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# Darkness at Noon;

OR, THE

## GREAT SOLAR ECLIPSE,

OF THE 16th OF JUNE, 1806,

DESCRIBED AND REPRESENTED

IN EVERY PARTICULAR

CONTAINING, ALSO,

*AN EXPLANATION OF ECLIPSES IN GENERAL,*

AND THE

CAUSES ON WHICH THEY DEPEND.

WRITTEN IN A STYLE, FAMILIAR AND EASY, AND

ADAPTED TO EVERY CAPACITY.

---

BY AN INHABITANT OF BOSTON.

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'Tis silence all, and universal maze;  
A wond'rous twilight overcasts the skies;  
At noon a darkness does usurp the day;  
And stars break forth and glitter through the gloom.

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BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY D. CARLISLE & A. NEWELL,

And for Sale at their respective Printing Offices.

MAY, 1806.

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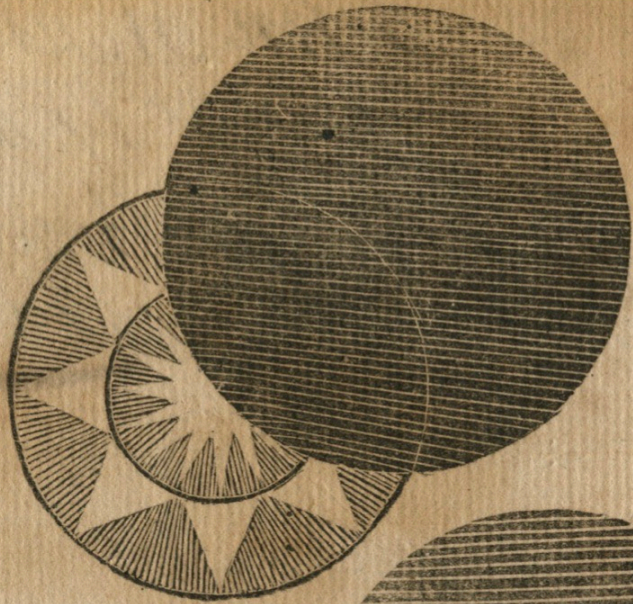


Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

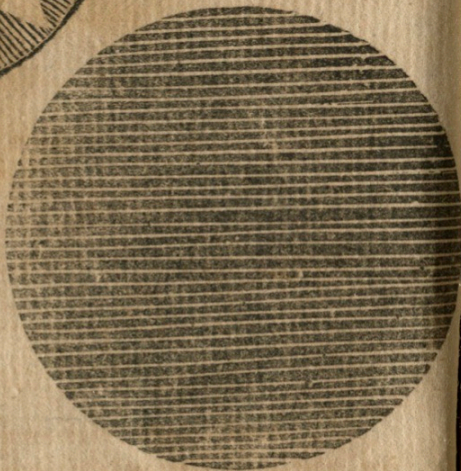
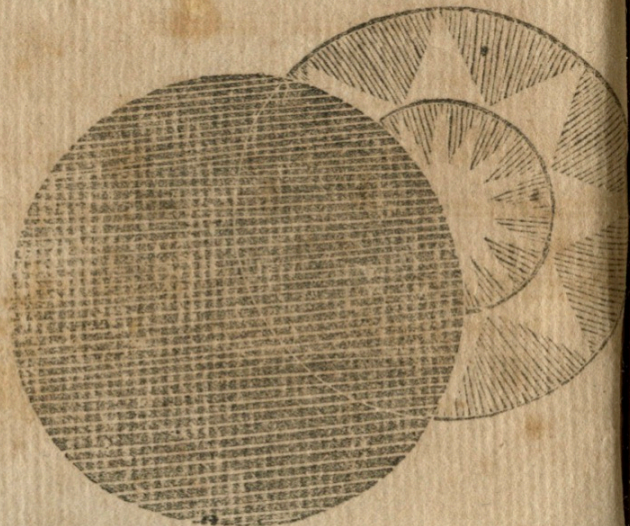


Fig. 3.



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THIRD EDITION.

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PREFACE TO THE READER.

*THIS publication originated from the following circumstance : a few days since I was visited by a gentleman of my acquaintance, who suggested the scheme of publishing a pamphlet which should give a description of the great Solar Eclipse in every particular ; at the same time be accompanied with an explanation of eclipses in general, and the causes on which they depend.*

*In conformity to his proposition, I have commenced the task with some reluctance ; doubtful of my ability to do justice to the subject. I have had but little time to examine my manuscript, which may occasion some imperfections that otherwise might have been prevented. I have endeavoured to be plain and concise as possible, and must acknowledge there are some repetitions ; but the plan is such*

that I could not avoid them. In the descriptions, I have referred to some of the most familiar objects in common life, in order to enforce an idea which otherwise might have been too obscure to be perfectly understood. There is nothing inserted but what may easily be comprehended by any person, without the ingenuity of art, or the aid of science. And it is presumed that the experiments are such, and the illustrations so plain, that they may be made without the least inconvenience; and which carry the full force of the subject in every particular. The whole was hastily put together, as it was suggested at a late hour. Under this disadvantage the work is submitted to the public.

THE AUTHOR.

Boston, May, 1806.

## INTRODUCTION.

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THE Science of Astronomy, in all ages, has been a subject of admiration, and it justly claims the distinction of superlative excellence. By its discoveries, knowledge has been diffused in rich variety over the face of the civilized world; and imagination has found a field where it can rove without restraint or limitation. Though it relates principally to objects whose distances are immeasurable, and whose numbers are infinite; yet we are not to conclude that they have no relation with terrestrial things; or that they are disconnected with that system of which we form a part.

