

HUBERT ANSON NEWTON.

Professor Gibbs' Estimate of his Work and Character.

Through the kindness of the editor of the American Journal of Science, the Weekly is able to reproduce this week from the advance sheets of the May issue of the Journal, the following from the closing passages of Professor J. Willard Gibbs' review of the life and work of the late Professor Hubert Anson Newton:

"If we ask what traits of mind and character are indicated by these papers, the answer is not difficult. Professor Klein has divided mathematical minds into three leading classes: the logicians, whose pleasure and power lies in subtlety of definition and dialectic skill; the geometers, whose power lies in the use of the space-intuitions; and the formalists, who seek to find an algorithm for every operation. Professor Newton evidently belonged to the second of these classes, and his natural tastes seem to have found an equal gratification in the development of a system of abstract geometric truths, or in the investigation of the concrete phenomena of nature as they exist in space and time.

"But these papers show more than the type of mind of the author; they give no uncertain testimony concerning the character of the man. In all these papers we see a love of honest work, an aversion to shams, a distrust of rash generalizations and speculations based on uncertain premises. He was never anxious to add one or more guesses on doubtful matters in the hope of hitting the truth, or what might pass as such for a time, but was always willing to take infinite pains in the most careful test of every theory. To these qualities was joined a modesty which forbade the pushing of his own claims, and desired no reputation except the unsought tribute of competent judges. At the close of his article on meteors in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, which has not the least reference to himself as a contributor to The Science, he remarks that 'meteoric science is a structure built stone by stone by many builders.' We may add that no one has done more than himself to establish the foundations of the science, and that the stones which he has laid are not likely to need relaying. * * *

THE WORK FOR YALE.

"But the studies which have won for their author an honorable reputation among men of science of all countries form only one side of the life of the man whom we are considering. Another side, probably the most important, is that in which he was identified with the organic life of the College and University with which he had been connected from a very early age. In fact, we might almost call the studies which we have been considering, the recreations of a busy life of one whose serious occupation has been that of an instructor. If from all those who have come under his instruction we should seek to learn their personal recollections of Professor Newton, we should probably find that the most universal impression made on his students was his enthusiastic love of the subject which he was teaching.

"A department of the University in which he took an especial interest was the Observatory. This was placed under his direction at its organization, and although he subsequently resigned the nominal directorship, the institution remained virtually under his charge, and may be said to owe its existence in large measure to his untiring efforts and personal sacrifice in its behalf.

A HAPPY ACCIDENT.

"One sphere of activity in the Observatory was suggested by a happy accident which Professor Newton has described in this Journal, September, 1893. An amateur astronomer in a neighboring town, Mr. John Lewis, accidentally obtained on a stellar photograph the track of a large meteor. He announced in the newspapers that he had secured such a photograph, and requested observations from those who had seen its flight. The photographic plates, with letters received from various observers, were placed in Professor Newton's hands, and were discussed in the paper mentioned. The advantages of photographic observations were so conspicuous that Professor Newton was anxious that the Observatory should employ this method of

securing the tracks of meteors. With the aid of an appropriation granted by the National Academy from the income of the J. Lawrence Smith fund, a battery of cameras was mounted on an equatorial axis. By this means, a number of meteor-tracks have been obtained of the August meteors, and in one case, through a simultaneous observation by Mr. Lewis in Ansonia, Professor Newton was able to calculate the course of the meteor in the atmosphere with a probable error which he estimated at less than a mile. The results which may be expected at the now near return of the Leonids will be of especial interest, but it will be for others to utilize them. * * *

HIS WORK FOR THE METRIC SYSTEM.

"Professor Newton was a member of the American Metrological Society from the first, and was conspicuously active in the agitation which resulted in the enactment of the law of 1866, legalizing the use of the metric system. He prepared the table of the metric equivalents of the customary units of weights and measures which was incorporated in the act, and by which the relations of the fundamental units were defined. But he did not stop here. Appreciating the weakness of legislative enactment compared with popular sentiment, and feeling that the real battle was to be won in familiarizing the people with the metric system, he took pains to interest the makers of scales and rulers and other devices for measurement in adopting the units and graduations of the metric system, and to have the proper tables introduced into school arithmetics. * * *

"In all these relations of life, the subject of this sketch exhibited the same traits of character which are seen in his published papers, the same modesty, the same conscientiousness, the same devotion to high ideals. His life was the quiet life of the scholar, ennobled by the unselfish aims of the Christian gentleman; his memory will be cherished by many friends; and so long as astronomers, while they watch the return of the Leonids marking off the passage of the centuries, shall care to turn the earlier pages of this branch of astronomy, his name will have an honorable place in the history of the Science."

M. Brunetiere at New Haven.

One of the most important lecturers who have visited Yale this year was M. Brunetiere, who lectured under the auspices of the Modern Language Club, of Yale, last Saturday, April 24. Ferdinand Brunetiere is not only one of the greatest literary critics of to-day, but he is also one of the leading lecturers in France, the editor of the Revue des Deux Mondes, and a member of the French Academy. He lectured entirely in French, giving a critical review of the leading periods of French literature under the title of "Les Grandes Epouques de la Litterature Francaise."

M. Brunetiere has been in this country only a short time. He came over to deliver a course of lectures at Johns Hopkins, and later lectured at Harvard and Columbia. The Modern Language Club, by securing him for a Yale audience, has done well for the University.

'Easter Trip of Musical Clubs.

The Easter trip of the University Musical Clubs, which came to a close Wednesday evening, April 21, in the concert at Jersey City, was the most successful in every way that has been taken in recent years. The audiences were much larger than last year, at every place where the clubs stopped; the interest and enthusiasm shown by the Alumni was much stronger; and the financial outcome is three or four hundred dollars in advance of last year. But the greatest feature of the trip was the reception given the Clubs by President and Mrs. McKinley at the White House, Monday, April 19. A short musical program was sung and then the members of the clubs were presented to Mr. and Mrs. McKinley and others, who were present, including several members of the cabinet. The reception was arranged chiefly through the mediation of Mr. John A. Porter, '78.

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