

The Heavens in May.

Jupiter is morning star, and by far the most important object for observation among the planets during the month. It cannot be too strongly impressed upon the minds of students of the stars, that the four great planets are all approaching their perihelia, and bringing about a condition of planetary affairs that has not occurred for 2,000 years. Jupiter reaches the goal first, arriving at perihelion on the 25th of September. Such is the eccentricity of this orbit that he will then be 46,000,000 miles, or about half of the whole distance of the earth from the sun, nearer to the great central fire than when farthest away. He is also at that time almost at his nearest point to the earth, coming into opposition with the sun eleven days after perihelion. The earth is then directly between him and the sun; but the earth is farthest from the sun in July, and will be at considerably more than her mean distance in September, when Jupiter is 46,000,000 miles nearer. It may be easily seen that when at opposition the earth is at or near her greatest distance, and Jupiter at his least distance, from the sun, the two planets will be almost as near together as they can be. Such will be the case next October, and the giant of the system will soon give evidence of the fact in his increasing size and brilliancy, being brighter than he has been for nearly twelve years. The difference will not be so marked as in the case of Mars under the same conditions, for nearly 400,000,000 miles of space intervene between the earth and the huge planet even when nearest. Jupiter, therefore, will be a source of intense interest during the coming months as he approaches and recedes from his perihelion and opposition. The great problem of the effect of his approach upon the mysterious spot period of the sun will be first in importance. Many astronomers scout the idea of such an influence. Many more find nothing improbable in the theory that the approach of a huge mass to the sun should produce disturbance in his blazing elements, evidently in commotion from some cause, while the near correspondence in time between the maximum of the spot period and the revolution of Jupiter favors the argument. No one doubts that the disturbed condition of the sun will be reflected on the earth in waves of intense heat, severe storms and auroral displays, or that the same influence will be felt in the same way to the system's remotest bounds.

Gigantic Jupiter, as his mighty mass plunges towards the sun, gives evidences of mighty forces at work among the chaotic elements of his cloud-surface. A spot has been seen on his disk for nearly a year, elliptical in form, red in color, and with a diameter of twenty thousand miles. No observer understands the cause of this huge rift. It may be an opening in the cloud-atmosphere disclosing the more solid matter beneath, and it may be something beyond human ken. About the 22nd, it is hoped that the planet will be again in favorable position for the observation of the red spot, and patient investigators will not be wanting to make the best of the opportunity. This beautiful planet may now be seen in the eastern sky, serenely unconscious of the excitement induced by his movements, rising a quarter before 4; at the end of the month he rises at 2, nearly two hours and a half before the sun.

Saturn is evening star, but no special interest is attached to his movements during the month, excepting on the 1st, when Saturn, Venus and Mercury rise within a few minutes of each other about an hour before sunrise, Venus being the brightest and farthest north, only one degree from Saturn. The planet rises at present about a quarter after four, at the end of the month half-past two, half an hour after Jupiter.

Venus is morning star, and though at nearly her greatest distance from the earth, and rising only about half an hour before the sun, is a charming object to behold in the pleasant May mornings, as, tremulous with brightness, she gleams in the rosy glow that heralds the near approach of the sun. She rises now at about a quarter after four; at the close of the month a few minutes before four, keeping at nearly the same distance from the sun.

Mercury is morning star throughout the month, though after the first few days invisible. He is at his nearest point to Saturn on the 6th, and to Venus on the 19th. He rises about a quarter after four on the 1st, and about half after four on the 31st.

Neptune is morning star after the 2d, when he comes into conjunction with the sun. He is in close conjunction with Mercury and near Venus on the 18th. As he travels on the system's extreme verge, and is now more than twenty-eight hundred million miles away, terrestrial observers will not be much wiser for attempting to trace his movements.

Mars is evening star, and still holds the honor of being the only planet visible in the evening. He shines in diminishing glory among the stars of Gemini, and is not far from Castor, the leading brilliant of that constellation on the 15th. He is so far away and his fiery rays have become so dim that he is not of much account among his brethren. He sets now a quarter of an hour before midnight; at the end of the month about 11.

Uranus is evening star and traveling far away from visibility, though, still very near the star Rho Leonis. He rises now about 1; at the end of the month about 11.

The May moon fulls on the 24th. The waning moon pays her respects to no less than five of the planets—to Jupiter on the 5th, to Mercury, Venus and Saturn on the 7th, and to Neptune on the 8th. The new moon of 9th is near Mars on the 13th and near Uranus on the 18th, the day after her first quarter.