The discoveries which have been made in this science within the three last centuries have exceeded the warmest expectations of human reason; for the mind, which was once limited to the narrow confines of a little earth, is now able by the telescope to travel space, and make excursions into the distant regions of the heavens; and a prospect is now opened to us, as wonderful as it is infinite. But its sublilities are not its *only* recommendation: by it, science has been improved, navigation promoted, and knowledge and invention carried to the utmost boundaries of human ingenuity. By its aid the mechanic arts have flourished, and by their union, have yielded the richest harvest of intellectual gratification.

The daily rising and setting of the sun and moon, with the milder glories of a nocturnal firmament, are some of the common specimens of celestial magnificence. We admire, indeed with propriety, the sublime indications of an "infinite creative mind;" and whilst we are charmed with the usual displays of his wisdom and goodness, we are led to make a transition from "nature to nature's God." But these are scenes which, from their frequency, are regarded with indifference; they are too often repeated to impress the mind with a remembrance of their origin, or a recollection of their destiny in the perfection of the present system.

But on some occasions, nature assumes a surprising aspect. The novelty of the event produces inquiry and universal astonishment. Either the reverberating echo of distant thunder, or the alarm of an approaching earthquake, awakens the mind from its indifference, and excites to reason, thought, and reflection. But a *total eclipse of the sun* is still more remarkable, as such an appearance has not happened at this metropolis since the settlement of New England; and probably many ages may pass before the same phenomenon will be repeated.

From these circumstances it may be necessary to enter into a minute description of this eclipse, and to relate every particular relative to this uncommon event; that whilst the appearance itself is clearly explained, it may also prevent unreasonable fear and foolish anxiety.

## A DESCRIPTION OF THE ECLIPSE.

THIS remarkable eclipse will happen on Monday, June 16th, in the forenoon: the times and appearances of which will be as follow:

	<i>h. m. s.</i>	
Beginning of the eclipse,	9 58 45	}
The moon's northeasterly side will touch the sun's centre, as in fig. 1.	10 39 00	
Middle of the eclipse, or total disappearance of the sun behind the moon, as represented in fig. 2.	11 22 15	
		}
The moon's edge will leave the sun's centre, as in fig. 3.	12 5 00	}
Ending of the eclipse,	12 46 15	

The duration of this eclipse will be 2 hours and 48 minutes, and the time of *total obscurity* will be 3 minutes and 30 seconds, as seen from Boston.

As the moon's *dark shadow* will make a circle on the earth's surface, some parts of this circle cannot be so broad as others. Consequently, in some places, the duration of *total obscurity* will be not more than a minute, and at others it will not exceed a second. And to all those places over which the centre of the shade will pass, the sun will be totally concealed for more than 3 minutes.

The beginning of this eclipse will be on the sun's south westerly edge, nearly; that is, 43 degrees from his vertex, or highest point, and on the right hand side. Therefore, an observer who wishes to see the *beginning* must direct his attention to that part of the sun's edge.

Note.—The sun's *highest* edge we call the west; the *lowest* the east; on the right hand the south; and on the left hand the north side of his body; but in the afternoon it is reversed.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE FRONTISPIECE.

THE three figures in the frontispiece represent three different views of this eclipse. Fig. 1 shews us how the sun and moon will appear when the sun is half obscured, that is, when the moon's edge will seem to touch the sun's centre; and the sun, at that instant, will appear to hang on the north-easterly side of the moon, as represented in that figure.

Figure 2 represents the appearance of the moon in the middle of the eclipse, at which moment the sun will entirely disappear behind her dark body. This will be the time of the greatest darkness, and will occasion a gloom and chill similar to night. Probably the principal stars of the firmament will appear, especially those of the largest apparent magnitude, and will glitter as if in nocturnal splendor. This we have reason to believe, if we credit the records of antiquity. The solemnity and aspect of the scene will be very singular, presenting an appearance of which we can have no idea, and converting the day into a temporary night.

Fig. 3 represents the appearance when the moon is leaving the sun's centre. The moon will quit the sun in a south easterly direction, as may be seen in figure 3. It is evident from the figures that the moon will then *appear* larger than the sun, otherwise the sun could not be totally eclipsed, as represented in figure 2.

It may be proper to mention that these calculations were made particularly for Boston; and that the eclipse will be total *only* at particular places. It will be seen at Albany very much as it will be at Boston; but at Philadelphia the moon will appear to pass north of the sun's centre, and as seen from thence will not be total. On the contrary, at West Portland, about 200 miles north-east from Boston, the moon will pass south of the sun's centre, and as viewed from that place, the sun's north side will be visible in the middle of the eclipse; and consequently cannot there be total. But it would be an endless affair to represent this eclipse as it will appear at all places, because the distance of 50 miles will occasion some difference. If we could translate ourselves to the earth's centre, and could view the eclipse through the dark body of the earth, the sun would appear only one third obscured; and at London it will be less than a third.

At the time of this eclipse, the moon's dark shadow will cover a circular spot on the earth's surface of about 104 miles in diameter; and Boston will be in or near the centre of this dark circle at the time of the middle of the eclipse. Consequently, persons remote from Boston, 50 or 60 miles, north or south, will see a part of the sun; and to them the eclipse cannot be total. But as the motion of the shadow is in an easterly direction, those who live in that or a westerly direction will be more likely to see the eclipse total than those differently situated.

During the eclipse, the moon's motion from the sun, through the heavens, will be at the rate of 39 miles every minute of time; and with the same velocity her shadow will travel over the earth's surface, which is almost five times as swift as the motion of a cannon ball. It is true we shall not be sensible

of this motion, because we are not in a proper situation to observe it.

Although the moon's dark shadow will not much exceed 100 miles in breadth; yet her penumbra,\* or faint shadow will cover an extent of almost five thousand miles on the earth's surface, viz. from 11 degrees to 82 degrees north latitude, within which the sun will appear more or less obscured, as the observer is less or more distant from the centre of the shadow. Beyond the above limits the whole body of the sun will appear. This eclipse will probably be seen total in some parts of Africa and in the Atlantic ocean.

