

WITH reference to the note in our issue of January 10, p. 60, on the proposed motor tours across the western Sahara to Timbuctoo, organised by Citroën Cars, Limited, it is announced that as absolute security cannot be relied upon along the Colomb-Bechar—Timbuctoo route, the opening of the service between the two points has been suspended for a period of at least one year.

APPLICATIONS are invited by the Metropolitan Asylums Board for the two following appointments, namely, the directorship of the board's pathological services and that of their diphtheria antitoxin establishment. Particulars of the appointments and forms of application can be obtained from the Clerk of the Board, Victoria Embankment, E.C.4. The completed forms must be received not later than the morning of Wednesday, January 28.

APPLICATIONS are invited for the post of an assistant agricultural chemist for the Division of Research, Lands

and Forests Department, Sierra Leone. Candidates must hold an honours degree in natural science (chemistry being the principal subject), or associate-ship of the Institute of Chemistry, and a diploma in agriculture. Further particulars and the form of application are obtainable from the Private Secretary (Appointments), Colonial Office, Downing Street, S.W.1.

MR. RICHARD H. BURNE has been awarded the Honorary Medal of the Royal College of Surgeons of England for "services rendered to the advance of biological knowledge." Mr. Burne has greatly extended the Department of Comparative Physiological Anatomy in the Museum of the College, of which department he is the Curator. The medal thus awarded, although founded in 1802, has been awarded only eleven times previously. The list of former recipients includes the names of Sir Richard Owen, Sir James Paget, Lord Lister, and of Sir R. Havelock Charles.

Our Astronomical Column.

THE SOLAR ECLIPSE OF JANUARY 24.—This eclipse cannot be regarded as of great importance for the study of solar physics, owing to the unfavourable season of the year, and the rather low altitude of the sun at all the land portions of the track of totality. The eclipse derives some interest, however, from the populous regions which it traverses in Canada and the N.E. corner of the United States, including some outlying districts of New York.

Efforts have been made to induce the general public to join in the observations; in particular, to note the exact duration of totality at numerous points close to the northern and southern limits. This will enable the exact position of the lunar node to be determined, as Newcomb did from similar observations in England in 1715. Numerous observatories lie within the totality track, so that full advantage will be taken of any opportunities for useful work that weather conditions may afford. The altitude is too small for study of the Einstein shift, which was, moreover, dealt with sufficiently in 1922.

The eclipse has some interest in the British Isles from the fact that, after a barren interval of two centuries, there is a very near approach to totality at St. Kilda in the Western Hebrides. The sun's altitude is, however, insufficient for any useful work, and landing on St. Kilda is generally difficult in winter. There is a large eclipse throughout the British Isles, beginning about 14^h 45^m, and greatest phase an hour later. The magnitude reaches 0.94 at Glasgow, 0.82 in London.

It would seem that the only observation of value that can be made in Britain is the careful timing of the first contact. Dr. Innes proposed a useful method of improving the determination by frequent measures of the distance between the cusps for the first minute or so. If the projection method be employed, two observers can mark on the screen the positions of the North and South cusps at prearranged beats of the clock. This method was found practicable at Greenwich in April 1921.

WOLF'S COMETARY OBJECT OF DECEMBER 22.—Observations of this object on December 22, 23, 25, 26 are now to hand. Dr. A. Kahrstedt, of Berlin-Dahlem, has deduced the following (still very un-

certain) elliptical orbit from the first 3 positions (Copenhagen Circular, No. 56).

T	1925 March 27.7308 G.M.T. (new)
ω	219° 32' 38.0"
Ω	264 47 14.8
i	14 47 11.3
ϕ	40 27 44.4
μ	319.231"
log a	0.69726
Period	11.12 years.

The magnitude is estimated as 16. The approach to the sun will probably cause a slight brightening, but the distance from the earth is increasing. The object will remain observable for some months.

EPHEMERIS FOR GREENWICH MIDNIGHT.

	R.A.	N. Decl.
Jan. 14.0	4 ^h 6.4 ^m	20° 0'
22.0	4 10.2	18 38
30.0	4 16.4	17 29
Feb. 7.0	4 25.0	16 31

The object is in Taurus, moving towards Aldebaran. The elements have some resemblance to those of Faye's Comet, due at perihelion next September. Identity, however, does not appear to be possible.

INTERESTING GROUP OF MORNING STARS.—Mr. W. F. Denning writes: "On the morning of Thursday, January 22, the south-eastern sky before sunrise will display the planets Mercury, Venus, and Jupiter, and the crescent of the moon in near companionship. The picture will be a rare and interesting one, but it will not be easy to observe; for the planets involved will rise at about 6 h. 35 m., and this is only 1 h. 20 m. before the sun. They will be placed, therefore, very near the horizon, and will require a favourable atmosphere at low altitudes in order to be well seen. If the observer occupies a position commanding a good open view of the south-east, and if weather conditions are good, there should not be much difficulty in detecting the various objects, though twilight will be strong. The best time to look for them will be at about 7 A.M. or a little afterwards. Of the planets, Venus will be the most brilliant, Jupiter being next, and Mercury last in the order of magnitude."