

RECENT ADVENTURES IN ASTRONOMY

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Recent Adventures in Astronomy by Alfred H. Fison

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ALFRED H. FISON

**RECENT
ADVENTURES
IN ASTRONOMY**

The Victorian Era Series

Recent Advances in Astronomy

Recent Advances in Astronomy

By

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Preface

In the following pages I have endeavoured to give a simple account of some of the more interesting "Recent Advances in Astronomy". To harmonize with the general scheme of the series of which this work forms a volume, it was at first suggested that I should develop recent progress in Astronomy historically. The difficulties in the way of treating any branch of science in such a manner are, however, very considerable; especially when, as in the present instance, it is desired to present the subject in such a manner as to be readily followed by those who have but slight familiarity with its technicalities. I am only acquainted with one entirely satisfactory "History of Astronomy", and that one scarcely appeals to other than professional astronomers. It has upon the whole appeared best to effect a compromise between an historical and a purely descriptive method; and I have, therefore, while dealing with what have appeared to me to be a few among the more interesting problems of modern Astronomy in a series of separate essays, followed in each the historical method as far as possible. It has been found practicable to adhere to this scheme more rigidly in the latter part of the work.

GIFT OF MRS. A. F. MORRISON 1897

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Every writer of a popular work on Astronomy, or any other branch of science, must become largely indebted to those who have devoted their labour to the compilation of works of reference; and I would acknowledge my deep obligation to the extensive accumulation of accurate knowledge contained in Miss Clerke's two works—*A History of Astronomy during the Nineteenth Century*, and *The System of the Stars*.

A. H. FISON.

September, 1898.

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Recent Advances in Astronomy.

Chapter I.

The Life of a Star.

"Great is the mystery of Space, greater is the mystery of Time. Either mystery grows upon man, as man himself grows; and either seems to be a function of the godlike which is in man. In reality, the depths and the heights which are in man, the depths by which he searches, the heights by which he aspires, are but projected and made objective externally in the three dimensions of space which are outside of him."

DR. QUINCY.

With our present knowledge of the sun-like nature of the stars, and the colossal part that they play in the scheme of the physical universe, it appears strange that, in spite of the bold spirit of speculation that characterized the ancient philosophy,—a philosophy that recognized the possibility of the development of higher forms of life from lower; that saw in the Sun, Moon, and Earth different forms of air in different stages of condensation; and in the universe itself the working of a fortuitous concourse of atoms,—no worthy speculation should have been recorded as to the nature of the stars.