

**THE CELEBRATED "MOON
STORY,": ITS ORIGIN AND
INCIDENTS; WITH A MEMOIR OF
THE AUTHOR, AND AN APPENDIX**

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The Celebrated "Moon Story,"; Its Origin and Incidents; With a Memoir of the Author, and an Appendix by William N. Griggs

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WILLIAM N. GRIGGS

**THE CELEBRATED "MOON
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THE AUTHOR, AND AN APPENDIX**

Locke, Richard Adams

THE CELEBRATED

“MOON STORY,”

ITS

ORIGIN AND INCIDENTS;

WITH A

MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

AND

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING,

- I. AN AUTHENTIC DESCRIPTION OF THE MOON;
- II. A NEW THEORY OF THE LUNAR SURFACE,
IN RELATION TO THAT OF THE EARTH.

BY WILLIAM N. GRIGGS

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THE
"MOON STORY,"

IN
ORIGIN, INCIDENTS, &c.

CHAPTER I.

ITS ORIGIN

PRIOR to the conception of this remarkable and universally celebrated production, its author, Mr. RICHARD ADAMS LOCKE, had written several serial articles for the NEW YORK SUN, in which it originally appeared, that had proved eminently successful and popular. Among these were the "Memoirs," not more marvellous than true, "of Matthias the Prophet," which filled the whole civilized world with commingled wonder and indignation, at the debasing credulity and fanaticism created by the supernatural and impious pretensions of an insane but subtle impostor, which they strikingly revealed. Although almost every fact and statement contained in these "Memoirs" had been fully substantiated by the sworn evidence adduced on the trial of Matthias for the murder of Mr. Pearson, in Westchester county, New York, and had become familiar to the public through the daily and extended reports of the public

press; yet the new interest which they acquired in the superior and exciting narrative of Mr. LOCKE, caused not only an unprecedented demand for *The Sun*—then newly established—for which it was specially written, but insured a sale of the “Memoirs,” in a pamphlet form, to the extent of more than *forty thousand* copies, in a few weeks.

For this article, Messrs. DAY & WISNER, the originators and then proprietors of *The Sun*, paid the author \$150, with the offer of a similar sum for any contribution, of a popular tendency, which he might feel disposed to write. Shortly after this, Mr. WISNER sold out his interest in the paper to Mr. MORRIS Y. BEACH, brother-in-law of the other proprietor, and the offer was urgently renewed, in connection with several new features of enterprise then introduced into the management of the establishment. While cursorily speculating upon subjects of a sufficiently novel and interesting character to enhance and accelerate the already increasing popularity of the paper, upon the terms proposed, Mr. LOCKE's choice of the topic of his renowned “Moon Story” was determined in the following manner. His course of reading for many years having been almost exclusively scientific, he was perusing, in the summer of 1835, the volume of the “*Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal*” for 1826, when, at page 390, his attention was arrested by an article from the pen of Dr. THOMAS DICK, of Dundee, the voluminous

and piously speculative writer upon astronomy, upon the possibility of corresponding with the inhabitants of the moon, by means of symbols—immense stone diagrams!—erected upon the surface of the earth. The particular passage referred to is as follows:

“ Gruithuisen, in a conversation with the great continental astronomer, Gauss, after describing the regular figures he had discovered in the moon, spoke of the possibility of a correspondence with the lunar inhabitants. He brought to Gauss’s recollection the idea he had communicated many years ago to Zimmerman. Gauss answered that the plan of erecting a geometrical figure upon the plains of Siberia corresponded with his opinion, because, according to his view, a correspondence with the inhabitants of the moon could only be begun by means of such mathematical contemplations and ideas as we and they must have in common.”

This grave assumption, on the part of these sage astronomers, first, of the existence of inhabitants on the moon; secondly, of their possessing powers of vision, either natural or artificial, adequate to the perception of symbolical structures on the earth; thirdly, of their being rational creatures, capable “ of such mathematical contemplations and ideas as we and they must have in common;” and fourthly, of their being both competent and inclined to erect symbolical edifices in reply to those constructed for them upon the earth, and without which lunar an-

swers no correspondences could be conducted—all these solemnly assumed points were too irresistibly ludicrous to escape Mr. Locke's susceptible tendency to the burlesque, and proclaimed as they were in a scientific journal of high philosophical pretensions, he deemed them fair subjects of sedate and elaborate satire.

On referring to Dr. Dick's astronomical speculations, in his various popular works—his *Christian Philosopher*, *Celestial Scenery*, &c., Mr. Locke not only found this article in the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal* referred to and cited, with that peculiarly pious unction for which that writer is so pre-eminently distinguished, but expatiated and moralized upon as an embryo suggestion, worthy of the highest international consideration and policy. Thus, in his *Celestial Scenery*, in commenting upon the passage above quoted, Dr. Dick seriously remarks as follows :

“ Were the inhabitants of the moon to recognize such a figure, erected on an immense scale, as a signal of correspondence, they might, perhaps, erect a similar one in reply. But it is questionable whether the intention of such a signal would be recognized ; and our terrestrial sovereigns are too much engaged in plunder and warfare to think of spending their revenues in so costly an experiment ; and, therefore, it is likely that, for ages to come, we shall remain in ignorance of the genius of the lunar inhabit-

ants. Schemes, however, far more foolish and preposterous than the above, have been contrived and acted upon in every age of the world. The millions which are now wasted in the pursuits of mad ambition and destructive warfare might, with far greater propriety, be expended in erecting a large triangle or ellipsis of many miles in extent, in Siberia or any other country, which might, at the same time, accommodate thousands of inhabitants who are now roaming the deserts like the beasts of the forest."—p. 273.

It is unnecessary to analyze the manifold absurdity of these presuppositions and suggestions, in order to feel the pungency of its appeal to the risible emotions of every rational and scientific mind. It is only necessary to imagine a nation, or an alliance of nations, actually engaged in the work of building these immense stone diagrams, "triangles or ellipses, of many miles in extent," to open a correspondence with the inhabitants of the moon, and in patient confidence that they would build others in reply, in the absence of the slightest indication of evidence, either ocular or inductive, that any such inhabitants exist. If we could conceive it possible that the toil and treasure of any country could be appropriated to such a purpose, the only information concerning the moon that we could hope to gain from it would be a conviction of a greater degree of disturbing influence from that luminary, upon the minds of men, than is now ascribed to her; with the mitigating