

# SCIENCE

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## EDWARD CHARLES PICKERING

By the death of Edward C. Pickering American science has lost one of its most distinguished figures, one of the most noteworthy contributors to its progress during the past forty years, and one of its most inspiring and influential leaders. A full account of his long and active career would demand far more space for its presentation and time for its preparation than are at the moment available; only the main events and achievements of an exceptionally productive life can be touched upon in these few words of appreciation.

Born at Boston, in 1846, of an old New England family, and a graduate of Harvard of the class of 1865, after two years as instructor in mathematics, he became professor of physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he established the first laboratory in America in which students were instructed by actual contact with physical instruments and measurements. Upon the death of Professor Winlock, the youngest physicist was called, in 1877, at the age of thirty-one, to the directorship of the Harvard College Observatory, which he held for nearly forty-two years, continuing the tradition of the institution, all of whose directors have died in office.

At this time most observatories were devoting themselves mainly to the old "astronomy of position"—the determination of the apparent positions of the stars and other heavenly bodies upon the celestial sphere, and of those constants of nature which can be derived from such observations—and the "new astronomy" (now bet-