\* The moon's penumbra is a fainter shadow surrounding the dark one. When the penumbra touches any place on the earth's surface, the eclipse begins at that place; and when the penumbra leaves it, the eclipse ends. Within the centre of this penumbra lies the dark shadow, whose breadth is greater or less, according as the moon's apparent diameter exceeds the sun's. Within the dark shadow the sun is invisible; but between the edge of the penumbra and the edge of the dark shadow, a part of the sun is seen; and the degree of obscuration is greater or less according as the observer is at a less or greater distance from the center of the shade. Beyond the edge of the penumbra the whole body of the sun is seen without any interruption.

When the sun appears larger than the moon, at the time of any eclipse, there is no dark shadow at that time; and to all those places over which the centre of the penumbra then passes, the sun will be centrally eclipsed like a ring, appearing like a circle made of brass wire. Of this description was the remarkable eclipse which happened April 3, 1791, on Sunday morning.

To represent, by a figure, the moon's penumbra, with the dark shadow in the centre, chalk a large circle on the floor, about 3 feet in diameter, which shall represent the penumbra; in the centre make another circle of about two inches in diameter; this last shall represent the dark shadow. This dark shadow can only happen at the time of a total eclipse of the sun.

Conceive the large circle, which we have just made, to travel over the earth's surface; when its edge touches any place the eclipse then begins at that place; and when its opposite edge leaves that place, the eclipse ends. These circumstances constitute the beginning and ending of an eclipse of the sun.

## A DESCRIPTION OF THE FIRMAMENT

*At the time of total obscurity, and of the stars which will then most probably be visible.*

AFTER the sun disappears behind the moon, the latter will appear like a black patch in the sky, and this is exactly represented in figure 2. There will probably be a twilight surrounding the moon on all sides, and the darkness will be considerable, perhaps almost equal to night. By inspecting a celestial globe, I find the following stars will most probably appear. The remarkable constellation of *Orion* will be seen on the south side of the moon, about the distance of 24 degrees. The *Dog Star* will be situated in a south easterly direction, from *Orion*, and is one of the largest in the firmament, and passes the meridian at midnight, in the month of January. It may be distinguished by its brilliancy and sparkling lustre. [This is the star, which, some people think, occasions the excessive heat of the summer months, as it then rises and sets with the sun. But this is a foolish notion.] A little westward of the moon may be seen that fine bright star, called *Bull's Eye*, situated in the constellation of the *Bull*. This also is a very large brilliant star. There is another large star called *Hydra's Heart*, situated in the constellation of the *Hydra*. It will appear in a south easterly direction, and will be very near the horizon. If the darkness is sufficiently great, the *Pleides*, called the *Seven Stars*, will be seen on the westerly side of the moon; but as they appear very small, they may not then be visible.

Several of the planetary bodies will be visible.—The planets *Mercury*, *Venus*, and *Mars*, will be seen

in a westerly direction from the moon. The other planets will then be in the lower hemisphere, and consequently cannot be visible to us, till after sun set.

This eclipse is such a novelty in the phenomena of nature, that a similar may not again take place for many succeeding ages.

This eclipse can be seen with most advantage by a good telescope; but as few persons are possessed of this instrument, perhaps the best substitute is one of the dark glasses of a common quadrant. By this means the sun can be viewed without any offence to the eye. As the sun at that time of the day will be very high in the heavens, it may be a convenience to view his image by a common looking glass, by which means he may be seen in any direction; and to look directly into the glass instead of the sun. In this case the darkened glass must be used as in the first instance. The management of this apparatus will not be difficult. Those who are possessed of a seaman's quadrant will find it extremely convenient in viewing the sun. By this instrument, the sun's image can be seen in any position, as shall please the observer.

A common spy glass may be made to answer extremely well instead of a telescope. The front glass must be closed by something to intercept the greatest part of the sun's rays, to take off the glare of light. Perhaps a piece of very thick green glass will do very well. But every one must try that which best answers his purpose.

Those who are not possessed of any of the contrivances above mentioned, must have recourse to a piece of common window glass, smoked on both sides sufficiently to prevent any injury to the eye. The glass should be several inches square to be used with good advantage, and it will be much more con-

venient than a small piece. The smoke of a common lamp is probably the best for this purpose, as the glass will not be so liable to crack.

## CONCERNING THE CAUSES OF ECLIPSES,

*And the manner in which they are produced.*

IN the less enlightened ages of the world, the eclipses of the sun and moon were regarded with surprize and consternation, and as intimations of divine displeasure. Amongst many of the ancients, they were considered as the harbingers of disastrous events, and as indications of some revolution in the physical system of things. But thanks to the progression of science, that whilst we are exempted from the slavery of superstition, we are enabled to predict them with certainty, point out the causes of their aspects, and the period of their return.

Eclipses are caused by the Earth, the Sun, and the Moon. The Sun can be eclipsed *only* at the *Change*, and the Moon can be eclipsed *only* at the *Full*. But the Sun is not eclipsed at *every* Change, nor the Moon at *every* Full, although she changes and fulls every month in the year. The reason of this we shall soon explain.

Every body that is exposed to the sun is enlightened by that luminary, and casts a shadow behind it, towards that part of space which is opposite the sun. The truth of this observation may be realized on numerous occasions. At the rising of the sun, the shadows of all bodies are directed towards the west,



and at his setting, they are projected in a contrary direction. It is exactly so in the heavens: the earth throws a shadow behind it, so also does the moon. The observation is equally applicable to the planetary bodies; but they are too remote ever to eclipse the sun, or to be eclipsed by the earth's shadow.

