

under the date of February 25th, in regard to the new star as follows: "This brilliant object attracted my attention at eleven o'clock on the evening of February 22d, before the receipt of the announcement of its discovery by Dr. Anderson. It was at that time to my eye brighter than a standard first magnitude star, and showed a distinct yellowish color, recalling to my mind the shade of *Nova Aurigæ*. It was cloudy here on the 23d, and the spectrum was first examined, between clouds, on the 24th, from 6^h 30^m to 10^h 30^m E.S.T. The observations were made with a McClean direct-vision star spectroscope attached to the nine-inch refractor of the Dartmouth Observatory. The general appearance of the visual spectrum was quite similar to that of *Nova Aurigæ*, with the bright components of the doubled lines on the less refrangible side (toward red). The dark components appeared relatively more intense, however, than in case of *Nova Aurigæ*, probably in great part a result of the superior brightness of the present star. The dark band on the more refrangible side of *C* was especially broad, much more so than in Campbell's drawing of the visual spectrum of *Nova Aurigæ*. Although the spectroscope employed does not permit micrometer settings to be made, the identification would seem to be sufficiently exact of the hydrogen lines *H α* and *H β* , the sodium lines at *D*, the magnesium group *b* (in whole or part), and probably the strong line at 25016—all these being represented by dark and bright components. Numerous other lines were seen which can not yet be identified. Singularly enough, the helium line *D₃* was very faint or absent (the identification of the sodium lines being assumed). This was also the case with *Nova Aurigæ*."

THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES.*

I HAVE the honor to report upon the second annual meeting of the Association of American Universities, which I attended by your designation as the representative of Columbia University.

The meeting was held at Chicago, February

* Report of Professor Nicholas Murray Butler, delegate from Columbia University to President Low.

26-28, 1901. The opening session was held at Chicago University, and the subsequent sessions at the Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue. Each of the fourteen institutions represented in the Association was represented by one or more delegates. Each session was well attended by the delegates, and the discussions were practical and earnest. Newspaper reporters and the general public were excluded from the sessions, which, therefore, took on the very helpful form of a conference or a committee meeting. At the close of each session the Secretary gave out to the press such information as he thought proper.

The three topics chiefly discussed were: (1) inter-university migration of graduate students; (2) fellowship; and, (3) the examination for the degree of doctor of philosophy.

Upon each of these topics a short report was presented by a delegate designated in advance for the purpose. Each discussion brought out the details of the practice of the several institutions in regard to each of the matters considered, and while the Association refrained from passing resolutions, certain conclusions were arrived at by what was substantially unanimous consent.

It was held in regard to the first topic that it is wise to promote by all possible means the inter-university migration of graduate students, to the end that they may come under the guidance of teachers of varying points of view, and so may receive the broadest possible introduction to their chosen field of study. The only limitation suggested upon this migration was that circumstances being what they are, it might be unprofitable to the student for it to continue after he had made some progress upon his dissertation.

As regards the question of fellowships, it was held by a majority of those who spoke, that the provision for university fellows in this country is already too large, and that there is danger of stimulating unduly a number of men to go forward to investigation and research who have not the highest and best qualifications for such work. The opinion was expressed that it would be advisable to make some of the fellowships distinctly research fellowships, to be awarded only to students who had already

taken the degree of doctor of philosophy, and who had, therefore, received their academic equipment for their life work.

In discussing the best type of examination for the doctor's degree, it was held very emphatically that the practice which is growing up in our universities, especially in some of the departments dealing with natural science subjects, of permitting the candidate to pass his examination course by course, as is usual in undergraduate instruction, is a pernicious one, and one which stands in the way of the attainment of the best and broadest scholarship. It was held that the examination for the doctor's degree should, in all cases, be upon subjects and not upon courses of instruction; the underlying principle being that the courses of instruction which a graduate student attends are but a small part of the work which he is supposed to do in order to prepare himself for his examination.

It was developed that there was some difference of practice between the universities as to the formal examination for the degree of doctor of philosophy. On the whole, I think it may be said that it was the opinion of most of those who expressed themselves, that great stress should be laid upon the oral examination at the time when the candidate finally presents himself for his degree, and that if any subordinate examinations are held previous to this time, either upon courses or upon subjects, they should be given very little weight in estimating the capacity of the candidate.

It was voted unanimously to approve the suggestion of the committee appointed by the Council of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, that there be set aside a week to be known as Convocation Week, in order that the various learned societies of the country may arrange to hold their meetings at that time.

It was also voted to print in pamphlet form an abstract of the proceedings of the first and second annual meetings of the Association, and to assess the cost thereof upon the fourteen institutions equally.

The place and date of the meeting of 1902 were referred to the incoming executive committee with power.

The officers chosen for the year were: *President*, Columbia University; *Vice-President*, University of Michigan; *Secretary*, University of Chicago; additional *Members of the Executive Committee*, Harvard University, University of California.

THE NAVAL OBSERVATORY.

SENATOR CHANDLER'S amendment to the Naval Appropriation Bill, providing a Board of Visitors to the Naval Observatory and requiring the Superintendent to be a line officer of the Navy not below the rank of Captain, was, after stout and repeated resistance by the House conferees, at last accepted, with, however, an amendment, consisting of the words 'until further legislation by Congress,' the concluding clause reading: "The Superintendent of the Naval Observatory shall be, until further legislation by Congress, a line officer of the Navy of a rank not below that of Captain." This, of course, indicates that in the opinion of the House conferees further legislation should follow. The bill was finally passed by both Houses without debate on these provisions.

It appears from the following extract from the Washington *Evening Star* of the 8th inst., that the affairs of the Observatory are likely to be kept before the public:

Charges have been preferred to the Navy Department by Capt. Charles H. Davis, U. S. N., superintendent of the United States naval observatory, against Professor Stimson J. Brown, director of the Nautical Almanac, head of the mathematical branch of the observatory, who is an officer of the navy with the rank of captain. Both officers are well known in naval and scientific circles. The Secretary of the Navy has had copies of the charges laid before Professor Brown, preliminary to the usual procedure of a court of inquiry, which will determine whether the charges are of a character to warrant a court-martial.

It was at first understood that Professor Brown had been placed under arrest by Captain Davis, but it is said in some official quarters that there has been no arrest, and in others it is stated that, at most, the arrest is technical, following the preferring of charges, and in no way involving any restraint.

The papers were first transmitted to Admiral Bradford, chief of the bureau of equipment, who has supervision of the Observatory, and by him they were laid before Secretary Long. The papers are not made public in such cases and, owing to the personal nature