

## PROBLEMS OF SPACE

ENIGMAS THAT SCIENCE IS STRIVING TO SOLVE.

The Question of an Infinity of Worlds and Their Distribution in an Infinity of Space—Distance of the Nearest External Universe.

There can be no subject more calculated to impress a man's mind with his own insignificance compared with the overwhelming power and glory of his Creator than the study and contemplation of the firmament in all its boundless infinity. It is not to be wondered at that from the earliest ages the subject has never failed to exercise a fascination over men and that those who by their genius and learning have most nearly succeeded in solving its mysteries have always been revered and esteemed to be among the wisest men of their day. More has been done within the last fifty years than in all the rest of the world's history toward the piercing of the veil which shuts off from our eyes the beauties and mysteries of faroff realms, and doubtless by means of the spectroscopic and increased size in the lenses of our telescopes we shall be enabled before long to unravel still more secrets of the universe.

The question as to whether space is finite or infinite can never be satisfactorily argued out or indeed even thought of, for the human mind is incapable of grasping the existence of a limit to space, even in its most abstract form, but the question of the infinity of worlds and their distribution in the spaces of space lies more closely within the scope of human intellect, for we have many material facts and calculations to go upon in discovering the probable answer to this most fascinating question.

Only as far back as the seventeenth century astronomers placed the number of stars in the universe as a little over 1,000, but this was absurd, as the real number visible to the naked eye is about 7,000, and perhaps treble that number can be seen by persons with exceptionally good eyesight. When the heavens, however, are examined through a telescope the number of visible stars is enormously increased. In fact, it has been calculated that the most powerful reveals as many as 100,000,000! Yet what is that vast number compared with infinity? It cannot even be likened to a grain of sand on the seashore, and yet if we think the matter out carefully we shall see that the number of visible stars cannot really be infinite, for if they were the heavens would be a complete blaze of light. This, of course, we know is far from being the case, and indeed there cannot be any doubt that in certain parts of the heavens at least the number of visible stars is already known, for even with the very strongest telescopes there are blank spaces which are absolutely devoid of stars beyond a certain magnitude or even the veriest trace of nebulous light.

These spaces are known to astronomers by the name of "coal sacks." They contain no stars fainter than the twelfth magnitude and, in fact, appear to mark those parts of the universe which are comparatively thin. On the other hand, in other parts of the heavens we have not by any means reached the limit of telescopic resolvability. It is curious, though, that these intensely dark "holes" in the bright empyrean are mostly to be found in those parts of the heavens where most stars abound, notably in the Milky Way.

These remarkable blank spots have been a favorite theme of discussion and argument among all astronomers, for, whatever the real shape or distribution of that universe may be, they point to the almost certain inference that in a particular direction at least there is an actual limit to the number of stars, and if there is a limit in one direction we have every right to suppose that such is the case in others, and that we have only to wait for telescopes strong enough to resolve those parts which are still unresolved to discover that a point can be reached when all the stars of the universe are unfolded to our gaze.

It now, we admit that the number of visible stars is limited, the next question to be asked is, What is the order or shape of their distribution? Various astronomers have had various theories about this matter. Herschel was inclined to think that the visible universe was in the shape of a disk, though his views in this direction were considerably modified during the later part of his life. Struve considered that the universe was in the shape of a disk of limited thickness, but infinite length, a theory which is hard to support, as, unless the ultimate extinction of light in space is believed in, that part of the heavens which lay toward the plane of the disk would necessarily shine with the brightness of the sun. Proctor, though finding it impossible to define any particular shape for the visible universe, as a whole, was of the opinion that the brightest part of it—namely, the Milky Way—was in the form of a spiral. This latter theory, however, has many objections to contend with. Other astronomers have had different theories on this question, but all, or nearly all, appear to admit an ultimate limit to the size of the visible universe, or, in other words, believe that the galaxy of worlds which surround us form, in fact, but an islet in the vast infinity of space.