If the Earth was a body as *large* as the Sun, the shadow of the former would be in the form of a cylinder, that is, of equal dimensions in every part. If the earth was *larger* than the sun, its shadow would increase in size, and spread, and would cover almost half of the visible heavens. But as neither of these is the figure of the earth's shadow, we may justly conclude that the sun is the largest, and that the shadow, at a certain distance, converges to a point. Now, as this is demonstrably certain, it is evident that the sun is vastly larger than the earth; since it is well known, that if the earth could be viewed from the sun, it would dwindle into the humble aspect of a solitary star, and sometimes would be quite invisible. The point where the earth's shadow terminates, is found by calculation to be about three times the distance of the moon; but its distance is continually altering, according as the earth approaches or recedes from the sun. These truths afford us some idea of the immensity of creation; and objects which we denominate large, are nothing when placed in comparison to a universe whose extent is commensurate with infinity.

As we have proved from the above reasoning, that the earth is a much smaller body than the sun, it is easy also, from the same arguments, to prove that the moon is less than the sun. It also can be proved that the moon is much smaller than the earth.

The moon's diameter is found to be 2170 miles; and if the sun was not larger than the moon, the dark

shadow of the latter would be 2170 miles, in diameter, that is, as large as the moon herself, which is contrary to facts; for in any total eclipse of the sun, the moon's dark shadow never covers a spot on the earth's surface more than 200 miles, and generally much less; and in most cases there is no dark shadow, the moon's penumbra\* being the only shade which obscures the sun. Therefore, "the moon's small distance from the earth, and the shortness of her shadow, prove that she is much less than the sun."

In order to familiarize the preceding illustrations, we will have recourse to a very simple experiment. Let us provide ourselves with a common wooden ball, of about two inches in diameter. If we suspend this ball from a string, and expose it to the light of the sun, we shall find that it throws a shadow behind it, and that this shade is lessened at a greater distance from the ball. Now this could not be the case, if the ball was larger than the sun; if it was, its shadow must increase in size, and spread over a greater space. To realize the truth of this observation, let the experiment be repeated with a candle in a large room. Here we shall find, that as the ball approaches the candle, its shadow will increase its dimensions, and at a small distance, will cover almost one side of the room: this is perfectly plain.

As we find, from uniform experience, that the earth's shadow is round, we may justly infer that the earth itself is globular; otherwise its shadow could not be of that figure. It is true we cannot see the curvature of this shadow, but at the time of a lunar eclipse; and on such occasions its circular form may easily be distinguished on the face of the moon.

Before we proceed any farther into the causes of

\* The moon's penumbra is explained in a note, page 10.

eclipses, it may be proper to explain some particulars relative to the sun and moon, that we may the more readily comprehend how the sun is *sometimes* eclipsed by the moon, at the *Change*, and at the *Full* the moon is *sometimes* eclipsed by the earth's shadow.

To make this matter plain, it will be proper to follow the moon in her monthly progress round the earth, that we may see the natural causes which must concur to produce eclipses of the sun and moon.

Whilst the sun appears to make a revolution round the earth once a year,\* the moon describes a revolution every month. The consequence of these motions must be, that the moon will *pass* by the sun every month. This we call the *change* of the moon, and at that time she is invisible, because her dark side is turned towards the earth. As she passes from the *change*, she removes to the eastward of the sun, and sets in the evening after that luminary, and appears in the west, in the form of a bow, with a small edge of light. As she progresses in her celestial course, she increases her distance from the sun, till she arrives at her *first quarter*, at which time she passes the meridian about six in the evening, and appears in the form of a half circle. From the *first quarter*, she increases her face, till she arrives at the *full*. She is then *nearly* opposite the sun, appears like a full orb, and rises in the east whilst the sun is setting in the west. From the *full*, she decreases, until her *last*

\* There is another apparent motion in the sun, which is his diurnal revolution, from east to west, in the space of 24 hours. A little observation will convince us, that this revolution is not confined to the sun, but is common to the whole firmament. It is scarcely necessary to remark that these motions arise entirely from the earth's velocity round its own axis; and that this revolution occasions the continual succession of day and night. It is from this cause that the sun and moon, and all the heavenly bodies, rise and set every twenty four hours.

*quarter*; she then rises about midnight, appears half enlightened as before, and passes the meridian about six in the morning. From the *last quarter*, she continues to decrease, until she arrives at the subsequent *change*; she then rises and sets with the sun, and becomes invisible.

As we have followed the moon throughout her monthly course, we plainly see that during *one* revolution she must pass near the sun at the *change*; and near the earth's shadow at the *full*; and that her various aspects of increase and decrease, arise entirely from her position with respect to the sun and the earth; and we from hence infer, that the light of the moon is not her own, but the light of the sun reflected by her dark body.

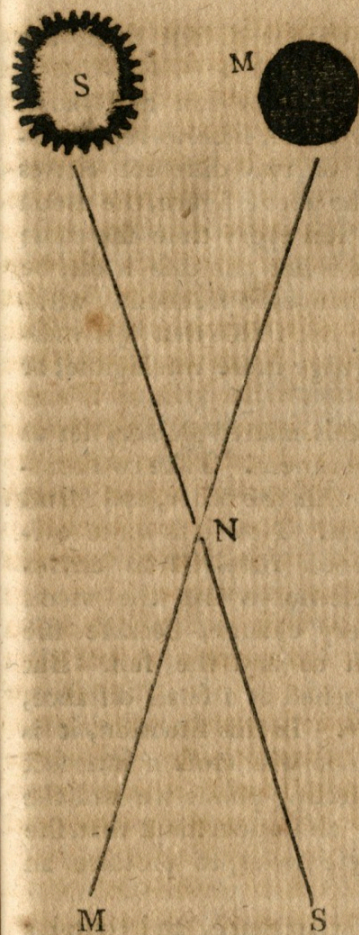
Although the moon, as seen from the earth, assumes different degrees of brilliancy and figure, yet we are to remember that one half is always enlightened by the sun; but it is directed towards us, only at the full; she then shows her whole enlightened face to our view.

