inference in his last letter (NATURE, vol. xxi. p. 226). Here you have it:—

"The Mind, that broods o'er guilty woes,
Is like the scorpion girt by fire;
In circle narrowing as it glows,
The flames around their captive close,
Till inly search'd by thousand throes,
And maddening in her ire,
One sad and sole relief she knows:
The sting she nourish'd for her foes,
Whose venom never yet was vain,
Gives but one pang, and cures all pain,
And darts into her desperate brain."

I hope to tax your patience no further on scorpion *felo de se.*

Prov. de Jaen, Linares, Spain, January 17 F. GILLMAN

Meteor

A MAGNIFICENT meteor was seen here last Monday evening (19th inst.) at 6.8 P.M. The meteor when first observed had an elevation of about 30° above the horizon and was travelling due west. It appeared to me to be at least four times the size of Jupiter and much more brilliant, the colour being bright blue. It seemed to be moving comparatively slowly and was in sight for some two or three seconds. When still about 15° above the horizon it burst, sending forth a number of different coloured sparks, in fact strikingly reminding one of the bursting of a sky-rocket. No report could be heard after the explosion. I may add that the night was very fine and the moon bright, and that a number of small meteors were seen at the same time.

West Calder, N.B., January 21 J. S. THOMSON

ON HALLEY'S MOUNT

"Hoc primum ab homine Anglo invertum fuisse non inficiabitur æqua posteritas."

IN Mrs. Gill's account of her voyage to Ascension,[1] she relates how her husband (since appointed astronomer at Cape Town) visited Halley's Mount, a prominent spur on the northern declivity from Diana's Peak, the central culminating point of the Island of St. Helena. Here, on a small plate u, the sight of a few roughly-squared blocks of tufa cannot fail to inspire the beholder with deep interest, for these stones, now overgrown with wild-pepper and blackberry brambles, are all that remain to mark the site of a celebrated astronomical station.

The neglected state of these ruinous foundations,

"In which there was obscurity and fame,
The glory and the nothing of a name,"

contrasts in a marked manner with the "exquisite neatness" (as Mrs. Gill terms it) which distinguishes the cœnotaph of Napoleon[2] in the so-called "Vale of the Tomb" several hundred feet beneath.

Here it was that Edmund Halley 200 years ago established his observatory, and first constructed his "Catalogus Stellarum Australium;" here he observed the transit of Mercury, and wrote his method of obtaining the sun's parallax by the forthcoming transits of Venus, and here made the first[3] magnetical observations in the southern hemisphere.

On the eve of Mr. Gill's astronomical experiment at Ascension, then a matter of uncertain expectancy, now happily a successful *fait accompli*, no wonder is it that a sincere sympathy with the aspirations of his predecessor determined him to some day find the means and opportunity to raise a memorial on the spot.

To astronomical students the apotheosis of the great Halley is immortally celebrated by the comet which bears his name; but to the "*profanum vulgus*" the mention of Dr. Halley conveys no conception of his genius nor of the practical scientific benefits he bequeathed to the English nation. It was Delambre who, speaking of Halley's "Synopsis Astronomicæ Cometæ," said (*Ast. Siècle*, xviii. p. 310): "Voilà bien, depuis Kepler, ce qui on a fait de plus grand, de plus beau, de plus neuf en astronomie."

It is a fact hardly yet appreciated either in England or America, that Dr. Edmund Halley is second only to Isaac Newton, whose friend and contemporary he was (Newton's "Principia" was first printed in 1686-7 at Halley's expense), and that it is to this close contemporaneity alone that the bright light of Halley's star has suffered diminution of lustre from the brilliant rays of his world-renowned neighbouring luminary.

No biographer has yet appeared to write the life of this great man, nor does any public monument yet adequately represent the national estimation which is so richly deserved by the second most illustrious of Anglo-Saxon philosophers. The first of these two reproaches is, we believe, on the eve of being wiped away; for we learn that Prof. Pritchard[1] of the Oxford University, to whom (as holding the Chair of Astronomy denied to Halley by Stillingfleet) pertains the honour of compiling so valuable a biography, is preparing for the press a full account of the long life-work of the venerable astronomer.

It is to remove the second of these wants that we now would advocate, through the columns of NATURE, the erection of a fitting memorial to our illustrious countryman on the spot which is indissolubly connected with his name, as the scene of his famous achievement.

The onerous duties of the astronomer at Capetown have prevented his doing more than suggesting the idea of a monument to Halley and the most appropriate site; it now remains for us with more leisure at home to forward the idea, and do our utmost to carry out his well-intentioned scheme; nor need we fear that it will be lost sight of and fall to the ground, now that it has been brought forward to the notice of our scientific societies. This recognition of the claim of Halley to his proper place on the roll of English scientific worthies, although somewhat tardy, need not therefore be the less hearty and thorough now that it takes place. It is now some seven or eight years since the Tuscans expended nearly forty thousand pounds in a memorial to their "Divinus Galilæus," at Florence;[2] and in 1874 the preparations for observing the transit of Venus recalled to our minds the hitherto obscure memory of the long-forgotten Jeremiah Horrocks. Surely we need not wait for the advent of the next transit in 1882 to remind the present generation what they owe to the St. Helena observer of 1677. Have we not therefore established the fact that it is desirable to erect a memorial to Halley on the ancient site of his observatory in St. Helena?

Receiving in anticipation an affirmative reply from our readers in answer to the question above, we may now approach the next stage of our subject by inquiry as to the form which such a memorial should take; and the fact is that it matters very little in reality whether tablet or bust; whether column, pyramid, or statue be chosen, so long as it is not too ornate.[3] The simplest and most

[1] See NATURE, vol. xix. p. 240. "Six Months in Ascension. An Unscientific Account of a Scientific Expedition." By Mrs. Gill. (Murray, 1878.)

[2] Darwin says: "After the volumes of eloquence which have poured forth on this subject, it is dangerous even to mention the tomb. A modern traveller, in twelve lines, burdens the poor little island with the following titles: it is a grave, tomb, pyramid, cemetery, sepulchre, catacomb, sarcophagus, minaret, and mausoleum!" ("A Naturalist's Voyage," p. 486.) Darwin's lodgings at Hutt's Gate were within a stone's throw of Halley's observatory, of which fact he appears to have been unaware; and, similarly, neither Napoleon nor any of his staff appear to have remarked the scientific associations of Halley's Mount during the six years they were resident at Longwood; a circumstance the more curious, as Napoleon always patronised science, perhaps less for its own sake than from motives of policy.

[3] In 1667 Halley found the variation of the compass to be 40' E., it is now 24° W.

[1] See *Monthly Notices*, Royal Astronomical Society, December, 1875, p. 51. Large materials for a life of Dr. Halley were found among the papers of the late Prof. Rigaud, which will be edited by Prof. Charles Pritchard, M.A.

[2] "Tuscan Memorial to Galileo," by G. F. Rodwell (NATURE, vol. viii. p. 328, August, 1873)

[3] The sketch of one design has been shown us, consisting of a pyramid whose four sides are inclined at an angle of 70° with the base standing on a podium, which is dodecagonal surrounded with seats. The faces of the pyramid face the cardinal points. On the north face is Ursa Major, and on