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ASTRONOMY

Spiral Nebula in Andromeda Bordered With Star Clusters

See Front Cover

TINY FLECKS of hazy light around the borders of one of the most famous of the spiral nebulae, the one in the constellation Andromeda, are now believed to be great globular clusters of stars—literally swarms of suns crowded like clouds of gnats that hang over the marshes at twilight.

This provisional identification was made by Dr. Edwin Hubble of the Mt. Wilson Observatory of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, after a careful study of 140 objects. Their astronomical behavior led him to the conclusion that they are probably star clusters, similar to the easily identified clusters that belong to our own particular part of the starry universe. Prof. Hubble's report was presented before the National Academy of Sciences.

The Andromeda nebula is one of the most famous of these great "pinwheels of the sky," whose spiral structure can be discerned only by means of the most powerful telescopes. Although it consists of so many thousands of stars that the 140 probable clusters on its border are mere incidents of its structure, it can barely be seen as a bit of light by the naked eye. This is because it is so immensely distant from the galaxy to which our own solar system belongs. Its distance has been measured as 900,000 light-years.

On the cover of this week's SCIENCE NEWS LETTER is a photograph of a typical star cluster. It is not one of Prof. Hubble's 140 Andromeda objects, which are too far away to show so much detail, but one belonging to our own galaxy. It serves, however, to illustrate the great beauty of these symmetrical crowded masses of stars. The photograph was made at the Mt. Wilson Observatory.

Science News Letter, April 30, 1932



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