It would appear at first sight that any attempt to solve the question of the existence of external galaxies and their distance was absolutely futile, yet such is not the case. The result of calculation is that the nearest external universe is so far distant that light from it traveling at the speed of 186,000 miles a second would take nearly 90,000,000 years to reach us!—Chambers' Journal.

## Mr. Bowser Buys a Hog

Planned to Have a Real Crispy Bacon of His Own Raising in Winter.

PORKER UPSETS SCHEME

Animal Doesn't Like Its Quarters in the Back Yard and Finally Escapes.

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MR. BOWSER had been humble and nice and sweet and contrite for five long days, and Mrs. Bowser was beginning to hope that the cure would be permanent, when a carpenter appeared in the back yard after noon with a load of lumber and two workmen. The cook was told to ask Mrs. Bowser to please step to the back door, and when she appeared the carpenter asked: "Madam, where will you have the pigpen located?" "The—the what?" she gasped. "The pigpen. I received instructions from Mr. Bowser by telephone an hour ago to come up here and build one. I suppose you want it against the back fence?" "He—he telephoned you, did he?" "He did, and he said he didn't want any delay over it."

"And he's bought a pig?" "He probably has or he wouldn't want a pigpen." Mr. Bowser had not dropped the slightest hint of his intentions around the house. He had departed for the office that morning as meek as a rabbit, and now all of a sudden he had broken loose and was telephoning to have a pigpen rushed to completion. Mrs. Bowser's first idea was to protest to the carpenter and put her foot right down, but she realized that he would have thoughts and do more or less talking. She therefore pointed out a place for the pen and retired into the house.

**Cook Was Anxious.** "Is it a grizzly bear that he is going to pen up here to be thirsting for my blood?" asked the cook in anxious tones.

"It's only a pig, I believe."

"And what do we want of a pig? Is it a grunting, squealing pig of a pig?"



A MAN CAME UP THE ALLEY DRIVING A PIG BEFORE HIM.

that's going to add to the harmony of this household?"

"If Mr. Bowser wants a pig he must have a pig," said Mrs. Bowser as she passed upstairs.

"Yes, and if Mr. Bowser wants a bellowing elephant he must have one!" muttered the cook to herself as she began to wrestle the pots and pans about.

That pigpen was planned, erected and finished in two hours and when it stood completed was good enough for any pig that ever walked on four legs. The last nail had scarcely been driven when a man came up the alley driving a pig before him. He had a long rope attached to one of the animal's hind feet, and he had the look of a man not afraid of anything in the hog line. He also sent word by the cook that he wanted to see the mistress of the house, and when Mrs. Bowser appeared in the back yard she was asked:

"Shall I dump him right into the pen, ma'am?"

"Who is the pig for?" "For Mr. Bowser. I was in his office yesterday telling him about my Wiltshire pigs, and he bought one to be delivered today. Did you ever see anything finer, ma'am?"

**Characteristics of the Pig.** It was a pig about a year old—in fact, he had arrived at that stage of life when he might properly be termed a hog. He was long legged and long bodied. His back came up to an edge, and all the meat on him would not make a full dinner for one crow. He had a cast in one eye, and his mouth was screwed around to the left, and he was not altogether a lovely picture to gaze upon. Mrs. Bowser started to say so to the hog man, but she checked herself. He had worked Mr. Bowser for a soft snap and got his money, and why hurt his feelings by telling him that if he had glued a few more hairs on the pig's tail the animal would have passed anywhere for a hyena? The pig was squealing while coming up the alley. He squealed while entering the

yard. He stood there and looked about him and squealed.

"What does he mean by that?" queried Mrs. Bowser.

"It's just his piggy way, ma'am. That pig is like a kitten. He'll be a joy to the house. You'll hear him the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night, and there won't be any need to keep parrots or canaries around."

"Is it a little German band that I'm to listen to all day long?" asked the cook of Mrs. Bowser, but the latter made no reply. She couldn't think of anything to say.