After the preceding explanation, the question will arise, Why have we not eclipses of the sun and moon every month, since the moon must pass *near* the sun at every *change*, and at every *full* she must pass *near* the earth's shadow? In reply to this question, it may be proper to observe, that all this would happen, if the two luminaries revolved *exactly* in the same part of the heavens, in one common circle. In this case, the moon would pass directly over the sun at every *change*; and at every *full* she would pass through the centre of the earth's shadow, and be totally eclipsed for almost two hours. Consequently, under these circumstances, there would be two eclipses every month in the year; one of the sun, and one of the moon; and sometimes three.

Now as the earth is continually revolving round the sun,\* and as this revolution is completed in the space of twelve months, the sun at the same time seems to make a circuit round the earth once a year; since, as it regards this particular, appearances are the same, whether it is the sun or the earth that moves. This circle, which the sun *appears* to describe in the heavens, is called the Ecliptic, or the sun's apparent annual path in the heavens. Now whilst the sun appears to move in this circle continually from West to East, by his annual motion, the moon, at the same time, performs her revolution in the space of 27 days, 7 hours, and 43 minutes, as determined by repeated observations.† From this explanation, it is easy to perceive, that if the sun and moon moved *exactly* in one common circle, as seen from the earth, that in every revolution she would pass directly over the sun, and consequently produce an eclipse. But that if the moon moves in a path which is not *exactly* in a line with the sun's, she may frequently pass the sun at the *change* without intercepting any part of his body. What we have only supposed, really takes place in nature. For the moon's path crosses the sun's in an oblique direction, like two lines intersecting each other. Perhaps this may be illustrated by a figure.

\* If the earth's distance from the sun is 95 millions of miles, and it completes its revolution in twelve months, it is certain that it must move 67 thousand miles every hour.

† Whilst the moon is making a revolution round the earth from west to east, the sun apparently is moving the same way. From this cause the moon must make something more than one complete revolution to get round to the next *change*. The time which usually intervenes between any two new moons, is 29 days, 12 hours, and 44 minutes.



The two lines S. S. and M. M. represent two circles viewed edgeways; and such is the appearance of any circle when seen in that position. The line S. S. represents the path which the sun appears to describe in twelve months. The line M. M. represents the moon's path round the earth, which she performs in one month. It is evident that these two circles cross each other in one point at N. and this point is called the moon's *Nodes*. Now as the sun always keeps in the circle S. S. and the moon in the circle M. M. it is easy to see, that when the moon *changes* near the sun's path, she must eclipse him to some part of the earth; and this effect cannot be produced without the *Change* happens near the *Node* N. and this *Node* is then nearly in a direct line between us and the sun. But when the moon *changes* at some considerable distance from the point N. she cannot appear to touch any part of the sun, that is, cannot produce an eclipse, because, in such cases, she will pass either to the northward or southward of the sun. This circumstance is represented in the

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above figure, where she is too far distant from the sun, to intercept any part of his body.

Now it is very plain, that if the sun and moon moved in one and the same circle, such as represented in the line S. S. instead of two different circles crossing each other, as in the above figure, the moon would pass *directly* over the sun every time she came to the *Change*. But as this is not the case, it can be no wonder that the moon changes so frequently without eclipsing the sun. I do not think that this matter can be explained in language more intelligible, or illustrations more familiar.

If it be possible to make this matter plainer, let us make the following easy experiment. Take two common hoops, and place one within the other, and thrust a wire directly through them. Now it is quite evident, that if the sun and moon revolved in circles situated to each other as these hoops are, the moon would eclipse the sun at every change, because she would pass directly between us and the sun. But suppose the hoops to be opened at a small distance, so as to incline to each other. In this situation, it is easy to conceive, that one hoop will cross or intersect the other; and these intersecting points we call the moon's nodes: and we may also understand that she must change near one of these nodes, to produce an eclipse.

As this article is of some importance, and contains the substance of the whole subject, it may be useful to have recourse to farther illustration from experiment, that the mind may have a perfect comprehension of the idea which we wish to enforce; and it is hoped, that the repetition so far from being burdensome, will rather please; and instead of introducing obscurity, will give the reader a full display of this important subject.

Let a person place himself in the centre of a very large room, and near the opposite wall, to fix a candle exactly of the same height with his eye. In this situation, let a second person take the suspended ball, mentioned in a prior experiment, and, at the distance of 5 or 6 feet, move it round the head of the other, exactly of the same height with his eye, and the candle. The obvious result of this experiment is, that in every revolution of the wooden ball it will conceal the candle to the central observer, and to him the candle will be eclipsed. Let the ball be moved exactly half round. It is then opposite the candle, and must pass through the shadow made by the observer's head, and must be totally eclipsed. After this let the experiment be repeated in such a manner, that the moving ball in every revolution may rise and fall gradually. In this case it may pass the candle without intercepting it; and may pass near the shadow without touching it. Here the candle may represent the sun, the ball the moon, and the person standing in the centre, an observer on the earth's surface. From hence we may infer, that it is the oblique direction in which the moon moves that prevents her from eclipsing the sun at every change, or passing through the earth's shadow at every full.

If the sun and moon were equally distant from the earth, an eclipse of the sun would have the same appearance to all parts of the earth. But the sun is so remote, when compared with the moon's distance, that there is a great variety in the same eclipse, as seen from different places. And notwithstanding the moon is so very small, when compared with the bulk of the sun, yet she is so much nearer, that she usually appears as large as the sun, and sometimes larger. To familiarize this idea, let us place ourselves on Beacon Hill, and take a view of Boston light house. In this

situation let us take a dollar and place it before our eyes at arm's length. This dollar, though small, appears sufficiently large to conceal the light house, and render it invisible. This matter is so plain, that it requires no farther explanation, than to observe, that the distance of objects has great effect in increasing or diminishing their apparent magnitudes; and that a small object, which is quite near, may appear large enough to obscure another of a thousand times its magnitude, at a remote distance. Now whilst the person who has the dollar in his hand, is deprived of his view by the intervention of that dollar, a man standing at the right or left has an uninterrupted view of the light house, and to him that object is not eclipsed. These observations are equally applicable to bodies in the heavens; only with this difference, that the experiment is there exhibited on a larger scale.

