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THE PLANETESIMAL HYPOTHESIS¹

On the eighty-fifth anniversary of his birth,^{1a} September 25, 1928, Professor Chamberlin's latest book appeared from the press. In this volume he presents an orderly account of the researches he has made during the last thirty years respecting the origin and development of the planets and the other attendants of the sun. Lest any one should suppose that this work represents the feeble and distorted echoes of more vigorous years, I wish to say at once that it would be difficult to find in astronomical literature its superior in exhaustiveness and coherence of reasoning, in precision of statement and in the exercise of constructive imagination. In his alertness for significant clues and interrelations among phenomena and in the relentlessness with which he pursues the trails on which he enters, he reminds one of Charles Darwin in "The Origin of Species."

On the same day that Professor Chamberlin's book was received, I found in the October *Harper's Magazine*, page 574, in an article by Professor Eddington, of Cambridge, England, the following sentences:

By elimination of alternatives it appears that a configuration resembling the solar system would be formed only if at a certain stage of condensation an unusual accident had occurred. According to Jeans, the accident was the close approach of another star casually pursuing its way through space. This star must have passed within a distance not far outside the orbit of Neptune; it must not have passed too rapidly, but have slowly overtaken or been overtaken by the sun. By tidal distortion it raised big protuberances on the sun, and caused it to spurt out filaments of matter which have condensed to form planets. That was more than a thousand million years ago. The intruding star has since gone on its way and mingled with the others; its legacy of a system of planets remains, including a globe habitable by man.

These sentences are the most recent expression of wholly erroneous views respecting the authorship of the theory to which they refer. They are the culmina-

¹ *The Two Solar Families: The Sun's Children*. By Thomas Chrowder Chamberlin. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1928. 8vo., pp. xxi+311; 52 illustrations. \$2.50.

^{1a} The death of Professor Chamberlin occurred on November 15, after this review of his book had been finished.

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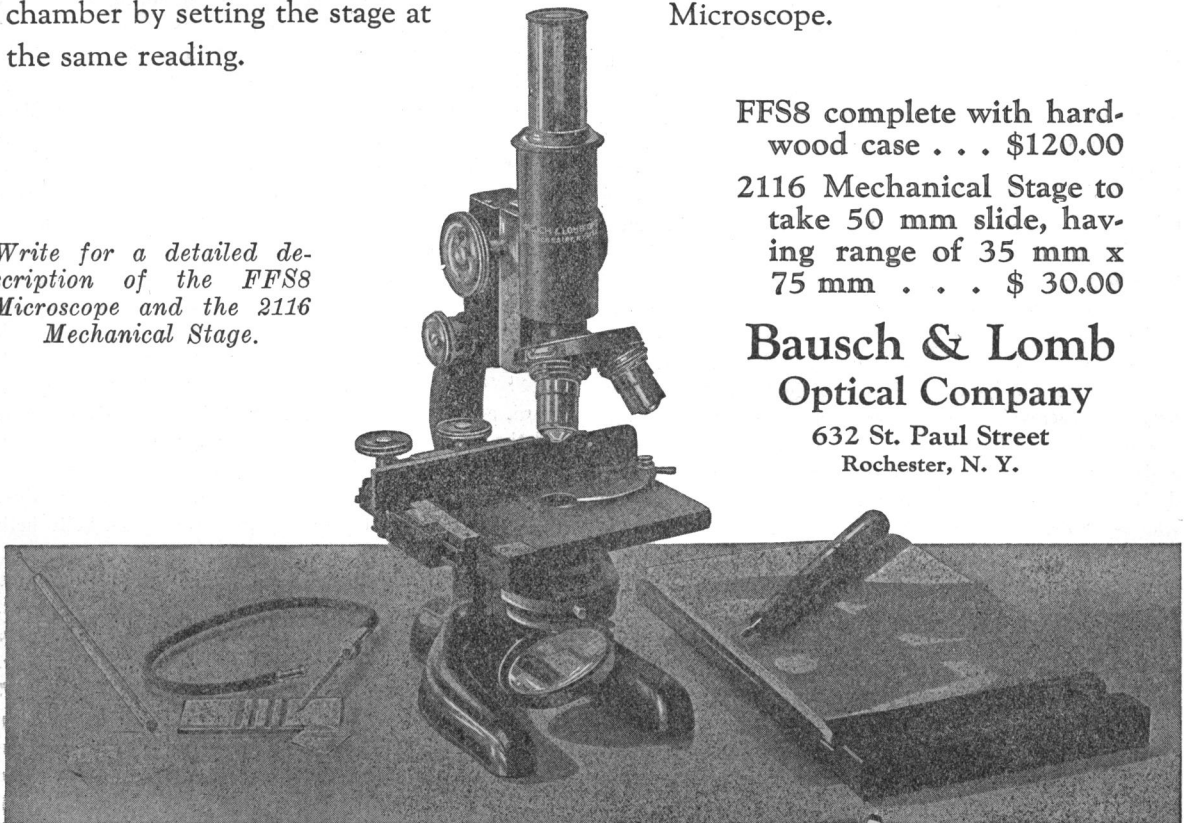
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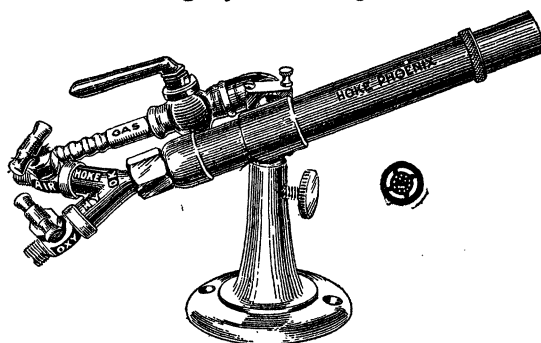
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