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ART. VI.—NEW DOORS IN THE TEMPLE OF TRUTH.

THE FIRMAMENT.

WE use the word "ether" in two different meanings. The first, as name of a colourless liquid, the vapour of which is greatly helpful in allaying pain; the second, as that substance, whatever it may be, supposed to fill all space—the sky, the expanse of heaven, "the spacious firmament on high."

"Firmament" conveys the meaning of solidity, but the original Hebrew word rather means extension with great tenuity. No one knows what the substance is, but it is assumed to be the means of bridging the tremendous void which everywhere separates suns and systems from their planets, and from the other constellations. It is with regard to this void—not really a void at all—that experiment, invention, electrical advance in our own time, is opening new doors in the Temple of Truth. The blue expanse, "over-spangled with a million of little eyes," is a dream of beauty within dream. "Most dreams are more slight than the mere nothings that engender them;" but the dreams of science as to the all-encircling expanse are becoming realities; and our religious conceptions receive scientific and grand explanations; their full meaning will be a startling light to coming generations.

If we take the atmosphere as that lower part of the firmament nearer to us, and the ether more specially the upper, "Waters above the firmament and waters below" may be understood as water in vapour extending to the heights, and water ready to descend in rain from the clouds near to the earth.

A great early teacher asks, "Hast thou with Him spread out the sky, which is strong, and as a molten looking-glass?" (Job xxxvii. 18).

Molten does not mean firm, but fluid; scientific men suggest that the spaces of the universe, those separating the stars and the vaster sphere, are occupied by a marvellous transparent fluid. It is thought to have density and rigidity, is colourless, and so surpassing in tenuity that it pierces all combinations of matter, and surrounds, and possibly fuses, or is in every atom. No part of the universe, however small or vast, is free from it, there is no break in the continuity. A touch on any part will send a quiver through the whole; the atoms are said not to quiver, the quiver runs through them. Verily, truth surpasses the flights of fiction!

PREBENDARY REYNOLDS.