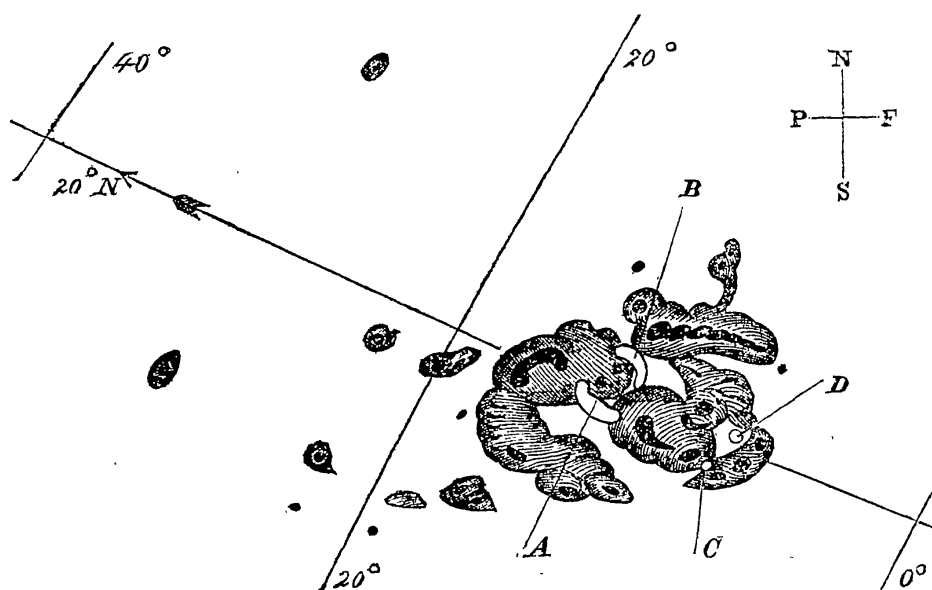


bination with the ancient measures, to a new computation by M. Oom, of the Royal Observatory of Lisbon, at present living at Pulkowa. The results of his computation have entirely confirmed my father's conclusions, that the changes observed in the course of 28 years in the relative positions of the two stars find a complete explanation in the proper motion of the principal star, but the new formula does but very little diminish the discordance of the results obtained in 1823 by transit observations.

Pulkowa, October, 1859.

Description of a Singular Appearance seen in the Sun on September 1, 1859. By R. C. Carrington, Esq.

While engaged in the forenoon of Thursday, Sept. 1, in taking my customary observation of the forms and positions of the solar spots, an appearance was witnessed which I believe to be exceedingly rare. The image of the sun's disk was, as usual with me, projected on to a plate of glass coated with distemper of a pale straw colour, and at a distance and under a power which presented a picture of about 11 inches diameter. I had secured diagrams of all the groups and detached spots, and was engaged at the time in counting from a chronometer and recording the contacts of the spots with the cross-wires used in the observation, when within the area of the great north group (the size of which had previously excited general remark), two patches of intensely bright and white light broke out, in the positions indicated in the appended diagram by the letters A and B, and of the forms of the spaces left white. My



first impression was that by some chance a ray of light had penetrated a hole in the screen attached to the object-glass, by

which the general image is thrown into shade, for the brilliancy was fully equal to that of direct sun-light; but, by at once interrupting the current observation, and causing the image to move by turning the R.A. handle, I saw I was an unprepared witness of a very different affair. I thereupon noted down the time by the chronometer, and seeing the outburst to be very rapidly on the increase, and being somewhat flurried by the surprise, I hastily ran to call some one to witness the exhibition with me, and on returning within 60 seconds, was mortified to find that it was already much changed and enfeebled. Very shortly afterwards the last trace was gone, and although I maintained a strict watch for nearly an hour, no recurrence took place. The last traces were at C and D, the patches having travelled considerably from their first position and vanishing as two rapidly fading dots of white light. The instant of the first outburst was not 15 seconds different from $11^h 18^m$ Greenwich mean time, and $11^h 23^m$ was taken for the time of disappearance. In this lapse of 5 minutes, the two patches of light traversed a space of about 35,000 miles, as may be seen by the diagram, which is given exactly on a scale of 12 inches to the sun's diameter. On this scale the section of the earth will be very nearly equal in area to that of the detached spot situated most to the north in the diagram, and the section of *Jupiter* would about cover the area of the larger group, without including the outlying portions. It was impossible, on first witnessing an appearance so similar to a sudden conflagration, not to expect a considerable result in the way of alteration of the details of the group in which it occurred; and I was certainly surprised, on referring to the sketch which I had carefully and satisfactorily (and I may add fortunately) finished before the occurrence, at finding myself unable to recognise any change whatever as having taken place. The impression left upon me is, that the phenomenon took place at an elevation considerably above the general surface of the sun, and, accordingly, altogether above and over the great group in which it was seen projected. Both in figure and position the patches of light seemed entirely independent of the configuration of the great spot, and of its parts, whether nucleus or umbra. The customary observation was shortly resumed, and the diagram engraved, as well as the larger drawing exhibited at the Meeting on Nov. 11, was deduced from an exact reduction of the recorded times.

It has been very gratifying to me to learn that our friend Mr. Hodgson chanced to be observing the sun at his house at Highgate on the same day, and to hear that he was a witness of what he also considered a very remarkable phenomenon. I have carefully avoided exchanging any information with that gentleman, that any value which the accounts may possess may be increased by their entire independence.

(Mr. Carrington exhibited at the November Meeting of the

Society a complete diagram of the disk of the sun at the time, and copies of the photographic records of the variations of the three magnetic elements, as obtained at Kew, and pointed out that a moderate but very marked disturbance took place at about 11^h 20^m A.M., Sept. 1st, of short duration; and that towards four hours after midnight there commenced a great magnetic storm, which subsequent accounts established to have been as considerable in the southern as in the northern hemisphere. While the contemporary occurrence may deserve noting, he would not have it supposed that he even leans towards hastily connecting them. "One swallow does not make a summer.")

Mr. Carrington regrets having omitted previously to communicate the following passage in a letter from M. Schwabe, dated March, which is plainly intended for others as well as himself:—"The remarks and drawings of *Jupiter* in the *Monthly Notices* by Dawes, Murray, and Lassell, have much interested me, as I also have long followed the changes which take place in his bands. Although none of the observations in the *Monthly Notices* coincide in time with those which I have obtained, yet I recognise a good accordance in general, especially in the two figures given by Sir W. Murray.* Yet I do not find indicated in those two figures, that, as I observe, the whole surface of *Jupiter* is covered with delicate parallel dark lines, which are the most conspicuous in the dark belts. The most delicate ones are to be found in the bright equatorial zone, the zone of Schroeter, in the middle of which, or on the equator itself, they appear rather more distinctly, although this middle line is not always there. . . . In the figures of the *Monthly Notices* there are representations of bright round beads which I do not observe under that character. My impression is that I see longish bright places between the above-named parallel lines, in which, or through which, the bright surface of the planet is discernible. I much wish to learn whether Messrs. Dawes, Murray, or Lassell, or either of them, see also those delicate parallel lines. The large and almost black spots which were seen a short time ago, also dissolved into similar but much broader and darker parallel lines. . . ."

On a curious Appearance seen in the Sun.

By R. Hodgson, Esq.

"While observing a group of solar spots on the 1st September, I was suddenly surprised at the appearance of a very brilliant star of light, much brighter than the sun's surface,

* Lassell (?).—Ed,