

ASTRONOMY, IN INFANCY, YOUTH AND MATURITY.

[*Address delivered before the Astronomical and Physical Society of Toronto in the Lecture Hall of the Canadian Institute, January 23rd, 1900, by the retiring President, Mr. Arthur Harvey, F.R.S.C.*]

The President, Mr. Geo. E. Lumsden, F.R.A.S., occupied the chair

I have found it as difficult to choose a title for my farewell address as to condense it into reasonable compass. I wish to treat, first, of the earliest stage of the development of our science; next, of the time and manner in which it threw off its swaddling clothes; and lastly, of some of its latest achievements. Mr. Lindsay, our editor, suggested as a caption, "The Growth of Astronomy," which will do very well, but I do not intend to attempt a consecutive history.

To be orderly, this paper should begin with the enquiry how old our civilization is.

Plato makes his Kritias tell a curious tale. He brings him to our notice as an old man, who, when a boy, heard from his grandfather the story Solon brought from Egypt. A priest at Sais told the Athenian student that the present Greeks were children, ignorant of their own history; they had really occupied Hellas 8,000 years before,\* and had waged successful war with the Atlantides, who, coming from a great island just outside the Pillars of Hercules, had subjugated Europe and Africa, as far as the Tyrrhenian sea on the north, and Egypt on the south shore of the Mediterranean. Suddenly, however, great earthquakes and floods occurred, as indeed in the history of the human race they often had before: the island of Atlantis was submerged, and the Greek hosts were also swallowed up. In these floods the cities suffered destruction, and none but the hill folk escaped, so that Hellenic civilization had to recommence. Egypt, however, had always been free from earthquakes and torrential rain, having only the usual regulated flood of the Nile, wherefore it had preserved the records which traced back its history to the foundation of the kingdom—9,000 years before. The description given of the Atlantic island is minute, and it has ever

\* In the *Timæus* the figures are thus given, in the Kritias a thousand more years are added.