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## HENRY SMITH PRITCHETT

The election of Dr. Henry S. Pritchett, Superintendent of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, to the Presidency of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was confirmed at a meeting of the Corporation held March 30. He will succeed President Crafts at the beginning of the next school year.

Dr. Pritchett was born April 16, 1857, at Fayette, Missouri, and is the son of Professor C. W. Pritchett, Director of the Morrison Astronomical Observatory at Glasgow in the same State.

His college training was obtained in the local institution in that place, and supplemented in 1876 by study in mathematics and astronomy under Professor Asaph Hall at the Naval Observatory at Washington, and later by study at the University of Munich, leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr. Pritchett began his professional life as a computer in the Naval Observatory, and on competitive examination he was advanced to the place of assistant astronomer in that observatory in 1878. This place he resigned in 1880 to become astronomer at the Morrison Observatory; and in 1881 he became assistant professor of mathematics and astronomy in the Washington University, St. Louis, and continued on the faculty of that institution until 1897.

In 1882 he was appointed astronomer to the Transit of Venus expedition to New Zealand, and spent the next year in these observations and in pendulum determinations in Australia, India, China, and Japan. In 1884 he became full professor of mathematics and astronomy in Washington University, the chair formerly occupied by Professor William Chauvenet.

The greater part of Dr. Pritchett's professional life has been spent in the service of Washington University, where his work as teacher, as director of the observatory, and as president of the St. Louis Academy of Sciences, has brought him recognition among scientific men in this country and abroad. During this time he has published technical papers giving the results of original work in astronomy and geodesy, and is a member of a number of scientific bodies in Europe and America. At present he represents the United States in the international association for exact measurement of the earth, and will undoubtedly retain this position.

Dr. Pritchett has been called into the government service from time to time to take up special investigations, the results of which have appeared in various publications of the government.

In 1897 Dr. Pritchett was called by the President to the head of the Coast and Geodetic Survey, the oldest scientific department of the government. He took charge of the bureau at a time when it had been demoralized by political interference. He was called upon also to deal with the exigencies arising from the Spanish War and the large increase of coast line of the United States which resulted therefrom. The revision of the very imperfect Spanish charts of Porto Rico has been nearly completed from new surveys. His administration of the office has resulted in

a reorganization of the whole service and the adoption of a plan of work which looks years ahead, and which includes the survey of the new possessions of the United States. His administration of the office has been entirely satisfactory to the Secretary of the Treasury and to the President; and it seems likely that the permanent civil service, with promotion for merit, which is well established in the department, will prove its efficiency so completely as to commend itself to Congress and to the country. The supervision of weights and measures and of electrical standards is also in charge of the Coast Survey, and the duties are yearly demanding a closer scientific supervision.

The Coast Survey was authorized in 1807 under the direction of the Secretary of the Treasury; and work was begun in 1816, naval officers being chiefly employed. Between 1818 and 1832 the survey was directed by the War Department, and little work was done. It was put in charge of the Treasury Department in 1833, and in 1834 transferred to the Navy. In 1836 the Treasury again took control, and the survey was reorganized by a board of which Hassler was chairman. The plans then laid down have since been followed. The title was changed in 1879 to Coast and Geodetic Survey.

Men of high reputation have filled the office of superintendent, and the circumstances which have led to their retirement have been of different kinds, sometimes being due to the inevitable conflict between the man of precise methods and a system of political favoritism; but the place has always been difficult to fill apart from such causes of friction, for the duties of the office not only call for administrative and scientific ability, but also for those rare qualities in dealing with men which procure from legislative committees a recognition of the claims of a great national work of precise scientific measurement.

The list of superintendents includes Hassler, 1816-18 and 1832-43; Bache, 1843-67; Peirce, 1867-74; Patterson, 1874-81; Hilgard, 1881-85; Thorne, 1885-89; Mendenhall, 1889-94; Duffield, 1894-97; Pritchett, 1897-1900.

