with special reference to the ten-penny shilling, and piecemeal proposals for introducing metric weights and measures. Among the speakers will be Sir Robert Horne, Sir Robert Hadfield, Sir Napier Shaw, Mr. Harold Cox, Mr. Gordon Selfridge and Mr. Felix Blakemore. A number of chambers of commerce and other public bodies in the Dominions Overseas are sending delegates, and representatives from the United States will also be present. In connexion with the Conference a visit to the National Physical Laboratory, Teddington, has been arranged for July 10.

AT a meeting of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh, to be held at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, on July 17 and 18, demonstrations and communications on various aspects of vegetative plant propagation are to be given. At the morning sessions of the meeting, numerous illustrations of the methods and results of propagation from stem, leaf, and root, will be presented, while the afternoon sessions will be devoted to the reading of papers and to a general discussion of the exhibits. The following papers will be read: (1) The propagation of clematis, by Miss Edith Philip Smith; (2) on cuttings of camphor, by Miss Oona Reid; (3) horizontal branch propagation, and (4) root cuttings, by Mr. L. B. Stewart; (5) propagation by bulb scales, by Dr. R. J. D. Graham.

THE Egyptian Government Almanac for 1924 (Cairo: Government Publications Office, 1924; price 10 P.T.) maintains the high standard of usefulness of former editions. It contains a good deal of statistical matter, but aims rather at being explanatory and descriptive. Matters of scientific interest include some papers on the geographical features of Egypt and a useful article on the Nile, its tributaries and water supply. There are notes on the survey of Egypt, the antiquities department and the physical department, including a summary of meteorological data. The section on agriculture and industries is particularly full.

MESSRS. H. SOTHERAN AND CO., 140 Strand, W.C.2, and 43 Piccadilly, W.1, have just issued No. 789 of their "Price Current of Literature," being No. 3, Pt. 4, of their "Catalogue of Science and Technology," and comprising the titles and bibliographic details of some hundreds of books relating to physics, many of which are rare and of great interest and importance. A valuable list of works by, and respecting, Sir Isaac Newton is included. The catalogue should appeal to all students of physics.

ERRATUM.—In announcing the award of a Research Prize of 1000 dollars to Dr. Mary Evelyn Laing in NATURE of June 28, p. 935, it should have been stated that the award referred to is the Ellen Richards Research Prize for 1924.

Our Astronomical Column.

EYEPIECES USED BY SIR WILLIAM HERSCHEL.—It is well known that Sir William Herschel stated that at times he used eyepieces giving magnifying powers in the neighbourhood of 6000. The eyepieces themselves seem to have been lost sight of after his death, and considerable scepticism as to the reality of these powers was expressed by subsequent writers. But recently, Dr. W. H. Steavenson, who was making by request a thorough examination of the Herschel instruments at Slough, found the eyepieces in question, and measured their powers with a dynamometer. He found values agreeing within 10 per cent. of those stated by Herschel, the highest power being well over 6000. This was naturally a single lens, $\frac{1}{60}$ inch in diameter. From a highly enlarged photograph the lens was seen to be not a natural spherical drop, but carefully figured. The curves were hyperbolæ rather than circles, and the two sides were not quite symmetrical, but Dr. Steavenson found that he could get fair definition on a portion of Saturn: the diameter of the well-defined region was only 26″, so that it must have been excessively difficult to keep objects in the field without equatorial mounting. It is satisfactory that Sir William Herschel's accuracy of statement is once more vindicated.

MINOR PLANETS.—The observation of these bodies, which was greatly interrupted by the War, is now once more in full swing. Several interesting objects have been detected in recent months. *Astr. Nach.* No. 5293 contains a study of the special perturbations by Jupiter and Mars of 132 Aethra, by Mr. C. J. Merfield, of Melbourne Observatory. He gives osculating elements for the oppositions of 1924, 1925, 1926, together with an accurate ephemeris for the next few weeks. This body was found by Watson in 1873, and was then lost for fifty years, being recovered in December 1922.

Astr. Nach. No. 5292 contains some observations of Eros made at Berlin-Babelsberg last autumn, its magnitude being 9·6. The planet afterwards went southward, and its observation was continued at Johannesburg. Dr. Witt, its discoverer, is engaged on a careful study of its perturbations, in order to predict the conditions of its near approach to the earth in January 1931. These recent observations will be very useful, as the planet was fairly near the earth.

The last assignment of numbers to recently discovered planets extended to No. 995. As many have been discovered since, the next numbering, in a few months' time, will undoubtedly extend beyond 1000. It should be noted that the number of those known to exist, but not all observed sufficiently for definite numeration, passed 1000 several years ago.

REPORT OF THE CAPE OBSERVATORY.—Dr. H. Spencer Jones, recently appointed H.M. Astronomer at the Cape, has just issued his first annual report. Besides the usual meridian observations, heliometer comparisons of the major planets with neighbouring stars are being made regularly. These have a considerably smaller probable error than meridian places, so will ultimately be very useful for improving the tables of these bodies.

Stellar spectrographs have been taken with the Victoria telescope for the measurement of radial velocities. Many plates have also been taken for proper motions both with this telescope and the astrographic: they are examined by Dr. Innes with the blink micrometer. Messrs. Long and Skjellerup, two voluntary observers, used the small equatorials for the study of 60 variable stars, obtaining more than 140 observations.

Dr. Halm is continuing his studies on stellar masses and luminosities. He suspects that the masses are grouped round the values 6·5, 3·3, 1·6, 0·8, in terms of the sun; they appear to form a geometrical progression. Further details are promised shortly.

Wireless time-signals for the use of ships are sent from the Observatory to Slangkop, where they are automatically distributed.