SCIENCE

A WEEKLY JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE, PUBLISHING THE OFFICIAL NOTICES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

FRIDAY, JANUARY 3, 1908

CONTENTS

MSS. intended for publication and books, etc., intended for review should be sent to the Editor of SCIENCE, Garrison-on-Hudson, N. Y.

LORD KELVIN

WITH the death of Lord Kelvin on December 17 there passes away the grandest figure of contemporary science, and with it closes an epoch in the history of physics. When William Thomson was born, in 1824, Ohm's law of the flow of electric currents had not been discovered, Oersted's discovery of the magnetic action of the current was but four years old, while Faraday's capital discovery of the induction of currents was not to come for seven years. The wave-theory of light had been but recently set on its feet by Young and Fresnel, and was not yet thoroughly believed, while the two laws of thermodynamics, perhaps the most important contribution of the nineteenth century, were unknown. All these things Lord Kelvin saw, and a great part of them he was. Probably no one, with the single exception of Helmholtz, born three years earlier, exercised a greater influence on the science of the nineteenth century, while to compare the influence of these two great physicists with that of Darwin is as bootless as to question whether the grass is greener than the sky is blue.

Whether William Thomson, born at Belfast, is to be classified as an Irishman, along with the great Sir William Rowan Hamilton, or by virtue of descent and almost lifelong residence in Glasgow, as a Scotchman, like that other genius Clerk Maxwell, we need not discuss, but that country in which, perhaps in all the world, intellect is most prized, may fairly claim