**Squeals Attract Attention.**

Two hours later Mr. Bowser dropped off the car half a block from home. Pedestrians were looking and listening. There was a sound in the air like a bad boy drawing the teeth of a saw across iron. The nearer he got to home the louder and more chilling the sounds. As he went up the front steps his teeth were fairly on edge, and he said to Mrs. Bowser at the door:

"For heaven's sake, why haven't you telephoned for a policeman to stop that noise?"

She beckoned him to follow her down the hall and to a back window in the sitting room. She threw it up and pointed to the pigpen and said:

"Your pig is there, and he has kept this noise up for three long hours without a break."

"Oh, it's the pig, eh? Well, why didn't you feed him?"

"We have carried out everything we could think of, but he won't even look at food. Why on earth did you go and buy a pig?"

"Come, now, my dear woman, don't get excited. I was offered a Wiltshire pig at a bargain. You know we have quit buying bacon at the butcher shops. If we have any for the winter we must raise it for ourselves."

She beckoned him to come out and look at the pig. Their presence was greeted with a shriller edge to the squeals, and the animal began leaping up and gnashing its teeth.

**Animal Was Lean.**

"How many years do you think it will take you to get bacon out of that?" asked Mrs. Bowser. "He's like a plank, with four wooden legs under him."

"But that's the way with all Wiltshires, my dear. Four weeks of food and contentment will make a roly poly pig out of him. I want to kill him along about Thanksgiving time. I'll make the sweetest, nicest bacon out of him you ever tasted. Think of sitting at our own table and eating bacon of our own raising!"

"And think of those squeals lasting night and day for two months!" she replied as she put her fingers in her ears.

"Yes, he wants sour milk."

Mr. Bowser went to the dairy and got sour milk. He went to the feed store and got corn. He went to the grocery and got meal. The pig would notice none of them. He simply stood and squealed and squealed, interrupting himself now and then in an effort to spring high enough to bite Mr. Bowser. Seven or eight boys gathered on the alley fence. Four tramps entered by an alley gate and proffered advice. A policeman came along and observed that what the pig was sighing for was about 17,000 whacks with a club.

The Bowsers went in to dinner. They didn't have music by the band as they ate, but music from the pig. An African savage would have found sweet melody in those squeals. They were as monotonous as a deaf and dumb boy pounding on the bottom of a dishpan.

"Well, what are you going to do?" asked Mrs. Bowser after half an hour of it.

**Needed Petting.** "When we have finished dinner I shall go out and scratch his back with a chip. It has just occurred to me that he has been raised a pet and is squealing because he misses the little attentions he is used to. The minute he feels a chip raking along his spine he will be as quiet as a lamb. You know I must have bacon for breakfast, Mrs. Bowser, and you know that it must be crisp and—"

The squeals from the back yard had become heartrending, and the dinner was left untouched. No sooner had Mr. Bowser made his appearance at the back door than something ran against him and sent him sprawling. It was that pig. He had jumped the pen at last and was taking a canter around the yard. His squeals had become shrieks, and there were more than fifty spectators to applaud. Mr. Bowser scrambled up and armed himself with a clothes prop and headed the procession. The pig circled the yard three times and then went out of the alley gate with a farewell squeal, to be seen never, no, never, again. The crowd gave three cheers, the boys rushed in and tore the pen down and escaped with the boards, and as twilight settled down and the cricket turned up Mr. Bowser entered the house and said to Mrs. Bowser:

"Madam, this is the dead line, and you can drive me no farther. Your object was to assassinate me, and tomorrow morning we will telephone to our respective lawyers and have the divorce settled once for all."

M. QUAD.

**The Furnace.** The furnace fire's started now, And trouble has begun, For it is difficult to suit The whims of every one. Elvira thinks it is too hot— You know she's rather stout— While Eunice says: "I'm freezing cold! Don't let the fire go out."

Marla wants the damper up, And Mildred wants it down, Whichever way I fix the thing, I'm greeted with a frown. Oh, I shall welcome with a whoop The advent of the spring, And when the winter is all gone I'll cheer like everything! —Somerville Journal.

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