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FRIDAY, MAY 21, 1897.

THE PROBLEMS OF ASTRONOMY.\*

## CONTENTS:

<i>The Problems of Astronomy</i> : SIMON NEWCOMB.....	777
<i>The Recent Visit of Sir Archibald Geikie</i> : J. F. KEMP.....	785
<i>Sir Archibald Geikie on a Comparison between the Tertiary Volcanic Succession in Northwestern Europe and in Western America</i> : W. F. MORSELL.....	788
<i>Some Phases in Weed Evolution</i> : F. A. WAUGH.....	789
<i>The Effect of the Density of the Surrounding Gas on the Discharge of Electrified Metals by X-Rays</i> : C. D. CHILD.....	791
<i>Current Notes on Physiography</i> :—	
<i>Cornish on Sand Dunes</i> ; <i>Philippson on Geomorphology</i> ; <i>Thorodssen on Northeast Iceland</i> ; <i>Volcanic Phenomena of 1894</i> ; <i>Limestone Range of the Klonthal, Switzerland</i> : W. M. DAVIS.....	795
<i>Current Notes on Anthropology</i> :—	
<i>The Notes on American Ceramics</i> ; <i>The Racial Geography of Europe</i> ; <i>Another Interpreter of the Mayan Hieroglyphs</i> : D. G. BRINTON.....	797
<i>Notes on Inorganic Chemistry</i> : J. L. H.....	798
<i>Scientific Notes and News</i> :—	
<i>A Permanent Census Bureau</i> ; <i>The Elizabeth Thompson Science Fund</i> ; <i>General</i> .....	799
<i>University and Educational News</i> .....	803
<i>Discussion and Correspondence</i> :—	
<i>Former Extension of Ice in Greenland</i> : RALPH S. TARR. <i>Poudré</i> : LUDOVIC ESTES. <i>Earliest Published Note of the late Chas. E. Bendire</i> : C. H. M.....	804
<i>Scientific Literature</i> :—	
<i>Recent Text-books of Physics</i> . <i>Sergi's Antropologia della Stirpe Camitica</i> : D. G. BRINTON. <i>M'Kendrick's Elementary Human Physiology</i> . JOSEPH W. WARREN. <i>Martin's Story of a Piece of Coal</i> : J. J. STEVENSON.....	805
<i>Societies and Academies</i> :—	
<i>Biological Society of Washington</i> : F. A. LUCAS. <i>The Geological Society of Washington</i> : W. F. MORSELL. <i>Science Club of the Northwestern University</i> : THOMAS F. HOLGATE. <i>The Texas Academy of Science</i> : FREDERIC W. SIMONDS.....	810
<i>New Books</i> .....	812

ASSEMBLED, as we are, to dedicate a new institution to the promotion of our knowledge of the heavens, it appeared to me that an appropriate and interesting subject might be the present and future problems of astronomy. Yet it seemed, on further reflection, that, apart from the difficulty of making an adequate statement of these problems on such an occasion as the present, such a wording of the theme would not fully express the idea which I wish to convey. The so-called problems of astronomy are not separate and independent, but are rather the parts of one great problem, that of increasing our knowledge of the universe in its widest extent. Nor is it easy to contemplate the edifice of astronomical science as it now stands, without thinking of the past as well as of the present and future. The fact is that our knowledge of the universe has been in the nature of a slow and gradual evolution, commencing at a very early period in human history, and destined to go forward without stop, as we hope, so long as civilization shall endure. The astronomer of every age has built on the foundations laid by his predecessors, and his work has always formed, and must ever form, the base on which his successors shall build. The astronomer of to-day may look

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\*An address given by Professor Simon Newcomb at the dedication of the Flower Observatory, University of Pennsylvania, May 12, 1897.

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