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On some remarkable crystals of snow

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quired distance from the wired string, the other end being stuck fast in the ground. If the electric fire strikes two inches over the dry silken cord, (and it will sometimes strike a yard,) it would not be safe to approach it; and no man could hold the string when it strikes over one inch of the silk, or, which is the same thing, through the air.

After the electrical state of the string has been ascertained, the wire may be slid away from it as far as possible (the silk ought never to be less than two yards long). The other end is then to be taken out of the ground and attached to the apparatus for experiment. The wire is again slid up to the wired string, and left there during the time the experiments are carrying on.

The only method of getting the kite down during an intense electrization of the string, with safety to the experimenter, is to unfasten the silken cord from its hold and let all go: the kite falls. I have frequently been annoyed, whilst holding the kite-string during hot hazy days when no cloud was visible, by a rapid succession of discharges, from which I had no other means of escape than by quitting the string and letting the kite fall. The same thing sometimes happens in cold dense fogs in the winter. I have experienced these rattling or tremulous shocks when the kite has not been more than 30 yards from the ground, and the wired string at the same time touching it. Hence great quantities of the fluid must necessarily pass into the ground directly through the wire, in addition to that which produced the shocks.

The publication of these particulars may possibly prevent some inexperienced electrician from receiving a death-blow from his kite-string.

Young persons who are fond of kite-flying should also be cautious not to have their kites up during thunder storms, as it is possible that a wet string may transmit a violent discharge, from which a serious accident might occur.

Artillery Place, Woolwich, July 23, 1834.

W. SURGEON.

ON SOME REMARKABLE CRYSTALS OF SNOW. BY W. THOMPSON,
ESQ., V.P. BELFAST NAT. HIST. SOC.

On the 22nd of March 1833, when travelling outside a stage-coach from London to Shrewsbury, and near to Daventry, the day being up to this time mild and calm, (the weather for some weeks previously had been excessively cold, with prevalent easterly and north-easterly winds,) snow of the loose flaky kind, common to the climate, began to fall, but mingled with it there appeared beautifully delicate lamellar crystals, of uniform transparency, having a spherical nucleus, from which sprang 6 and 12 radii most exquisitely formed, all the rays on each species being equal, and not in a single instance deviating from the regularity of geometrical proportion, as has on some occasions been observed. By far the greater number of these were of the former species, "having 6 points radiating from a centre." The figures 20 and 94 in the plates of snow crystals in Scoresby's "Arctic Regions" represent both these crystals, the lines

exhibited as extending from the centre of the latter not having been however visible to the naked eye. These stellate crystals, varying from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 lines in extreme diameter, continued to fall for nearly half an hour, and as they retained their form for a considerable time, proved highly interesting and attractive. I much regretted that I was so circumstanced as to be unable to ascertain the state of the barometer and thermometer; the wind, however, was northerly with a point of east. Snow continued to fall until the coach reached Shrewsbury; and in passing through Wales the next day, which was remarkably fine, I observed that it had fallen there in every direction. Arriving in Ireland on the 24th, I remarked that the snow had also extended to that country, the Wicklow and Dublin mountains being covered with it.

In anticipation of it being thought singular that I have not before recorded the fall of these ice-crystals, it may be stated that I delayed in the hope that some one better circumstanced for precise investigation had noticed the occurrence, and would have written on the subject of it. In expectation of this I have looked over the various British periodicals since published, and nothing having appeared concerning it, I presume it to be better that even the present imperfect account should be recorded than none at all.

WM. THOMPSON.

OBITUARY:—PROFESSOR HARDING.

We have to record the death of Professor Harding of the University Göttingen, an eminent astronomer, whose name will go down to posterity with the important discovery of the planet Juno, which it was his good fortune to make in 1804. He was descended from a highly respectable English Catholic family. One of his ancestors left England on account of his religion, and settled in Germany, where the family afterwards became Protestants. He was born at Lauenburg, the principal town of the then Hanoverian, now Danish duchy of Lauenburg, and was originally intended for the church; but after his academical studies, he became tutor to the son of the celebrated astronomer Schröter, and this circumstance led him to the study of practical astronomy, to which he afterwards exclusively devoted his whole life. After having been several years astronomical assistant to Schröter, he accepted in 1805 a Professorship of Astronomy at Göttingen, which he retained till his death.

Professor Harding was a most active and industrious practical astronomer, whose observations have, in no small degree, enlarged our knowledge of the heavenly bodies. He rendered a very important service to astronomy by compiling accurate maps of those parts of the heavens in which planets may be expected to appear. The perseverance and careful attention with which he mastered the heavens during several years in the prosecution of this work, were rewarded by the brilliant discovery above alluded to. He was a very amiable man, whose loss is much deplored by his numerous friends and colleagues in the university. The grief at the loss of his daughter, an only child, 14 years old, who died last year, terminated his days on the 31st of August last, at the age of about 70 years.