Thursday, . . . August 19, 1869.

WORLDS ON FIRE.

On the 12th of May, 1866, a great conflagration indefinitely larger than that of London or Moscow, was announced. To use the expression of a distinguished astronomer, a world was found to be on fire. A star, which till then had shown meekly and unobtrusively in the Corona Borealis, suddenly blazed up into a luminary of the second magnitude. In the course of three days from its discovery in this new character by Mr. Birmingham, at Tuam, it had declined to the third or even fourth order of brilliancy. In twelve days, dating from its first appearance in the Irish heavens, it had sunk to the eighth rank, and it went on waning till the 27th of June, when it ceased to be discernible except through the medium of the telescope. This was a remarkable, though certainly not an unprecedented proceeding on the part of a star; but one singular circumstance in its behavior was that after the elapse of nearly two months it began to blaze up again, though not with equal ardor, and, after maintaining its glow for a few weeks and passing through sundry phases of edge, it gradually paled its fires and returned to its former insignificance.

How many years had elapsed since this awful conflagration actually took place it would be presumptuous to guess; but it must be remembered that news from the heavens, though carried by the fleetest of messengers, light, reaches us long after the event has transpired, and that the same celestial courier is still dropping the tidings at each station it reaches in space, until it sinks exhausted by the length of its flight. Now when this object was examined, as it was promptly and eagerly by Prof. Miller and Mr. Huggins, they found to their great wonder that it yielded two spectra—the one imposed upon the other, though obviously independent. There was the prismatic ribbon crossed by dark lines, which belongs to the sun and stars generally, but there was another in which four bright lines figured; and these, according to the canons of interpretation previously mentioned, indicated that some luminous gas (or gases) was also pouring out its light from the surface of the orb.

Two of the lines spelled out hydrogen in the spectral language. What the other two signified did not then appear; but, inasmuch as those four streaks were brighter than the rest of the spectrum, the source from which they came must obviously have been more intensely heated than the underlying parts, or photosphere, from which the normal stellar light proceeds. And as the star had suddenly flamed up, was it not a natural supposition that it had become enwrapped in burning hydrogen, which in consequence of some great convulsion had been liberated in prodigious quantities, and that combining with other elements, had set this hapless world on fire? In such a fierce conflagration the combustible gas would soon be consumed, and the glow would, therefore, begin to decline, subject, as in this case, to a second eruption, which occasioned the renewed outburst of light on the 20th of August.

By such a catastrophe it is not wholly impossible that our own globe may something be ravaged, for if a word from the Almighty were to unloose for a few moments the bonds of affinity which unite the elements of water—of the ocean on the landland the measure in the air—a single spark would bring them together with a fury which would kindle the funeral pyre of the human race, and be fatal to the planet and all the works that are therein. It cannot but be a startling fact for us that in yonder doomed and distant world we have, probably, seen in our own day a realization of the fearful picture sketched by Peter, "when the heavens (or atmosphere) being on fire shall be dissolved; and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." And if we regard it as the centre of a system, it is impossible to think without horror of the fate of the numerous globes around it when overwhelmed by this sudden deluge of lighted caloric.—*British Quarterly Review.*

NOT A MAN AND BROTHER.

Pierre Vernon, the witty paragraphist of the Paris *Press*, has, or says he has, received a letter from the Chimpanzee recently added to the collection in the Jardin des Plantes. The chief points of this epistle may be thus rendered in English: "Dear sir," writes the Chimpanzee, "permit me to use your journal for the purpose of correcting a personal abuse of which I am the victim.

"Since my arrival here I have received the daily visits of a large number of Parisians. This speaks well for human taste, and I do not, therefore, complain of it. But from every group of visitors I hear the same refrain, namely, "why, it is just like a man!"

"Now, Sir, it is against this calumny that I wish to protest. I do not resemble a man as much as these slanderers assert. There are, it is true, some analogies, chiefly physical, however, which their fatuity may have discovered between their race and mine, although these are all in my favor. But as to any moral resemblance, bosh!

"The Chimpanzee never known to gamble in stocks. First difference.

"The Chimpanzee never was known to pass its life in making itself hideous and ridiculous under the pretext of fashion. Second difference.

"The Chimpanzee never eats without hunger, or drinks without thirst. Third difference.

"The Chimpanzee is not used to villify its fellow-chimpanzees, nor to publish libellous things against them. Fourth difference.

"Besides a hundred other contrasts, of which I spare you the catalogue, believing that those already mentioned have amply proved my case.

"Will you oblige me by publishing this letter, and thus putting an end to the injurious comparisons that daily offend my self-respect? Yours, respectfully, THE CHIMPANZEE."

"The penalty for walking on a railroad track in England is ten pounds," said one, while discussing the numerous fatal accidents on a railroad. "Pooh!" replied Uncle Jerry, "is that all? The penalty in this country is death."

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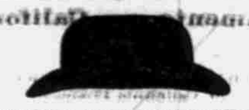
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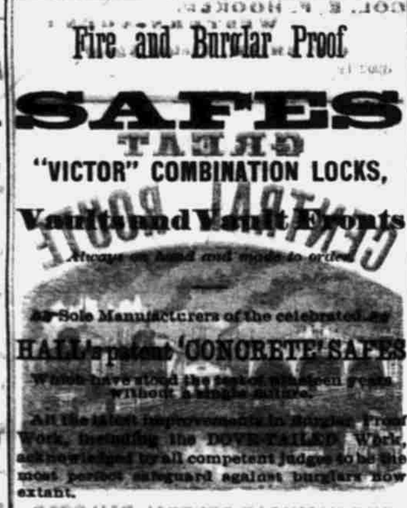
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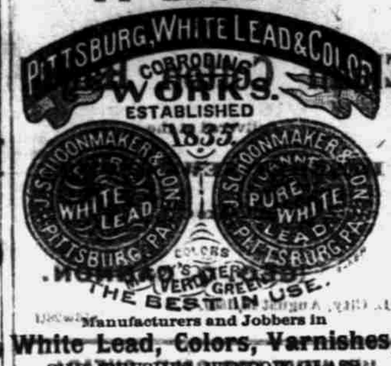

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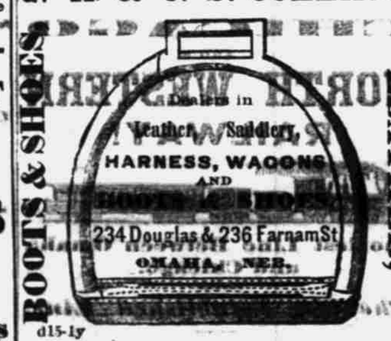
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