That these facts may be perfectly understood and realized, it may be useful to make another experiment, which will exemplify the matter to a demonstration. Let us provide ourselves with two circular cards, about 4 inches in diameter, cut from a piece of common paste board; one of which must be blackened to represent the moon at the *Change*, the other to represent the sun, which may be ornamented with red paint, to make the result more sensible. Place the one which represents the moon, over the other that represents the sun, in the manner represented in fig. 1 of the frontispiece, and pin them both against the wall, in a large room, of the same height with the eye, the moon being outside. Now these cards will have exactly the same appearance when viewed from one part of the room as the other, which is a direct proof, that if the sun and moon were of equal magnitudes, and were equally distant

from the earth, an eclipse of the sun would appear the same as viewed from different places.

Hoping that repetition will not become tedious, we will vary this experiment in the following manner: take the one which represents the sun, and fix it against the wall as before, and place the other which represents the moon about 8 feet distant. From this variation we shall plainly see, that the two cards will *not* appear the same as viewed from all parts of the room; and that in some situations they will appear exactly central; but if we remove to the right or left, part of the sun will be visible, and in some positions will be seen without any interruption. This experiment, though trifling and simple, is an exact representation of what takes place in the heavens; and is a direct proof of what was advanced in the beginning of the preceding paragraph. There are a variety of methods by which these things may be rendered plain and conspicuous, without the assistance of philosophy or the aid of mathematicks.\*

These facts serve to explain, why, at the approaching great eclipse, the sun will be totally concealed at Boston, and at the very same instant, a part or the whole of his body will appear at many other places.

\* Although the sun and moon, are globular bodies, yet as seen from the earth, they appear like circular plates, and such would be the appearance of the earth if viewed from the moon; because, when objects are very remote, the convexity of their surfaces is insensible to the eye. If the moon was in reality a circular plane as she appears to be, she would be invisible from the *change* to the *first quarter*, and from the *last quarter* to the *change*.

When the moon is viewed by a good telescope, the convexity of her surface is very discernible; and on those occasions the central parts are plainly the most prominent, because, by this instrument, the object appears as much nearer as it is magnified by the telescope; for the magnifying power in a measure corrects the misrepresentation of the senses, and makes the object appear of its true figure.

But if the sun and moon were equally distant, their relative position would be exactly the same, whether viewed from London, or the Cape of Good Hope, and an eclipse would appear the same in both places. But as the sun's distance exceeds the moon's almost 400 times, we cannot wonder that in shifting our places on the earth's surface, the moon may conceal or pass the sun, according to our position with respect to the two bodies.

In estimating distances upon the earth's surface, we judge from some rule of comparison, or by referring the distance to some known measure. By these means, we may, in some cases, determine with a degree of accuracy, the distances of particular objects. But beyond certain limits our judgment fails us, and all rules of comparison are useless. This is evident by our referring every body in the firmament at an equal distance; although it is well known that some celestial bodies are millions of miles beyond others. And if we could translate ourselves to that part of space which seems to be the limits of creation, we should still find beyond us, "a boundless ocean, of which we could have no idea;" and suns and worlds would rise in succession in endless profusion.\*

\* Since the discovery of the telescope, astronomy has attained a greater degree of perfection than was ever expected before the invention of that instrument. It is from this discovery that astronomical knowledge has been so surprizingly increased, and has laid open a field as wonderful as it is infinite. The latest improvement in this instrument is that of Dr. Herschel. By his inquiries he has furnished us with a more correct description of the universe, since, by his telescope, he was necessary to regions vastly beyond the limits of former observations. The prospect which was opened to him affords us some idea of the extent of space and the immensity of creation. The milky way, which appears to the naked eye as a confused mass of scattered light, is plainly represented by the telescope, as so many stars, whose combined lustre creates the appearance which it usually assumes; their distances being so

Before we dismiss this subject it may be proper to introduce one or two observations which have a close relation to our present discussions. As the moon revolves round the earth every month, she is once at her *greatest* distance; this we call the moon's *apogee*; and also at her *least* distance; this is called her *perigee*. In the first case she appears *smallest*, because she is then most remote from the earth's centre: in the latter case she appears *largest*, because she is then nearest the earth: all which is very natural. The same observations are applicable to the sun. As the earth performs its revolution round that luminary, in the space of twelve months, it is once at its *greatest* distance, and once at its *least*. The two opposite seasons of the year, when the sun appears in these points are January and July. In the first case the earth makes its nearest approach to the sun. This is evident by the sun appearing so much larger than usual; and in the month of July he is most remote; for at that season he appears smaller than at any other month in the year. These facts may be contrary to the common notions of mankind, since we have cold weather in January and warm in July. But this difference arises from the obliquity of the sun's rays in one case, and their perpendicularity in the other. In the winter, the sun is low, and continues but a little time above the horizon; and his rays are more dissipated, and cannot act so forcibly. But in the summer months the sun rises high, and continues longer above the horizon, and his rays fall nearly perpendicular upon the earth's surface. It is from the concurrence of these

amazingly great, that the unassisted eye cannot distinguish one from the other. There are many parts of the heavens which seem like a blank space to the naked sight; but when viewed with a telescope appear crowded with bodies as brilliant as they are glorious.

two circumstances that July is warmer than December, and occasions the excessive heat which prevails at that season.\*

As we have progressed thus far in this subject, it may be proper to dismiss it for the present, and proceed to an explanation of *Lunar Eclipses*, which being much more simple may be understood with less trouble.

From what has been illustrated in the preceding pages, it is plain, that an eclipse of the moon can happen *only* at the time she fulls; and the reason why she is not eclipsed at *every full* remains now to be explained.

