

Sir Joseph Norman Lockyer

Encyclopedia Article

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Sir Joseph Norman Lockyer

1836-1920

English astronomer who, in 1868, discovered helium, which he found in the sun's atmosphere; its existence on earth was not known until 27 years later. Lockyer began his spectroscopic observation of sunspots in 1866, and discovered that solar prominences are clouds of gas resulting from upheavals in the outer layer of the sun. In 1868 he developed a method of spectroscopic study of solar prominences that did not require the aid of an eclipse to block out the intense light of the sun.