

description of Minor Planet 1932 HA, which came to $6\frac{1}{2}$ million miles from the earth, and predicted the discovery of other similar objects. Since then Adonis was discovered in 1936 and made an approach to the earth of $1\frac{1}{2}$ million miles. The recent planet, 1937 UB, has made the closest approach of any, but it is quite possible that others may be discovered nearer still. These small objects present certain very interesting features in connexion with the evolutionary history of our solar system.

The Night Sky in December

At the time of the winter solstice on December 22, the night lasts $16\frac{1}{4}$ hours in the latitude of London. The moon is new on December 2 at $23\cdot2^{\text{h}}$ and full on December 17 at $18\cdot9^{\text{h}}$ U.T. Mercury is an evening star setting at about 17^{h} , but the planet will be difficult to see, even at the time of greatest elongation (21° east) on December 12. Venus rises as a bright star in the late dawn. Mars, Jupiter and Saturn are evening stars, their respective times of southing in mid-December being $16\cdot3^{\text{h}}$, $14\cdot6^{\text{h}}$ and $18\cdot3^{\text{h}}$. Conjunctions between the planets and the moon occur as follows : Mercury on December 4^d 17^{h} ; Venus on December 1^d 14^{h} ; Mars on December 9^d 0^{h} ; Jupiter on December 7^d 0^{h} and Saturn on December 12^d 1^{h} . At 22^{h} in the middle of the month, Algol, Capella, the Pleiades and Aldebaran are near the meridian. The variability of Algol may be watched about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours before and after the following times : December 3^d $0\cdot7^{\text{h}}$, 5^d $21\cdot5^{\text{h}}$, 8^d $18\cdot3^{\text{h}}$, 20^d $5\cdot6^{\text{h}}$, 23^d $2\cdot5^{\text{h}}$, 25^d $23\cdot3^{\text{h}}$, 28^d $20\cdot1^{\text{h}}$ and 31^d $17\cdot0^{\text{h}}$. Comet Encke is traversing the constellation of Ophiuchus ; according to Crommelin's ephemeris given in *B.A.A. Handbook*, p. 34, the comet will reach perihelion on December 27. The Geminid meteors, at maximum frequency about December 10, have their radiant point west of Castor. On a clear night, two nebulae that are very different in nature may be seen with the naked eye. The great nebula in Orion, situated within our stellar system, is a very extensive gaseous nebula nearly 600 light years from the earth. The great Andromeda nebula, 800,000 light years away, is one of the nearest two of a vast host of extra-galactic nebulae extending into remotest space.

Announcements

THE Symons Gold Medal for 1938 of the Royal Meteorological Society has been awarded to Dr. G. M. B. Dobson, reader in meteorology in the University of Oxford.

SIR KINGSLEY WOOD has announced that an inquiry is to be held into the causes leading up to the outbreak of typhoid fever in Croydon, and the steps taken to deal with it. The inquiry will be held by Mr. H. L. Murphy, K.C., who will have as assessors Sir Humphry Rolleston, lately regius professor of physic at Cambridge, and a former president of the Royal College of Physicians, and Mr. H. J. F. Gourley, a past president of the Institution of Water Engineers.

DR. E. F. ARMSTRONG gave away the prizes and delivered an address at the annual prize distribution

and conversazione of the Birmingham Central Technical College on November 17. He was then awarded an honorary associateship of the College. This distinction was inaugurated last year when it was given to Lord Austin, Dr. Sumpner, the first principal of the College, and Dr. C. C. Paterson.

THE RIGHT HON. LORD MACMILLAN will open the new buildings in Foster Court of University College, London, on December 1 at 2.45 p.m. After the opening ceremony, the new buildings (the Foster Court Library, the rooms of the Faculty of Laws, the Departments of Geography and Archaeology, the Junior Laboratory of the Department of Physics and the Department of Zoology) will be open for inspection.

A SPECIAL programme of films on scientific subjects will be shown at the Academy Cinema, Oxford Street, London, on Sunday, December 12, at 2.30 p.m., under the auspices of the Scientific Film Group of the Association of Scientific Workers. Tickets, price 1s. and 1s. 6d., may be obtained, prior to the day of performance, from the Secretary, Association of Scientific Workers, Kelvin House, 28 Hogarth Road, S.W.5, or from Film Centre, 34 Soho Square, W.1.

ON November 19, Capt. G. E. T. Eyston broke the world land speed record at Bonneville Salt Flats, Utah, in his car *Thunderbolt* by driving twice over the measured kilometre at an average speed of 312.20 miles per hour. Sir Malcolm Campbell held the previous record with an average of 301.47 miles per hour. *Thunderbolt* has two Rolls-Royce engines, each capable of developing 2,350 horse-power.

Flying Officer A. E. Clouston and Mrs. Kirby-Green returned to London from Capetown on November 20 in their Comet aeroplane, after making another record (NATURE of November 20, p. 388). The journeys were made in 5 days 17 hr. 28 min. The outward journey was done in the record time of 45 hr. 2 min., and the return journey in 57 hr. 23 min., the latter beating the previous best time by 39 hours. The round trip was faster by 88 hr. than any hitherto made. Another record was set up on November 22, when M. Codos and three companions flew from France to the Argentine in $48\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

A REPORT has been prepared by a joint committee consisting of representatives of the British Rainfall Organization, the Institution of Water Engineers and the Royal Meteorological Society, appointed to consider methods for determining rainfall over any area. The report will be discussed at the general meeting of the Institution of Water Engineers to be held in the rooms of the Institution of Civil Engineers, Great George Street, Westminster, on December 10, at 2.15 p.m. Advance copies of the report can be obtained by members of the institutes concerned from their assistant secretaries.

A CHAIR of social medicine has recently been founded in the Paris Faculty of Medicine with Dr. Crouzon as its first occupant.