Although eclipses of the sun and moon are expressed by the same word; yet there is an essential difference, since an eclipse of the sun is nothing more than an interception of his light by the dark body of the moon; but that an eclipse of the moon is a matter of reality, as she is really deprived of her light by passing through the earth's dark shadow.

Although the moon fulls or is *nearly* opposite the sun every month in the year; and must, at the time of her opposition, pass in the neighborhood of the earth's shadow; yet in consequence of the obliquity of her orbit, she may full so far to the northward or

\* It may be proper to observe, that in addition to the causes above mentioned, there is another circumstance which greatly contributes to the heat of summer: the earth at this season imbibes a greater proportion of the sun's rays; in consequence of which, it becomes amazingly heated, and the air, contiguous to the surface, is greatly increased in temperature accordingly.

It is a curious fact which is known to exist in all warm climates, in the hottest weather when the air, at the earth's surface, is extremely uncomfortable, that at the height of two or three miles, the cold is sufficient to consolidate water into ice. The appearance of clouds is a proof that the upper regions of the air are much colder than near the earth's surface; and this difference is the greatest in the summer months.

southward of the shadow, that she cannot be eclipsed. It was before explained, that if the two luminaries were confined to one and the same circle, as seen from the earth, the sun would inevitably be eclipsed every time that the moon passed the *change*, because in such cases, she would be interposed between us and the sun. This representation applies equally to eclipses of the moon, since if they were both confined to one path in the heavens, she would always at the full, pass through the centre of the earth's shadow, and be totally eclipsed for almost two hours. But as the paths of the two luminaries separate obliquely, like two hoops crossing each other; it is plain, that a full moon may happen at such a distance from the shadow, that there can be no eclipse. But that when she approaches the shadow sufficiently near to pass through any part of it, she must inevitably be eclipsed more or less, according to her distance from the centre of the shadow. In some cases only part of her body will enter the shadow, and she appears eclipsed on one side. This we call a partial eclipse of the moon; but if she passes her whole body within the shadow she will be totally eclipsed; and the duration of total darkness will depend upon the depth of shadow through which she has to pass.

Therefore, in calculating an eclipse of the moon, we must find the dimensions of that part of the shadow which she passes through at the time she fulls, together with her velocity across the shadow. These are the essentials in calculating an eclipse of the moon. But the process of the calculation cannot be introduced in a tract of such confined limits as the present.

The earth's shadow is always directly opposite the sun. Consequently, if the moon did always full *exactly* opposite the sun, she would be eclipsed in every

month. But the moon *generally* fulls a little without the earth's shadow, and passes to the northward or southward of it; in which case she must full without being eclipsed.

To explain this matter a little farther by experiment, let us take a ball of two inches in diameter, and suspend it by a string, from the ceiling, between the wall and a candle, both being equally high from the floor; the ball at the distance of 3 feet, and the candle at the distance of 9 or 10 feet, from the wall. Under these circumstances the ball will throw its shadow on the wall, and any body placed within that shadow, will be eclipsed from the light of the candle.

Whilst the ball and candle retain their position, let us suspend a marble from a piece of thread, and move it round the wooden ball, exactly of the same height as the candle. The marble must complete a revolution round the wooden ball, and be kept of the same height throughout its circuit. When it comes to be in opposition to the candle, it must pass through the centre of the shadow made by the wooden ball, and be totally eclipsed. As it is moved farther on, it will quit the shadow, and the eclipse will end. Now repeat the experiment in such a manner, that the marble, in passing its *full* or *opposition*, may rise above, or fall below the shadow, without touching it: in such case, it will full without being eclipsed. Here the candle may represent the sun, the wooden ball the earth, with its shadow, and the moving marble the moon, making her monthly revolution round the earth; and its passing through the shadow may represent a total eclipse of the moon.

From this experiment it is evident, that if the sun and moon moved in one circle, as seen from the earth, that is, both on the same level, that the moon would inevitably be eclipsed at every *full*; because, on these

occasions, she would pass through the earth's shadow. But as this is not the case, it is only in particular circumstances that her eclipses can happen.

The appearance of the moon in a total eclipse has been likened to tarnished copper. This, by different persons has been differently explained; and by them referred to various causes. A probable cause is the scattered light of the heavens, which is dissipated in every direction, from the numberless stars which compose the firmament. Sometimes the moon is invisible in a total eclipse, even in a clear sky, especially when he is nearest the earth, and passes through the centre of its shadow.

To recapitulate what has been explained upon the subject of eclipses, we may make the following inferences: that an eclipse of the sun is nothing more than an interception of his light, by the dark body of the moon; that such an obscuration can happen *only* at the *change*, and then *only* in such circumstances as have been mentioned. That an eclipse of the moon is occasioned by her passage through the earth's shadow; that such an eclipse must happen at the full; and the reason why she is *not* eclipsed at *every* full has already been sufficiently explained.

As the moon's motion in her orbit is from west to east, an eclipse of the sun generally begins on his westerly edge; sometimes on the north, and sometimes on the south side. This depends on a variety of circumstances, such as the time of day, the place from which the eclipse is viewed, &c. But an eclipse of the moon begins on her easterly edge; because, as her progressive motion is continually in an easterly direction, she must necessarily first touch the shadow on the westerly side, by which means the obscurity commences on her easterly limb.



## CONCLUSIVE OBSERVATIONS.

“Eclipses of the sun are more frequent than those of the moon; but we have more visible eclipses of the moon than of the sun, because a lunar eclipse is seen from all those places on the earth which are directed towards her.” Consequently an eclipse of the moon may be seen by one half of the world at the same time. But an eclipse of the sun can be seen *only* at those places, which lie in the passage of the moon's shadow. It is much like a cloud passing over the sun, whilst he is visible to the adjacent country, and the sun may be totally eclipsed at one place, and not the least obscurity be seen in another.

“The number of eclipses in any year cannot be *less* than *two*, nor *more* than *seven*; the most usual number is four, and it is very rare to have more than six.” When there are only two eclipses in a year, they are always both of the sun; and when there are seven, four are of the sun, and three of the moon.

