

## PERCIVAL LOWELL.

By the sudden death of Dr. Percival Lowell, at Flagstaff, Arizona, on November 13, America has lost one of her best-known astronomers, a man who made large contributions to the advancement of his chosen science not only by his own observations and studies, but also by building and maintaining at his personal cost an observatory equipped with powerful telescopes and accessory instruments at which a staff of expert observers coöperated in his researches.

In addition to these services he has done more, by his charming books and his popular lectures, to interest the general public in astronomy than any man since Newcomb.

In the public mind Lowell's name is associated almost exclusively with the planet *Mars* and, in particular, with the theory he advocated so skilfully that our neighbor planet is the abode of intelligent life. *Mars* did, in fact, receive more of his own attention than any other object; but his personal observations extended to all of the planets of our system from *Mercury* to *Saturn* (and, to a lesser degree, to *Uranus* and *Neptune*), and the Lowell Observatory, under his direction, has also made important contributions to our knowledge of the stellar universe, particularly by the discovery and measurement of double stars and by photographic and spectrographic investigations of the spiral and other nebulae. The energy and enthusiasm with which Mr. Lowell and his associates have worked since the foundation of the Lowell Observatory in 1894 is made manifest by the three large quarto volumes of the "Annals of the Lowell Observatory," and the seventy-three "Bulletins of the Lowell Observatory" which have already been issued. Last year, in addition to these, Mr. Lowell began the publication of a series of "Memoirs of the Lowell Observatory," containing theoretical researches in celestial mechanics. The two memoirs so far distributed contain his personal studies of the problem of a Trans-Neptunian planet and of the structure of *Saturn's* rings.

To these technical works must be added his widely known books "The Solar System," "Mars and its Canals," "Mars as the Abode of Life," and "The Evolution of Worlds"; and

his numerous popular lectures. Only a month before his death he delivered at Berkeley and at Stanford University the last two addresses of a lecture tour among the colleges of Idaho, Washington, Oregon and California.

His astronomical researches by no means absorbed all of Mr. Lowell's energies; he was, indeed, a man of wide interests and of many-sided ability. Long before he founded the Lowell Observatory he had established a reputation as a student of Oriental life and as a writer of books on travel and study in Japan; and with all his literary and scientific work he found time to exercise his keen business ability in the accumulation and administration of a large fortune.

Many astronomers have been unable to adopt Mr. Lowell's point of view on some questions or to agree with all of his conclusions, but every one interested in astronomy appreciates the great value of his work in extending our knowledge of the planets of our system, and admires the generosity with which he has supported the observatory which bears his name. His researches have been recognized by the award of the Janssen Medal of the French Astronomical Society; by the award of the Gold Medal of the Mexican Astronomical Society; by honorary degrees conferred upon him by American colleges; and by honorary membership in the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada and in other societies.

We deeply regret his death while still in the prime of his power as an observer and as a student—he was only 61 years old—and sincerely hope that such provision has been made for the Lowell Observatory at Flagstaff, that it may continue his work and remain as a permanent memorial to him.<sup>1</sup>

ROBERT G. AITKEN.

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<sup>1</sup> Definite information has been received since these lines were written to the effect that Dr. Lowell's will provides for the continuation of the work of the Lowell Observatory.