SCIENTIFIC NOTES.

The usefulness of a free, public, astronomical observatory is being discussed in the cities of New York and Boston. In the former, efforts are being made to accomplish the purpose of appealing to those who have means, and are willing to expend a portion of their wealth in the furtherance of popular schemes for educating their fellows. In the latter, the Boston Scientific Society is taking the lead. A paper on the subject was read by Dr. S. C. Chandler, of Harvard. He argued that a public observatory would not only "have its value as a scientific missionary feature," but that, in competent hands, with a moderate expenditure, the public taste in this department would be appeased, and the service of astronomy could be advanced in a way which is very much needed. All that is being said for the scheme in Boston can be said for such a scheme in Toronto, the centre of the educational interests of the Province, and the seat of many schools and colleges, and two universities, none of which possess a telescope. For a small sum, comparatively speaking, a really useful observatory could be built and equipped. Such an equipment would be lasting in its value, and the perennial source of blessing not only to the students, but to the public, the larger proportion of which must be directly interested in astronomy, the most charming of sciences within its reach.

The Rev. T. E. Espin, F.R.A.S., is to be congratulated upon the manner in which he has edited a new edition of Webb's Celestial Objects for Common Telescopes. This book, which has been pronounced a classic, should be in the hands of every observer, to whom it is simply invaluable. Mr. Espin is issuing it in two parts; the first is devoted to the sun, planets, moon, comets and meteors, and the second to the stars. The editor has done well in inserting in the first volume (just received from Longmans, Green & Co.) two entirely new chapters, the one on celestial photography, the other on the spectroscope as applied to the telescope. both well written. The hints as to photography are already being availed of by several members of the Toronto Astronomical Society, which Mr. Espin, in his preface, thanks for having appointed a special committee to make suggestions, which were inserted by the editor when he undertook the work, which must have been a labor of love. The first volume is embellished by an excellent photograph of the late Prebendary Webb, who laid all astronomers, but especially amateurs, under a debt of lasting obligation.

It is interesting to learn that Lippmann, of Paris, is still making progress in his investigations having for their purpose the photographing of objects in their true colors. He has recently communicated a paper on the subject to The French Academy of Sciences, the contents of which have have not been made public.

Speaking of this, reminds us that a photographer has discovered that by interposing screens of green and yellow glass between the combinations of the lens in a camera, it has been found to be possible to translate the colors of Nature into correct monochrome values; with long exposures, special plates are not necessary. If the yellow be placed behind the green screen, in the proper position, the correction required is secured.

The two most interesting planets observable are Jupiter and Saturn; the former is still in excellent position; the latter is rapidly becoming better situated for study. Saturn's rings are opening out and the planet presents now an aspect much more interesting, from the general observer's standpoint, than he has for some years. Venus has become a morning-star. Mercury has just ceased to be an object easily visible in the West after sunset.

—G. E. L.