A total eclipse of the sun can never happen at any time and place without the moon *then* appears larger than the sun. It must also be attended with a concurrence of many other circumstances; so that two total solar eclipses may not happen at the same place for many centuries. There are upon record accounts of such eclipses which have been seen in different countries, and in different ages of the world.

“In astronomy, eclipses of the moon are of great use in ascertaining the periods of her motions, especially such eclipses as are observed to be alike in all circumstances, and have long intervals of time between them. In geography, the longitude of places may be found by eclipses of the moon. In chronology, both solar and lunar eclipses serve to determine the time of any past event: for there are so many particulars observable in every eclipse, with respect

to its quantity, the places where it is visible, if of the sun, and the time of the day or night, that it is impossible there can be two solar eclipses, in the course of many ages, which are exactly alike in all circumstances.”

From what has been explained upon the subject of eclipses in the preceding pages, we may plainly see that every event in nature has a natural cause; and instead of being alarmed by groundless apprehensions, we must be convinced that it is all the consistent result of a well regulated frame; and that no operation in the visible system, however novel or incomprehensible to us, is any digression from that established harmony which prevails in every part. It cannot be expected, that beings situated as we are, can have a perfect knowledge of the design of creation. There are effects produced in the heavens and in the earth, whose origin we cannot trace, and whose causes we cannot explore.

It is the advantage of the present age, that genius has been directed to its proper channel; and that it has involved in its progress the perfection of every art, the improvement of every science; and which has made a delightful transition in the condition of society, and in the face of things. As the common appearances in nature can generally be traced to natural and rational causes, we have reason to be thankful for the improvements and discoveries which have been made in universal knowledge; and which form a conspicuous contrast between the philosophy of the present day, and the darkness of some of the preceding ages. And as our inquiries have hitherto been so successful, there is reason to hope and believe, that the progress of science in the present period will be such, that posterity will rise up, and realize the improvements of the nineteenth century.

*The following are some of the remarkable eclipses which have been seen in New England within thirty years.*

IN the year 1778, June 24th, there was a great eclipse of the sun. As seen from Boston it was about 11 digits, the north side of the sun being visible in the middle of the eclipse. Probably many persons now living can remember this remarkable eclipse, as it happened four days before the Monmouth battle. It was *total* in some parts of Connecticut, probably at New London. This is one of the largest eclipses which has happened within the last hundred years.

In the year 1780, October 27, there was another great eclipse. At Boston, it was about 10 digits; but in some of the more northern towns it was much greater, and almost total.

In the year 1791, April 3d, there was another extraordinary eclipse, being almost central at Boston, and appearing like a luminous ring. This also is well remembered by many persons. The last eclipse of the sun, which was visible to us, was June 26, 1805, at sun set.

In the year 1809, April 14, there will be another eclipse of the sun, about three digits at Boston. It is the periodical return of the one which happened April 3d, 1791.

In 1811, Sept. 17, another large eclipse may be expected, with an obscurity of 10 digits. It will begin between 12 and 1 o'clock, and end about 4, in the afternoon; its whole duration will be more than 3 hours; and in some parts of New England it will appear like a luminous ring. This eclipse is one of the greatest which has happened for many years; and at the time will occasion much gloom and obscurity.

In the year 1808, there will be two total eclipses of the moon, both of which will be visible to us; also, two smaller eclipses in the year 1809.

*A Catalogue of some of the most remarkable Eclipses of the Sun, which have been seen at different times, and in different places, before and since the Christian Era.*

Before Christ.	Eclipses of the Sun seen at	Months and Days.	Quantity of the Eclipse.
431	Athens	August 3d.	11 Digits*
424	do	March 20	9 do
404	do	September 2	8 1-2 do
403	Pekin	August 28	10 1-2 do
394	Gnide	August 13	11 do
364	Thebes	July 12	6 do
340	Zant	September 14	9 do
310	Sicily Island	August 14	10 1-2 do
217	Sardinia	February 11	9 do
190	Rome	March 13	11 do
188	do	July 16	10 1-2 do
104	do	July 18	11 3-4 do
60	Gibraltar	March 16	Central
54	Canton	May 9	Total
51	Rome	March 7	9 Digits
36	do	May 19	6 1-2 do
29	Canton	January 5	12 do
28	Pekin	June 18	Total
26	Canton	October 23	11 1-4 Digits
2	do	February 1	11 1-2 do
Aft.			
Ch'ft			
1	Pekin	June 10	11 1-2 Digits
27	Canton	July 22	Total
30	do	November 13	10 1-2 Digits
49	Pekin	May 20	10 do
53	Canton	March 8	11 do
237	Bologna	April 12	Total
290	Carthage	May 15	11 Digits

\* A Digit is a twelfth part of the diameter of the sun or moon.

After Christ.	Eclipses of the Sun seen at	Months and Days.	Quantity of the Eclipse.
334	Toledo	July 17	Central
348	Constantinople	October 8	8 Digits
484	do	January 13	10 do
540	London	June 19	8 do
608	Paris	August 12	11 1-3
644	do	November 5	10 do
718	Constantinople	June 3	Total
753	England	June 8	10 1-2 Digits
809	Paris	July 15	8 do
810	do	November 30	Total
812	Constantinople	May 14	9 Digits
813	Cappadocia	May 3	10 1-2 do
1016	Nimeguen	November 16	Total
1017	do	October 22	6 Digits
1023	London	January 23	11 do
1086	Constantinople	February 16	Total
1113	Jerusalem	March 18	9 Digits
1124	London	August 10	10 do
1191	England	June 23	11 1-2 do
1194	London	April 22	6 1-2 do
1230	Naples	May 13	Total
1261	Vienna	March 31	9 Digits
1415	Wittemburg	June 6	Total
1433	do	June 17	Total
1438	do	September 18	8 Digits

THE END.