

sity of Marburg where he taught for two years, 1891 and 1892. At the same time he was editor of the *Ausland*, an old, well-established journal that contained particularly ethnological and geographical information. The duties of these positions were not congenial to him because they absorbed too much of the time that he wished to devote to research, and soon he returned to Berlin where, in 1896, he was elected president of the Berlin Geographical Society.

His interest in the problems of the Pacific Ocean never flagged. In 1897 he went to the Marquesas Islands. He visited every island and every village and amassed most valuable ethnological material. On his return journey in 1898 he visited some of the northwestern tribes of Canada. Then followed years of unrelenting study. He was never satisfied with the mere collection of material but saw in it a means of solving problems. Ever since his Brazilian journey the question of primitive art was uppermost in his mind, and the interpretation of the curious and intricate forms of Marquesan art was one of the attractions that this remote group of islands held out to him. With indefatigable persistence he visited all the museums of Europe and America and accumulated material for the study of the historic development of Marquesan art during the period of our knowledge of the islands. His purpose was the attempt to reconstruct the earlier history of this art. Work on this particular problem was interrupted by the duties which he undertook as director of the South American department of the Ethnological Museum of Berlin, a position which he occupied from 1902 to 1906. Again he found that administrative duties made too heavy demands on his time and he returned to the problems that interested him most profoundly.

During this period he took a most active part in the scientific life of Berlin. From 1908 to 1910 he was president of the Berlin Anthropological Society, and his house was the center to which all interested in ethnological studies resorted. It is largely due to his influence that Germany has taken a prominent part in anthropological work in South America. Paul Ehrenreich, Max Schmidt and Theodor Koch-Grünberg were all stimulated by his enthusiasm.

It is fortunate that it was given to him to see published his great work on the art of the Marquesans. The first volume appeared in 1925, the second and third volumes in 1928. In his book on Brazil he had taken the view that all geometrical art developed through conventionalization of realistic forms. In later years he abandoned this view, and the value of his great Marquesan work lies in the attempt to interpret on the basis of painstaking formal analysis the many directions art forms take under the conditions

of technique and of constant reinterpretation. The wealth of material and the penetrating analysis of forms are such that now, since the book has been in our hands only a short time, it is quite impossible to assess fully its value, but there can be no doubt that his method of examination sets a new standard for all studies of similar subjects, not only in art but equally in religion, ceremonial life, social structure and invention. We deeply regret that it was not given to him to work out by similar methods the large mass of traditional literature that he collected. His Marquesan work stands out as an example of thoroughness and of critical acumen.

In his younger years von den Steinen, because of his wide knowledge and his rare social gifts, exerted a wide influence, but as he grew older he retired more and more to his study. His counsel was sought but he did not take an active part in scientific affairs. His personal charm and his loyalty endeared him to all who had the privilege of knowing him intimately, and his friends mourn his death no less as a personal loss than as a loss to science.

FRANZ BOAS

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#### RECENT DEATHS

PROFESSOR RALPH H. CURTISS, professor of astronomy and director of observatories at the University of Michigan since 1927, died on December 25 in his fiftieth year.

A CORRESPONDENT writes that Emile Francis Williams, a charter member of the New England Botanical Club and from 1896 to 1917 its recording secretary and treasurer, died at his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on December 19, in his seventy-second year. He was born in Boston on January 11, 1859, and spent his early youth in France, where he received his early education in Paris. Returning to America he continued his studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, from which he was graduated from the civil engineering course in 1878. For many years he engaged in business as an importer of rugs and other oriental goods of rarity, devoting, however, much of his time to the pursuit of botany. He made frequent visits to the less explored portions of New England and the adjacent parts of the Maritime Provinces. He had exceptional skill in the selection and preparation of plant-specimens and built up a personal herbarium of unusual excellence. This, including about 14,000 sheets of mounted specimens, he gave to the Gray Herbarium of Harvard University, of which he had, for many years, been a highly valued member of the visiting committee. He was one of the founders of the New England Botanical Club and during more than twenty years devoted much care to its exploring activities, the upbuilding of its col-

lections, a very methodical record of its meetings and an effective oversight of its finances. After his retirement from business he traveled much in southern

central France and brought out his experiences in a work called "Undiscovered France," a beautifully illustrated volume of unusual insight and charm.

## SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

### SITE FOR A NEW OBSERVATORY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

THE University of Michigan has acquired by purchase two hundred acres of land lying along the left bank of the Huron River, which will be used as a site for a new astronomical observatory. The site had the approval of the late Professor Ralph H. Curtiss, director of astronomical observatories, and was also approved by the late Professor William J. Hussey. It includes, according to an account in *The Michigan Alumni*, a commanding elevation close to but not on a main highway, and is entirely removed from the smoke, vibration, city lights and other conditions which have in recent years continued in increasing degree to make modern astronomical study impossible in the present observatory.

Architects' plans have already been drawn for an observatory designed to accommodate a 75-inch telescope and all the other apparatus required in modern astronomical investigations. The building, according to the plans, will be unpretentious but substantial and fireproof. Aside from the telescope building, the university plans to build a residence for the keeper and the observing staff, and estimates that the cost of the entire undertaking will be \$260,000.

Seventy-five years ago the present observatory was built and equipped with what was then one of the best obtainable telescopes. At that time it was located on the edge of town, where the air was clear, and there were no buildings near by. Since that time it has been hemmed in upon all sides, the view of the skies is obscured by smoke from the university powerhouse, and the operation of the delicate instruments is made nearly impossible by the continual jars caused by the heavy traffic on Ann and Observatory Streets. It is impossible to carry on research work under these conditions. The telescope, which was one of the finest in the country at the time of its purchase many years ago, is now outdistanced by the modern instruments at Harvard, Mt. Wilson, Ohio Wesleyan and Victoria, B. C., and its field is said to be practically worked out.

If the observatory is moved, the university will come into possession of thirty-two acres of land inside the limits of Ann Arbor, which will be free from all restrictions. Four of these acres are used as the site of the present observatory. This property was purchased in 1854 by a fund to which the Honorable Henry N. Walker, Senator Zachariah Chandler, Gen-

eral Lewis Cass and Governor Henry P. Baldwin contributed. There are twenty-six acres of ground east of Observatory Avenue, adjoining the Hospital grounds, which Robert P. Lamont has held for some time for the use of the observatory, as well as two additional acres on which the university has been allowed to erect buildings, with the understanding that other provisions would be made to meet the needs of the observatory. If the observatory is moved, this land will be deeded to the university.

### THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF SOIL SCIENCE

IN accordance with the decision of the general committee of the International Congress of Soil Science meeting on July 6 in Budapest, the sessions of the second congress will be held in Leningrad from July 20 to 31, 1930, under the presidency of C. C. Gedroiz. The first six days the meetings will be in Leningrad and the remaining time will be spent in Moscow. In both cities a series of excursions will be arranged and exhibits of general soil science including special displays devoted to agronomical and forest soil science, utilization of marshes, technical processes of cultivation, land taxation, etc.

After the congress an excursion of twenty-nine days will be made across the soil zones of the European part of Soviet Russia, during which the members will have the opportunity of visiting higher schools, agricultural experiment stations, agricultural and industrial enterprises, etc.

The excursion will be made by special railway trains supplied with sleeping-cars and dining cars, and by steamer on the Volga and the Black Sea. Out of the twenty-nine excursion days three days will be given for rest, two in the Caucasus and one in the Ukraine. In addition to this excursion, special excursions may, if desired, be arranged: (1) to the Mourman peninsula for visiting peat-soils, forest swamps, the biological station, the railroad colonization, etc.; (2) to central Asia, and (3) to the agricultural exhibit of Minsk (White Russia) and other places. A discount of 50 per cent. is given on the railway fares. Members desiring to attend both congress and excursions are requested to communicate with Professor Dr. A. Yarov, president of the Organizing Committee, Moscow, Karuninskaja, Gosplan, not later than February 1, stating at the same time the town in which they would like to receive the visa to enter Russia.