

first half of the present century, and even during the last half of the preceding one. The labor which could profitably be devoted to this work would be more than that required in any one astronomical observatory. It is unfortunate for this work that a great building is not required for its prosecution because its needfulness is thus very generally overlooked by that portion of the public interested in the progress of science. An organization especially devoted to it is one of the scientific needs of our time.

In such an epoch-making age as the present it is dangerous to cite any one step as making a new epoch. Yet it may be that when the historian of the future reviews the science of our day he will find the most remarkable feature of the astronomy of the last twenty years of our century to be the discovery that this steadfast Earth of which the poets have told us is not after all quite steadfast; that the north and south poles move about a very little, describing curves so complicated that they have not yet been fully marked out. The periodic variations of latitude thus brought about were first suspected about 1880, and announced with some modest assurance by Küstner, of Berlin, a few years later. The progress of the views of astronomical opinion from incredulity to confidence was extremely slow until, about 1890, Chandler, of the United States, by an exhaustive discussion of innumerable results of observations showed that the latitude of every point on the Earth was subject to a double oscillation, one having a period of a year, the other of 427 days.

Notwithstanding the remarkable parallel between the growth of American astronomy and that of your city, one cannot but fear that if a foreign observer had been asked only half a dozen years ago at what point in the United States a great school of theoretical and practical astronomy, aided by an establishment for the exploration of the heavens, was likely to be established by the munificence of private citizens, he would have been wiser than most foreigners had he guessed Chicago. Had this place been suggested to him I fear he would have replied that were