three stars in the center form his belt, and the oblique stars mark his glittering sword. So striking are the outlines of this constellation, that when it has once been traced, it can never be forgotten. Not only does it take the lead for its exceeding beauty, but it is equally noteworthy for the telescopic interest attached to it and for the number and richness of its astronomical curiosities.

Orion is visible all over the habitable world, for the center is midway between the poles of the heavens and directly over the equator. The three stars in the belt measure three degrees in width, and may thus serve as a measuring rod for computing the distance of the stars. This constellation contains the most famous nebula in the heavens, and it is visible to the naked eye. Around the central star in the Sword clusters a hazy cloud-speck. When a powerful telescope is turned upon it, a wondrous transformation takes place—the Great Nebula of Orion springs into existence. The cloudy patch becomes a huge monster, with open mouth and branching horns. Within the open mouth a trapezium of stars is revealed, while spiral forms of ghost-like indistinctness fill in the field of vision. Telescope and spectroscope have exhausted their powers in seeking to solve the mysterious formation of this wonder of the skies.

Eighty stars may be counted in Orion visible to the naked eye, while nearly two thousand are revealed in the telescope. Many of them are double, triple, and multiple stars, the components developing every contrasted color of the rainbow, and bearing witness to the inconceivable richness and profusion of creative Power that not only produces systems ruled by a single sun, but mingles with them other systems, where two, three, four, and even more suns revolve about each other in circuits that take thousands of years to complete.

If now we turn our eyes to a point in the sky 26 degrees northeast of Sirius, and about the same distance east of Betelgeuse, a bright red star will appear. It is Procyon, the leading brilliant in Canis Minor. It shows to skillful observers similar evidence of disturbance to that of Sirius. It is hoped that some of the great telescopes now being constructed will reveal in like manner the companion of Procyon. It will help to impress the relative position of Sirius, Betelgeuse, and Procyon on the memory to note that they form a large equilateral triangle.

Looking 23 degrees north of Procyon, two bright stars, 4° 30' apart, may be seen. They are Castor and Pollux, twin stars in the constellation Gemini. The upper and brighter of the two is Castor, of the first magnitude. It is the most beautiful double star in the northern heavens. A telescope of moderate power will separate it into two stars of nearly equal magnitude—one a brilliant white, the other white tinged with green. Castor and Pollux, as well as Procyon, are on the meridian about an hour after Sirius, while Orion has passed the meridian an hour earlier, and is descending on the westward track.

Turning our eyes northwest of Orion, we behold two clusters in Taurus. One of them is the Pleiades, with six stars