The Sun.

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THE POETRY OF ASTRONOMY.

THE FIRST OF PROF. RICHARD A. PROCTOR'S COURSE OF LECTURES.

The Oldest of Sciences Brilliantly Illustrated and Explained—The Great Discoveries that Men Have Made—Comets as Seen by the Ancients and as Seen in Modern Times.

Prof. Richard A. Proctor, the distinguished English astronomer, whose many books on the science of the stars and whose popular lectures in this city five years ago have made his name familiar in this country, began a new course of lectures on astronomy in Chickering Hall last night. A very intelligent audience filled the hall in every part, and Prof. Proctor, as he stepped quickly across the broad stage in front of the screen used for the magic-lantern pictures, was warmly applauded. His subject last night was, "The Poetry of Astronomy." He said there are two objections that may be made to the association of poetry with astronomy. The first is that the student of astronomy may oppose the connecting of the two because he fears that the imagination of the poet may interfere with the exact methods of science; and the second is that the poet will be apt to fear lest the processes of scientific investigation may take away from the charms of nature. The Speaker thought that both these objections might be done away with. Science owes much to poetry, and poetry is also indebted to science, which opens up new fields of beauty for it to delight in.

Astronomy, especially among the sciences, is naturally associated with poetry, for astronomy has the most poetical aspirations, while at the same time it requires the closest scientific scrutiny. This association of poetry with astronomy runs through all the old systems of the science. How the spirit of poetry permeates it everywhere is well shown in the romantic notions of the old star-gazers, who imagined the planet Mercury threading its course back and forth through the heavens as the Mercury of the gods, the fleet-winged messenger, carrying messages to and fro among the deities of heaven.

After geographically, though briefly, describing the ancient theory of the heavens, with its mazes of cycles and epicycles, the speaker pictured the coming of Copernicus, who swept away the old trumpery of the theorists, and caused new and mainly correct views of the universe to be taken. The depths of space, boundless in their extent, were regarded in a new light, and the planets were seen to be swinging through orbits that have the sun, not the earth, for a centre. After this great step had been taken men began to ask questions about the laws that controlled the heavenly motions, and Newton came with his sublime discovery of gravitation, making the answer to these questions plain, and at once the world seemed filled with light. Gradually the mysteries that had puzzled men were unveiled, and one gave place to another, which, in its turn, was explained, until the mind of man had penetrated far into the depths of the universe.

Prof. Proctor said he regretted that it was not in his power to do more than indicate the poetical aspect of this great science. He wished that Tennyson or some other English poet, or our American poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes, who has lately shown his regard for the expression of astronomical truths with poetic fervor, would take the subject in their hands.

After this general introduction, the great hall was suddenly plunged in darkness, and upon the stage appeared the illuminated circle of the lantern lenses from a stereopticon in the gallery. There followed a series of large pictures, representing the great mysteries of the heavens, and astonishing a professional man-about-town, who had come to laugh, and who had been induced to come by the promise of the pictures, so much that he forgot to laugh at the pictures. The first picture was a representation of the brilliant star of Bethlehem, which, it was said, was probably a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, or with the addition of Mars, or a great comet, or a nova, or a star in the act of being extinguished. The speaker said he had no hypothesis to offer, but he had a theory that the star was a great comet, and that the Magi saw it in the east, and followed it to the place where the child was born. The speaker thought that the star was not a star, but a comet, because it was said that the star went before them, and stood over the place where the child was, and a star could not do that, but a comet could. The speaker said that the Magi were astrologers, and that they were the astronomers of their day, and that they would be the last men to be deceived by a star, but they might be deceived by a comet, which was a very common thing in those days, and was looked on as a sign of great events.

Comical pictures of comets as they appeared to the imaginations of the ancients and true pictures of some of the great comets of modern times followed upon the screen. One ancient comet looked precisely like an old woman's frill cap, with a long lace collar dangling down for a tail.

Views of nebulæ, and charts representing the multitudes of the telescopic stars, with accompanying descriptions, closed the lecture.

On Thursday night Prof. Proctor lectures on "The Immensity of Space."

NYMAN'S UNDUTIFUL SON.

The Coroner's Inquest as to the Causes of Old John Nyman's Death in Passaic.

The Coroner's inquest in the case of John Nyman, who was found dead in his barn, in Passaic, N. J., on Saturday morning last, was continued yesterday. Romer Nyman, son of the dead man, is in jail, in Paterson, under arrest on suspicion of being the murderer. His counsel was present at the inquest.

John Nyman, with his wife and Romer, who was then 7 years old, came to this country from Holland about twenty-three years ago, and went on to a small farm near Hackensack. About eighteen years ago he bought the small farm on the outskirts of Passaic, on which he lived till the time of his death. Quarrels in the Nyman family were frequent. In March last Mrs. Nyman was found dead in her chair. Her death was attributed to heart disease. It was said that she had not been seen nor spoken for four years. In view of the circumstances of the husband's death, it is probable that Mrs. Nyman's body will be exhumed and examined for indications as to the cause of her death. The quarrels of the father and son have been frequent, and they are said to have been very bitter shortly after the death of the mother, in consequence of Romer's desire to possess some money—about $1,600—that he received from Holland not long before his death.

Many witnesses have been examined in the case. C. A. Van Houten, a farmer living near the Nyman place, testified yesterday that on Saturday evening, August 30, Romer Nyman told him that John Nyman had been found dead in his barn. The witness went to Nyman's house at about 9 o'clock in the morning and found Romer lying on the stoop in front of the house. "I asked Romer if he was sick," the witness said, "and he told me he was. I could not get anything out of him about the cause of his father's death. A woman in the house said the doctor came to see the old man yesterday morning. Romer told me that his father had died in the barn. She launched. Romer, you heard what your father's and he. she said made no reply.

"My wife said that he saw the boy of Nyman when the barn was first opened by Nyman. Then Romer said he had found the corpse. The witness said he had heard that the boy was very savage. The witness was in the habit of meeting Nyman in the road. The boy was very savage. The witness was in the habit of meeting Nyman in the road. The boy was very savage. The witness was in the habit of meeting Nyman in the road. The