

SCIENCE

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THE AGE OF THE EARTH¹

By Professor GEORG VON HEVESY

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FREIBURG, NON-RESIDENT LECTURER IN CHEMISTRY AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY
UNDER THE GEORGE FISHER BAKER FOUNDATION

BEFORE inaugurating my lectures on this generous foundation established by Mr. George Fisher Baker, I would first of all express my pleasure at having this opportunity to spend a term with my colleagues and the students of this department, which has reached such a high degree of perfection under the able, far-seeing guidance and efficient administration of your genial director, Professor L. M. Dennis. The actuality far exceeds what I had come to expect from the glowing accounts given by my predecessors.

For my introductory lecture I have chosen the problem of the age of the earth. Our earth was born from our sun. The sun, while in the giant-star stage, is supposed to have been broken up by tidal actions induced by a passing star several times more massive than itself. Originally formed in the gaseous state, the earth passed to the liquid state through loss of heat by radiation from its surface, and later into the

solid state. The earth's crust and some of its individuals were formed simultaneously, followed at a much later era by the formation of biological individuals. When did the earth's crust solidify? How many years then elapsed before "life" began to develop? These questions are of interest for both the physical and the biological sciences, and an answer will be sought in the following discussion.

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¹ Introductory public lecture.

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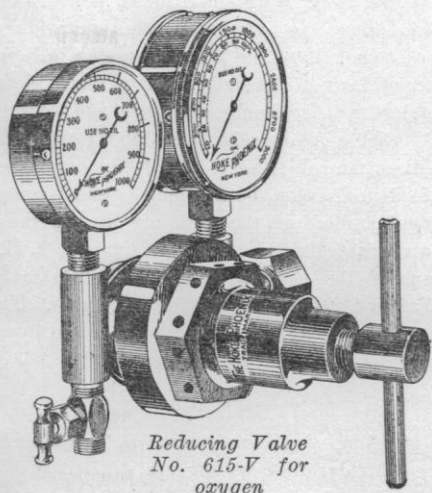
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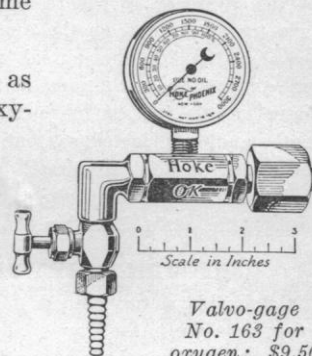
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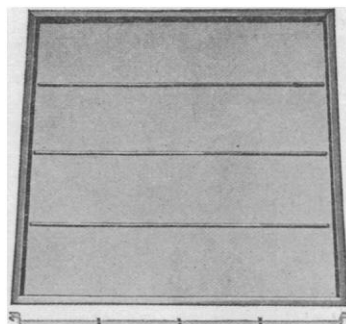
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