the scales adopted to be reduced to a common system. This seems to give sufficient latitude, but, nevertheless, at the eleventh hour, no less than five different papers are presented on this vexed question of magnitude. Among other papers forming the annexe is a short but interesting note from the Astronomer Royal on the number of stars found on each of the plates devoted to photographing the Polar Cap, with a comparison with the numbers comprised in the Durchmusterung and the accurate catalogues of the Astronomische Gesellschaft. The totals are as follows :—

Number of stars measured on the plates	58,176
Number of stars to the square degree	70·0
Number of stars in Argelander's Durchmusterung	9979
Ratio of photographed stars to Bonn D.M. ...	5·83
Number of stars in A.G.C. Catalogues	4966
Ratio of photographed stars to A.G.C.	11·7

If the number of stars approximately increases as the magnitude diminishes, the ratio here given would point to the faintest stars on the plate being 1·9 mag. fainter than Argelander's faintest stars, or well covering the eleventh magnitude, originally assigned as the limit to which the catalogue should extend.

Since writing the above, M. Lœwy has published very complete details showing the approximate times of observation of the planet Eros at no less than forty-six observatories where the work has been undertaken. The energy displayed is of the most gratifying character, and the final result will no doubt demand a degree of confidence commensurate with the labour that has been bestowed on the undertaking. The work is shown to be one of gigantic magnitude, and M. Lœwy displays considerable hopefulness in suggesting that two years may see it completed. Several other papers, all devoted to securing accuracy and homogeneity in the final reductions, also appear in this brochure. We may especially call attention to a paper by the Director of the Paris Observatory on the degree of precision that the photographic measures possess, and of the success that is likely to attend the adoption of the scheme for driving the equatorial at various rates depending on the amount of geocentric motion of the planet itself. The additional matter supplied by the Paris authorities is of a highly interesting character to which we hope to do justice later, when complete details from the various authorities are published.

THE COLORADO POTATO BEETLE.

THE official announcement by the Board of Agriculture of the appearance of the Colorado potato beetle swarming in a potato field at Tilbury is a very serious matter, for we have no wish to see another insect pest added to those with which our agriculturists already have to contend. It is satisfactory to know that the Board took instant measures to cause the destruction of all the crops within the infested area ; and as the surrounding neighbourhood has since been searched in vain for any further traces of the insect, it is confidently hoped that the measures taken for its timely extirpation have proved successful.

The beetle is about half an inch long, and slightly oval in form. The wing-cases are longitudinally and alternately striped with black and yellow, and the wings are red. The grubs, which feed on a great number of other wild and cultivated plants besides the potato, are orange or reddish, with a row of black spots on each side. The oval yellow eggs are laid in clusters.

The insect was so destructive in North America some years ago that great fears were entertained of its spreading to Europe ; and at that time was passed the Destructive Insects Act, according to which every person meeting with the insect is bound, under a penalty of 10*l*., at once to inform the police, who in their turn must notify the local authorities, who must communicate by telegraph with the Board of Agriculture.

It must be remembered that, if there is danger of an injurious insect establishing itself in a country, instant action is as necessary as in the case of a threatened epidemic. W. F. KIRBY.

PROF. BARON ADOLF ERIK VON NORDENSKJÖLD

WHEN a man who has spent an earnest and useful life reaches the mature age of threescore years and ten, it must be a relief to those near and dear to him when his last days are not spent in suffering. The great Swedish explorer's end was in this wise. "His death," writes his nephew, Dr. Otto Nordenskjöld, "was absolutely sudden ; the same day he was working in his laboratory, occupied with great plans in his mineralogical and chemical work."

Baron Adolf Erik von Nordenskjöld was born at Helsingfors, the capital of Finland, on November 18, 1832, the third in order of seven children. His father, Nils Gustav Nordenskjöld, descended from a scientific family, and, himself an ardent naturalist, was chief of the Mining Department of Finland. Nils Gustav was a most distinguished mineralogist, and his work brought him into communication with the most eminent mineralogists and chemists of his time in France, Germany, and Britain. He travelled as far as the Urals, and on many of his journeys he was accompanied by his son, Adolf Erik von Nordenskjöld, who as a boy became an industrious collector of minerals and insects. He acquired great skill in collecting minerals and in the use of the blow-pipe, which his father handled with a masterly skill, unknown to most of the chemists of the present day. Thus, both by inheritance and by the influence of environment, Nordenskjöld had opportunities allotted only to the few, but which were taken the greatest possible advantage of. His early education was from private tuition, after which he was sent to "gymnasium" at Borgo, a connecting-link between school and university. Here he distinguished himself, as the rector expressed it, "only by absolute idleness." He was marked in his certificate "unsatisfactory" in nearly the whole of the subjects. His parents were judicious enough not to attach any importance to this well-deserved mishap. His private tutor was removed ; and with five silver roubles Nordenskjöld had to seek modest board and lodging, and got full liberty to manage his studies in his own way. "Self-respect," he says, "was thus awakened. I became exceedingly industrious, and was soon one of those then attending the gymnasium who obtained the best reports."

Nordenskjöld entered the University of Helsingfors in 1849, devoting himself chiefly to the study of chemistry, natural history, mathematics, physics, and, above all, of mineralogy and geology. He took charge of the rich mineral collection of Feugard, and made many excursions. In 1853 he accompanied his father on a mineralogical tour to Ural, when he planned an expedition to Siberia, which the Crimean War prevented him from carrying out. On his return he wrote, as his dissertation for the degree of licentiate, a paper "On the Crystalline Forms of Graphite and Chondrodite," which was discussed under the presidency of Prof. Arppe on February 28, 1855. At this time he published "A Description of Minerals found in Finland," "The Mollusca of Finland" with Dr. E. Nylander, and shorter papers in the "Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fenniæ." During this time he was appointed Curator of the Mathematico-Physical Faculty and to a post at the Mining Office with inconsiderable pay. Before he received his second