

There is also "*whin-axe*," an instrument for extirpating whin from land.

The Scotch form of whin is *quhyn*.  
March 16

JOHN JEREMIAH

#### The Aurora of February 4

THIS Aurora was seen throughout Europe, including Russia and Constantinople, in Egypt, in the Mauritius, and in India.

May not all auroras pervade the atmosphere around the entire globe and be visible wherever night prevails with a sufficiently clear sky? And so may not the southern and northern aurora belong to one and the same universal aurora?

GEORGE GREENWOOD

Alresford, March 16

I SEE notices in the English papers of a great aurora seen in all parts of Scotland, England, and even as far south as Alexandria in Africa. It may be interesting for your readers to know that it was visible here on the same evening—Sunday, February 4. I saw it first at 6.30 P.M., and at various times after that until 10.30, after which I did not look out of doors. There were no streamers, and the peculiarity of the appearance was that it was in all directions, and less in the north than in the west and east. It presented the appearance of a dull red fog, in shifting masses, and more like the haze I observed here in 1861, when the earth was said to have passed through the tail of the comet of that year. Auroras are very rare in this latitude, but we have had four or five displays in fifteen months: one so bright as to excite the alarm of fire, and to call out the fire department.

GEORGE S. BLACKIE

Nashville, Tennessee, U.S., Feb. 27

#### Barometric Depressions

By the introduction of parenthetical sentences between words, which do to some extent represent my meaning, though they are not mine, as the inverted commas would imply, and by the omission of the main point of his own argument, Mr. Ley has presented as mine certain propositions which may well appear to him and to every one who reads them, not only irreconcilable, but sheer nonsense. As these parenthetical interpolations are Mr. Ley's own, and as the point in his argument to which I took exception was not the application of Buys Ballot's Law, but his proposition—shortly stated—that revolving storms are caused by heavy rain, I conceive that his version of my views, which may be funny but is certainly incorrect, is scarcely worth the serious attention of any one.

As to the rest, it is a great thing, in any branch of science, to establish points beyond the reach of further argument or doubt. The depression of the barometer in summer over a great part of Asia has hitherto seemed one of the most curious and difficult problems in Physical Geography. We now know all about it. There is no more room for doubt. It is "really due" to the rarefaction of the air. Mr. Ley says so. What, how, why, when, or where, are details far too commonplace for him to enter upon.

The whole subject of barometric changes, and their relation to strong winds or storms, is one of extreme difficulty; and, in the present state of our knowledge, we can do little more than guess at or discuss the probable solution of the many questions that arise out of it. From the off-hand way in which Mr. Ley disposes of them, or wishes them disposed of, it would appear that he has not yet arrived at even an appreciation of their difficulty. This is the real point on which we are at issue; the range of his study has been too confined. A more general application of his industry will, I hope—should he again meet me in my capacity of critic—relieve me of the necessity of making remarks unpleasant for him to read, or for me to write.

J. K. L.

#### The Meteor of March 4

I HAVE been looking out for some corresponding notice of a meteor seen here on March 4, but hitherto in vain. At first I hoped that the interesting accounts from Ireland, published in the last number of NATURE, might have referred to the same phenomenon; but I soon found that the dates were discordant,

and I now beg to forward the following brief notice of the earlier one:—

On the above-mentioned evening, about 7h. 40m. P.M. railway time, a brilliant meteor was noticed by my gardener Thomas Wood. According to his account it appeared about 20° or 30° above the N. horizon as a ball of red fire passing rapidly from W. to E., about one-third as large as the full moon, with a tail seven or eight times its diameter in length, the portion nearest the head being reddish; but changing at about one-third of its length to green, which was especially distinct towards its tapering point. The head seemed to be surrounded by some sparks. It threw such a light upon the ground as to show all the growing wheat in the field through which the spectator was passing. The course was rather descending, and it went out suddenly without coming down to the horizon. I have heard of only one other person in the neighbourhood who saw the light cast by the meteor, and who described it as extremely brilliant. It is singular that it has not been more generally noticed. The especial interest attached to it is the fact that, in common with the one observed only four days later in Ireland, its course was in the unusual direction of the earth's motion.

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay, March 18

T. W. WEBB

#### THEODOR GOLDSTÜCKER

FOR the following particulars of the career of the late Prof. Goldstücker we are indebted mainly to the *Academy* and *Trübner's Oriental Record*:—

By the death of Theodor Goldstücker, at the early age of fifty-one, philology has lost one of its greatest scholars, and society, what it can still less afford to lose, one of the noblest and most disinterested of men. Born at Königsberg, in Prussia, he began the study of Sanskrit, for the profound knowledge of which he has since become so famous throughout the world, under Prof. Peter von Bohlen, at the University of that town. He continued this study under Profs. August Wilhelm von Schlegel and Christian Lassen at Bonn. He afterwards resided for some time at Paris, where he enjoyed the friendship of men of the greatest distinction, such as Burnouf, Letronne, &c. He then resided at the University of Berlin, where he began soon to display great scholarly activity. Alexander von Humboldt formed already at that time a very high estimate of the capacities of the young scholar, whose aid, in several very difficult questions of Indian philosophy, he gratefully acknowledged in his "Kosmos."

After the reaction of 1848-9, Goldstücker came over to England for the purpose of assisting Prof. Wilson in the preparation of a new edition of his Sanskrit Dictionary. For this new edition no material whatever existed save the dictionary itself in its printed form. Goldstücker, nevertheless, undertook its revision single-handed; and the immense proportions which under his hand the first six parts assumed (480 pp. without getting to the end of the first letter) rendered the completion of the work by one man or in one generation impossible. Many thousands of notes and references for this and other works, the result of an unremitting study of the MSS. treasures at the India House, &c., are left behind; and we are glad to learn from the *Academy* that the report in some of the newspapers that the deceased had left directions in his will for their destruction is without foundation.

The earliest work undertaken by Goldstücker was the translation into German of the "Prabodha Chandrodaya," a theologico-philosophical drama, by Krischna Miçra, to which Professor Rosenkranz wrote a Preface. In 1861 he published, as an Introduction to a Fac-simile Edition of the "Manava-Kalpa-Sutra," an investigation of some literary and chronological questions, which may be settled by a study of Panini's work, under the title of "Panini, his place in Sanskrit literature." Goldstücker also edited the text of the "Jaiminiya-nyāya-mālā-vistara," of which work 400 pages in large quarto are in type.