Professor Pritchett has published a number of papers on astronomical subjects during the last twenty years; and until recently his work, besides these researches, has been devoted to teaching mathematics, engineering, and astronomy. It is scarcely necessary to say that the experience and high reputation gained in these fields, as well as in an important administrative position, are fitting qualities to bring to the new position as the head of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

#### LIST OF PAPERS PUBLISHED BY DR. PRITCHETT.

Report on Observations of the Total Eclipse of July 29, 1878. Washington, 1880.

Determination of the Rotation Period of Jupiter from Observations of the Great Red Spot. *Proceedings A. A. A. S.*, 1881.

Observations of the Satellites of Mars. *A. N.*, vol. 91.

Observations of Conjunctions of the Satellites of Saturn. *A. N.*, vol. 92.

A Determination of the Mass of Mars. *A. N.*, vol. 93.

A Determination of the Diameter of Mars from Micrometric Observations, with a Discussion of Systematic Errors. *A. N.*, vol. 97.

Ephemeris of the Satellites of Mars. *Am. Jour. Adv. of Science*, December, 1881.

Observations of Comets. *A. N.*, vol. 99.

Determination of the Longitude of the Mexican National Observatory. *A. J.*, vol. 7.

The Transit of Mercury 1891. *Sidereal Messenger*, vol. 10.

Report of Washington University Eclipse Expedition. *Proc. S. L. Acad. Sci.*, vol. 7.

The Solar Corona of 1889 with Discussion of the Photographs (illustrated). Proc. Ast. Soc. Pacif., vol. 3.

Report on the Determination of Latitude and Longitude of Morrison Observatory. Proc. Morrison Observatory, vol. 1.

A Formula for Predicting the Population of the United States. Proc. S. L. Acad. Sci., 1890. (Reprinted in Proceedings American Statistical Society.)

Observations of Double Stars and Personal Equation in Double Star Measure. Proc. S. L. Acad. Sci., vol. 7.

Eclipses of Saturn's Satellites and their Use in Determining the Planet's Diameter (with tables). Thesis for degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Munich, 1895.

Personal Equation in Time Observations. Astrophysical Journal, 1898.

Lists of Observations of Double Stars, Comets, and Small Planets in the Ast. Nachrichten, and a large number of publications in various Government Reports containing the results of Latitude, Longitude, and Gravity Determinations, Meridian Circle Observations, etc.

A Plan for an International Measurement of an Arc of the Ninety-eighth Meridian. Proc. Royal Soc. Canada, 1899.

## HOUSTON HALL\*

## THE HOUSTON CLUB OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Any visitor at the University of Pennsylvania will get an inadequate idea of that famous institution of the Quaker City if he lingers so long in the libraries and laboratories as not to see Houston Hall. If the guide is a student, he is presumably a member of the Houston Club, and will make sure that it is not omitted. If the stranger comes from another college located in a large city, he will surely envy the University this admirable provision for the social life of its students, and may leave it with another hope for the enrichment of the life of his own alma mater. The present undertaking of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Alumni Association lends additional interest to the study of what has been accomplished at other colleges; and, while in the end the needs of the Institute will necessarily prove not quite identical with those of the University, a comparison of conditions and a careful study of the solution which has been so successful at Philadelphia cannot fail to have great value.

The University of Pennsylvania was founded in 1740, and has at present 2683 students. While located in a large city, it has been fortunate in retaining the ownership of not less than fifty-two acres of land (1897-98), with athletic grounds (Franklin Field) and dormitories. The general effect of its site and spacious detached buildings is distinctly suburban—rather than urban—in about the same degree

\* Acknowledgment is due to the courtesy of the officers of the Houston Club and to Mr. Frederick M. Mann, M. I. T. '94, for highly valued aid in furnishing material for this account of Houston Hall.

as at Harvard or Yale. The need of special provision for the social and physical welfare of its students would then appear to have been much less pressing than it is at the Institute, where space can hardly be found for a tennis court or a bicycle rack, and students can only congregate in each other's way.

