

(41.) Shall we spread our wings for a farther flight—to the region of the *nebulæ*? For such an excursion we are hardly yet prepared. Our present reach extends, as we have seen, only to a very few of our nearest neighbours among the *stars*; a class of bodies which we have every reason to believe form with our own sun a system—to us a universe—but which, removed to the distance of the *nebulæ*, would appear perhaps as one of them. Moreover, it is not wings, but a resting-place for the sole of our foot that we want. If we knew in what orbit the sun itself is moving (for that it moves is certain, and with no trifling speed), and if human observations were to endure till it had completed half a circuit in that vast orbit—then indeed we should have established a new base line from whose extremities the *parallax* of the nearest nebula might become sensible. Failing this, we must rest content with such probable indications as we can glean from other sources.

(42.) There is one which can hardly fail to strike any one who does not reject altogether from his philosophy the consideration of design and purpose in the construction of the frame of nature. In their orbits round the sun, the earth and other planets carry round with them satellites retained in *their* orbits by gravitation to their primaries. These orbits, though very sensibly disturbed by the sun's attraction, are yet in no case so much so as to hazard in the smallest degree the stability of these miniature planetary systems, or in the lapse of even indefinite ages to produce any very material change in their relations to their primaries or to each other. The