

spans the sky under the name of the Milky Way, might be only a dense collection of stars too remote to be distinguished. This conjecture has been verified by the instruments of modern astronomers, and some speculations of a most remarkable kind have been formed in connexion with it. By the joint labours of the two Herschels, the sky has been "guaged" in all directions by the telescope, so as to ascertain the conditions of different parts with respect to the frequency of the stars. The result has been a conviction that, as the planets are parts of solar systems, so are solar systems parts of what may be called astral systems—that is, systems composed of a multitude of stars, bearing a certain relation to each other. The astral system to which we belong, is conceived to be of an oblong, flattish form, with a space wholly or comparatively vacant in the centre, while the extremity in one direction parts into two. The stars are most thickly sown in the outer parts of this vast ring, and these constitute the Milky Way. Our sun is believed to be placed in the southern portion of the ring, near its inner edge, so that we are presented with many more stars, and see the Milky Way much more clearly, in that direction, than towards the north, in which line our eye has