

“the photosphere,” is a sort of thing that three or four years ago we might be said to know nothing at all about; I mean as to its nature and constitution; but within that time a most wonderful discovery has been made by Mr Nasmyth. According to his observations, made with a very fine telescope of his own making, the bright surface of the sun consists of separate, insulated, individual objects or *things*, all nearly or exactly of one certain definite size and shape, which is more like that of a willow leaf, as he describes them, than anything else. These leaves or scales are not arranged in any order (as those on a butterfly’s wing are), but lie crossing one another in all directions, like what are called spills in the game of spillikins; except at the borders of a spot, where they point for the most part inwards towards the middle of the spot, presenting much the sort of appearance that the small leaves of some water-plants or seaweeds do at the edge of a deep hole of clear water. The exceedingly definite shape of these objects; their exact similarity one to another; and the way in which they lie across and athwart each other (except where they form a sort of bridge across a spot, in which case they seem to affect a common direction, that, namely, of the bridge itself),—all these characters seem quite repugnant to the notion of their being of a vaporous, a cloudy, or a fluid nature. Nothing remains but to consider them as separate and independent sheets, flakes, or scales, having some sort of solidity. And these flakes, be they what they may, and whatever may be said about the dashing of meteoric stones into the sun’s atmosphere, etc., are