The feature of the month is the unusual number of planets doing duty as morning stars. Jupiter, Saturn, Venus, Mercury and Neptune form the shining quintette that sing together as they wait the coming of the sun. If mortal ears are not turned to hear the music of the morning stars, mortal eyes will enjoy rare pictures on the celestial canvas during the mild May mornings. Venus, Saturn and Mercury rise within a few minutes of each other on the 1st. The loveliest picture of the month is unrolled on the 7th, for the slender crescent of the waning moon, only two days before her change, is then in close vicinity to the same trio. Throughout the winter Venus reigned alone as morning star, and Jupiter, Saturn and Mars, far asunder, spanned the evening sky. Now they are all morning stars, grouped near each other and near the sun. And yet such is the variety and simplicity of the noble science of astronomy, that an intelligent child can comprehend the movements of the planets.

Observers of the stars have enough to do during the month in watching the movements here indicated, in studying the phases of Jupiter and the reappearance of the great red spot, in noting the increase of sun spots, and in testing the truth of the prophecies of men of science concerning the meteorological changes to be expected from these celestial coincidences.—*Providence Journal*.

—I know, my young friend, you find comfort in that cigar, but it is a costly comfort. It is against health, comeliness, and economy. Hence it is against the conscience. It is against sainthood and true manliness. Has God made the world so lean that you must seek comfort by defilement?

—The Rev. Johnathan Lees, of the London Missionary Society, writes of a tour he recently made in the Tientsin country North China, among the villages where efforts have been made to secure converts. Seven districts are included in the section of country visited by Mr. Lees, making an area perhaps 420 miles in circumference. Mr. Lees states as the result of his observation, that the people are, in a hitherto unknown degree susceptible and receptive. This arises, he thinks, partly from two circumstances: viz, The natural decay of the old idolatry and the favorable impression caused by the famine relief. In the Hiao-chang district he received no less than 110 new probationers. A most singular and encouraging fact he mentions is that a large proportion of heathens and converts are women. "This," he says, "is one of the most extraordinary features of the work, and one, so far as I know, quite unparalleled elsewhere in North China." The explanation of the strange event he cannot give. Some say that in the famine far more men than women were swept away, and hence, there is a scarcity of men, compelling to women to appear, accounting for the frequent attendance of women at meetings. Others think it is part owing to the impression created by Christian assistance to the famine sufferers. Whatever the cause may be, the women show great desire to hear the Gospel that no ordinary obstacle can prevent them from attending services. Thus one woman walked regularly every Sunday to church to a village five miles distant. Eight or ten others have lately been walking (small-footed women, too) over on Saturday, a distance of ten miles, and remaining over Sunday. They are utterly ignorant and sometimes most pitifully stupid, so that their earnestness and persistence are the more touching. But "not a few have laid hold of the great facts of the Gospel," and even the most stupid weep when they speak of the love of Christ for sinners. Mr. Lees was greatly encouraged throughout his tour by the proficiency of the people in learning the songs out of book he had distributed among them. They never tire of singing these Gospel songs. Many who know little of the Catechism sing heartily "The Great Physician," "Rock of Ages," and the like.—*Independent*.

—The news from Burmah of the sacrifice of seven hundred human lives by burying alive, to appease the wrath of evil spirits, is so bloodcurdling in its horror that it is scarcely possible to believe that such an enormity of superstitious cruelty can belong to the nineteenth century. It would be appalling even among the basest superstitions of the darkest regions of cannibalism in Africa. To save the life of a drunken monster, universally feared and hated, his astrologers represented his disease as the infliction of evil spirits, who are angry that he did not build a new city and establish a new capital; and to save a worse than worthless life, seven hundred men, women and children were buried alive! The only relief in the case is in the additional intelligence that the King has since died. It is to be fondly hoped that this is true. The civilized world should demand the speedy punishment of the execrable monsters at whose suggestion this atrocious crime was committed.—*Standard*.

Mrs. LEELE as Editor.—Mrs. Frank Leslie has removed from 511 to 21 Fifth Avenue, in the vicinity of Washington Park. The lady is filling the editorial chair formerly occupied by her late husband in the Frank Leslie establishment—a position for which by education, experience and natural ability she is well fitted. She is regularly at the editorial desk, and the printers come to her for "copy" and for directions as to the make-up of the different periodicals just as they would to a "chief" of the sterner sex. And she meets their demands in a prompt and business-like way. Writing articles for newspapers and preparing manuscripts for printers is not a novel employment for Mrs. Leslie, and she performs the duties with an easy grace which is refreshing to a looker-on.

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C. J. WRIGHT.

Palouse, W. T.

MISCELLANEOUS.

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