

SCIENCE

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FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 1896.

REMARKS ON THE PROGRESS OF CELESTIAL MECHANICS SINCE THE MIDDLE OF THE CENTURY.*

CONTENTS :

<i>Remarks on the Progress of Celestial Mechanics since the Middle of the Century:</i> G. W. HILL.....	333
<i>Admission of American Students to the French Universities:</i> G. BROWN GOODE.....	341
<i>Application of the X-Rays to Surgery:</i> HENRY W. CATTELL.....	344
<i>Current Problems in Plant Morphology:—</i> <i>On Some Characters of Floral Galls:</i> CONWAY MACMILLAN	346
<i>Current Notes on Anthropology:—</i> <i>The Wall Paintings of Mitla; Commerce across Bering Straits; The Society of Americanists of Paris:</i> D. G. BRINTON.....	349
<i>Scientific Notes and News:—</i> <i>A Director in Chief of Scientific Bureaus in the Department of Agriculture; Röntgen Rays and the Royal Society; Astronomy: General.....</i>	350
<i>Discussion and Correspondence:—</i> <i>Certitudes and Illusions:</i> JOSIAH ROYCE. <i>Prof. C. Lloyd Morgan on Instinct:</i> WESLEY MILLS. <i>The Chance of Observing the Total Solar Eclipse in Norway:</i> A. LAWRENCE ROTCH. <i>The Röntgen Rays Present in Sunlight:</i> CHARLES S. DOLLEY, SEN-ECA EGBERT. <i>Röntgen Rays from the Electric Arc:</i> W. S. FRANKLIN.....	354
<i>Scientific Literature:—</i> <i>Ortmann's Grundzüge der Marinen Tiergeographie:</i> G. BAUR. <i>Cooke's Introduction to the Study of Fungi:</i> BYRON D. HALSTED. <i>The Geology of South Dakota:</i> C. S. PROSSER. <i>Lippmann's Chemie der Zuckerarten:</i> FERDINAND G. WEICHMANN.....	359
<i>Scientific Journals:—</i> <i>The American Journal of Science; American Chemical Journal:</i> J. ELLIOTT GILPIN. <i>Psyche.....</i>	370
<i>Societies and Academies:—</i> <i>Geological Section of the New York Academy of Sciences:</i> J. F. KEMP. <i>The Torrey Botanical Club:</i> H. H. RUSBY. <i>Boston Society of Natural History:</i> SAMUEL HENSHAW. <i>Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences:</i> EDW. J. NOLAN. <i>Geological Society of Washington:</i> W. F. MORSELL. <i>Geological Conference of Harvard University:</i> T. A. JAGGAR, JR. <i>The Academy of Science of St. Louis:</i> WM. TRELEASE. <i>The Woman's Anthropological Society:</i> A. CARMAN.....	372
<i>New Books.....</i>	376

THE application of mathematics to the solution of the problems presented by the motion of the heavenly bodies has had a larger degree of success than the same application in the case of the other departments of physics. This is probably due to two causes. The principal objects to be treated in the former case are visible every clear night, consequently the questions connected with them received earlier attention; while, in the latter case, the phenomena to be discussed must oftentimes be produced by artificial means in the laboratory; and the discovery of certain classes of them, as, for instance, the property of magnetism, may justly be attributed to accident. A second cause is undoubtedly to be found in the fact that the application of quantitative reasoning to what is usually denominated as physics generally leads to a more difficult department of mathematics than in the case of the motion of the heavenly bodies. In the latter we have but one independent variable, the time; while in the former generally several are present, which makes the difference of having to integrate ordinary differential equations or those which are partial. Thus it happens that, while the

*Presidential address delivered before the American Mathematical Society, December 27, 1895, by Dr G. W. Hill.