The foundation of Houston Hall and what it now is are told in an attractive booklet issued to members of the Houston Club, from which the following account is in substance taken:—

In one of their meetings, held some four or five years ago, a committee of the University branch of the Young Men's Christian Association was called to consider the subject of obtaining a building for the use of its rapidly increasing membership. The committee in question at this particular session numbered just thirteen, and the good luck in odd numbers which has extended down from Christopher Columbus to Rory O'More has been once more amply verified. The proposition laid before the committee was suitably ambitious: it demanded that the University branch should be housed as amply as the parent society at Chestnut and Fifteenth Streets. With this end in view, the work of securing a building fund was started, and reports of slow progress were made to subsequent committee meetings. So slow, indeed, was the progress that, after having obtained the pledges of some six thousand dollars, the hopes of the Association began to waver.

At this stage of affairs one of the trustees of the University, now its popular provost, became interested. Dr. Harrison made investigations as to the sum likely to be needed, and proposed to obtain \$100,000 for this work. To realize this proposal, Dr. Harrison shortly afterward called upon Mr. H. H. Houston, the founder of the

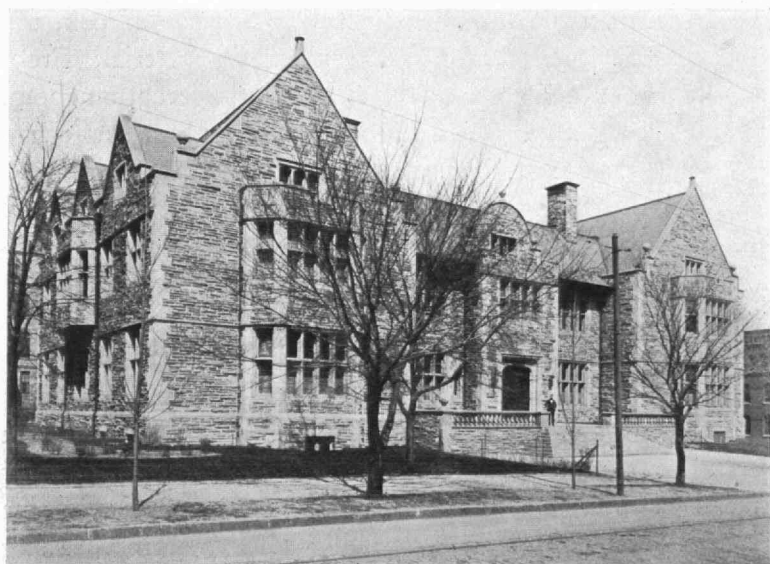


Union Line Express Company, and afterward long identified with the activities of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. Mr. Houston promptly responded to the call; and it was characteristic of his modesty that he never visited the building during its erection, simply issuing his checks for the money as it was needed in the progress of construction. Before the Hall was finished, the useful life of Mr. Houston came suddenly to its close. His death is too recent to have been forgotten by the community in which it was so important a factor. Dr. Harrison afterward secured from the widow of Mr. Houston a further gift of \$50,000, which was required to complete and furnish the Hall.

About this time, from a spontaneous thought of the original committee, and one which was at once accepted by all who were interested in the work, the new building found its appropriate name. Some years before, Mr. Houston had sent a cherished son to the University, a son of bright promise and large preparation for the future which seemed likely to be pointed out for him. But in advance of the father this son had been called away. The Hall, therefore, came naturally to be regarded as an unconscious memorial of both parents to their child.

The plan of the structure was the result of a competitive effort among architects; and it would seem to have been happily appropriate that the prize was won by two young graduates of the University, who were in hearty sympathy with the undertaking. The location is central, and conveniently surrounded by some of the most attractive features of the campus and the tall buildings which form its border. It is designed in the style which prevailed in England at the time of the transition from the Gothic to the Renaissance. The body of the walls is of a light gray stone,

which comes from the quarry in long, flat pieces. The building has, therefore, a highly stratified appearance; and, the pointing being done in a broad, old-fashioned manner, the stone-work has the effect of great stability. The mullions, transoms, sills, door heads, copings, etc., throughout the building are of Indiana limestone, which has been used



Houston Hall.

in sufficiently liberal quantities to avoid the meagre effect which often results in American renderings of the transition, or Elizabethan, style. The broad, mullioned windows, which are characteristic of this style, have been introduced in such a way as to give the building, not only the appearance of being amply lighted, but to actually insure that result. Carved detail has been sparingly used, and is in evidence only in a few shields bearing the arms of the University and the initials of the donors at various parts of the