

the solar calendar of the Mexicans, and the lunar calendar of the Greeks), contain the only record now extant of discoveries which must have required a great deal of observation, of thought, and probably of time. The later improvements in calendars, which take place when astronomical observation has been attentively pursued, are of little consequence to the history of science; for they are generally founded on astronomical determinations, and are posterior in time, and inferior in accuracy, to the knowledge on which they depend. But cycles of correction, which are both short and close to exactness, like that of Meton, may perhaps be the original form of the knowledge which they imply; and certainly require both accurate facts and sagacious arithmetical reasonings. The discovery of such a cycle must always have the appearance of a happy guess, like other discoveries of laws of nature. Beyond this point, the interest of the study of calendars, as bearing on our subject, ceases: they may be considered as belonging rather to Art than to Science; rather as an application of a part of our knowledge to the uses of life, than a means or an evidence of its extension.

#### *Sect. 6.—The Constellations.*

SOME tendency to consider the stars as formed into groups, is inevitable when men begin to attend to them; but how men were led to the fanciful system of names of Stars and of Constellations, which we find to have prevailed in early times, it is very difficult to determine. Single stars, and very close groups, as the Pleiades, were named in the time of Homer and Hesiod, and at a still earlier period, as we find in the book of Job.<sup>28</sup>

Two remarkable circumstances with respect to the Constellations are, first, that they appear in most cases to be arbitrary combinations; the artificial figures which are made to include the stars, not having any resemblance to their obvious configurations; and second, that these figures, in different countries, are so far similar, as to imply some communication. The arbitrary nature of these figures shows that they

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<sup>28</sup> Job xxxviii. 31. "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Chima (the Pleiades), or loose the bands of Kesil (Orion)? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth (Sirius) in his season? or canst thou guide Ash (or Aisch) (Arcturus) with his sons?"

And ix. 9. "Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south."

Dupuis, vi. 545, thinks that Aisch was *aîç*, the goat and kids. See Hyde, *Ulugh-Beigh*.