

ASTRONOMY—AAAS

Origin of Meteorites

All are shattered fragments from ancient planet smaller than earth that once moved in an orbit between those of Mars and Jupiter.

► METEORITES, those chunks of iron and stone that occasionally rush flaming down through the atmosphere and make crash landings on the earth, are all shattered fragments of an ancient planet that once revolved around the sun, Dr. Carl August Bauer, of the University of Michigan, told the section on astronomy of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The planet was smaller than the earth. It moved in an orbit between those of Mars and Jupiter, where the asteroids or minor planets are to be found today.

The speaker fitted the various types of stony and metallic meteorites that have been collected and studied into a picture of a planet considerably smaller than the earth but built essentially in the same way. Specifications call for a metallic core of iron and nickel, with the nickel most concentrated towards the center but present in some proportion throughout. Outside of this was a stony shell, again with metal admixtures most abundant in its deeper part, grading down to practically nothing in a thin outer layer corresponding to the stony crust of the earth.

This theory of the ancient planet is made plausible by Dr. Bauer's studies indicating that meteorites may have been "artificially aged" by cosmic-ray bombardment in outer space, very much as whisky is sometimes hurried through the aging process by ultraviolet irradiation. Thus they are not always as old as they seem.

Heretofore, age of meteorites has been

estimated largely on the basis of the small quantities of helium they contain, just as terrestrial rocks are judged. This is because the "orthodox" way for helium to originate is through the slow decay of uranium. This is all very well for earthly rocks, especially for those from well-buried sites; but it has now been shown that helium can also be produced by the impact of cosmic rays on various elements.

PSYCHOLOGY—AAAS

First-Born More Selfish

► THE oldest child in the family tends to be more jealous, more selfish—and neater. The younger brother or sister is likely to be happier, more generous—and more punished.

This effect of place in the family on personality was reported by Profs. W. Allison Davis and Robert J. Havighurst, of the University of Chicago. It applies, they found, to both colored and white families of the middle economic class.

Negro and white middle-class families are very much alike, they observed. They have the same number of children, are about the same age when they marry, and bring up their children in much the same way.

But the differences found are interesting. Negroes are more easy-going about feeding their babies whenever they want to nurse and they wean them later than do the white mothers. On the other hand, Negro mothers are more strict about toilet training.

Negro mothers give their girls more responsibility in the home but do not let them go to the movies as young as do the white mothers, it was found.

Intelligence tests are unfair to poor children, the same scientists told the meeting. Rich children, they say, have the advantage on three counts: they are more familiar with the situations described in the class of "scholastic" problem used, the words used are more common among wealthy people, and finally rich children are more likely to have a

This "artificial aging" of meteorites, occurring irregularly, may very well be responsible for the great apparent differences in age among meteorites that have been analyzed, Dr. Bauer suggested. This explanation overcomes the principal objection to the otherwise quite plausible theory that these meteorites are the shattered fragments of an ancient planet.

What tore this ancient planet apart and scattered its pieces throughout a wide zone of planetary space is not even guessed at as yet. But although the fragments of that long-perished planet may not be as old as formerly assumed, they are by no means things of yesterday; for Dr. Bauer assigned to them an antiquity of "several hundred million years."

Science News Letter, January 3, 1948

motive to work hard to solve an academic problem.

Reading is a serious handicap to the poor children, they found in an experiment with 516 school children. But the poorest children improve more than the richest children when the situations and words of the problems are chosen from among those more generally common in the United States.

Science News Letter, January 3, 1948

GENERAL SCIENCE

Old Italian Library Asks Aid To Rebuild Collection

► A FAMED Italian cultural center, the Ambrosiana Library and Art Gallery of Milan, has issued an international appeal for books and periodicals with which to rebuild its war-damaged scientific collection.

Already, 35 nations are represented in the contributions, but officials of the Ambrosiana are particularly anxious to receive more material from the United States. Scientific publications may be sent to Erminio Turcotti, an Italian civil engineer who is working on the restoration of the scientific library of the Ambrosiana.

Science News Letter, January 3, 1948

Ergot in grain causes ergotism in man; ergot is an important disease of rye, wheat, barley and many grasses which sometimes passes to humans eating the grain.

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