

Satellites," by Ellen M. Clerke. We have now before us a second one, entitled "The Planet Venus," in which the authoress lays before us in a pleasant manner a similar summary of the more important points connected with this planet's appearance. Commencing with a few words with regard to the position of Venus with relation to the other planets in the solar system, one is introduced successively to her changes of aspect due to her varying positions in her orbit, to the "silver crown" or halo produced by the refraction of the sun's rays round her globe, and to her rotation, general appearance, and polar caps. Her appearance at times of transit, and the phantom satellite, are then dealt with, the concluding chapter speaking of her in connection with the Star of Bethlehem. In this last reference is made to the "enhanced splendour with which she occasionally—once or twice in a century or so—shines at such times." That the planet does assume this increase of brightness, in addition to that due to her position, seems very doubtful, and the explanation here given to account for it depends on the luminous clouds theory suggested by the lectures on the liquefaction of gases by Prof. Dewar. The monograph is well worth a perusal, and should be widely read.

"MEMOIRE DELLA SOCIETA," &c.—Among the contributions to these memoirs for the month of July will be found a detailed account of the late eclipse of the sun as observed from the Royal Observatory of Catania; a note by Millosevich giving some data with a map for the eclipses of May 28, 1903, and August 30, 1905; and the spectroscopic observations given in graphical form of the sun's limb, made at Palermo and Rome during the months of October, November, and December of 1891.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

IN the September number of the *Geographical Journal*, Mr. Fred. Jeppe has a paper dealing in great detail with the Zoutpansberg gold-fields in the north of the Transvaal, illustrated by a new map of the district on a large scale, and by several photographs of characteristic scenery. The paper is historical as well as topographical, and contains an interesting account of the ancient workings in the Palabora region. The difficulty of orthography of place-names is referred to, several examples of alternative spelling being given, of which the series Li-Thaba, Lehlaba, Lechlaba, Lethaba, Letaba, Taba is characteristic. The district appears capable of great development when difficulties of transport are overcome by a branch from the Delagoa Bay railway.

DR. R. HANSEN contributes a paper to the last number of *Petermann's Mitteilungen* on the changes in the coastline of south-western Schleswig, with maps showing the coast as it existed in 1240, 1634, and 1892. These maps present a striking picture of the progressive diminution in area of the islands north of the mouth of the river Eider, especially Nordstrand, while those immediately adjoining the river mouth have been united with the mainland, and extended in area by the erection of dykes. As the islands have been inhabited from very early times, and protected to a certain extent by dykes, the process of coast-erosion has not been as continuous and gentle as would naturally be the case, but it has been a succession of artificial catyclasms—if the phrase may be used—brought about by exceptional storms destroying the sea-walls. In the old time each of these catastrophes was recorded amongst the islanders by the name of the patron saint of the day when it occurred.

*Petermann's Mitteilungen* also publishes a new map of Chitral and the surrounding districts of the Hindukush, by Mr. F. Immanuel, who describes the region in a short article.

MR. H. M. DICKSON spent the month of August on board H. M. S. *Jackal*, on behalf of the Fishery Board for Scotland, in carrying out a series of physical observations on the water between the Orkney, Shetland, and Faeroe Islands. This work was, to a certain extent, in concert with that being done by the Danish and Swedish Governments on the entrance to the Baltic and the neighbouring ports of the North Sea.

#### MEETING OF THE FRENCH ASSOCIATION.

THE twenty-second meeting of the Association Française pour l'Avancement des Sciences was held this year at Besançon (Departement du Doubs.), capital of the old province

of Franche Comté. Few towns in France, even although small, are wanting in historic or antiquarian attractions, and in these respects Besançon has much to interest the antiquarian as well as the man of science, and therefore on its own merit is well worthy of a visit. The meeting of the French Association in this town not only enabled many to see it who otherwise would perhaps never have had occasion to do so, but owing to the facilities afforded, both by the municipality and by the civil and military authorities, practically everything interesting in the town and in the environs was liberally put within the reach of the members of the Association.

The meetings of the Association were held in the Lycée, which was built by the Jesuits about the commencement of the seventeenth century, and by reason of the great number of classrooms afforded the necessary facilities for the meetings of the different sections for correspondence, &c.

The Association, although modelled on the lines of the British Association, has a slightly different scope, owing to the conditions which brought it into existence. It really commenced as the "Association Scientifique de France" in 1864, when it was founded by Le Verrier, but this subsequently to 1871 became combined with the Association Française pour l'Avancement des Sciences, the object of which was not only scientific after the mode of the British Association, but also aimed at reviving the study of science and of stimulating scientific research in the departments by bringing French scientific men together in the different principal towns throughout the country, enabling them thus to become better and more practically acquainted with France as a whole, and with the wishes, wants, and requirements of the populations. This patriotic object has been well kept in view, and the cordiality of the reception afforded to the Association wherever it goes shows how well its work is appreciated by the country. It would therefore follow that the study of the district visited forms an important part of the work of the Association, and that the "Excursions" are just as much sought after as in the meetings of the British Association.

The business usually commences with a general meeting, held either in the theatre of the town visited or other public building capable of affording the necessary facilities; in this case it was held in the theatre, a remarkable structure dating back to 1778, and inaugurated in 1784 by the Prince de Condé and his son, the Duc de Bourbon. On the stage facing the house was the table, at which sat the principal authorities of the town, civil and military, the president and principal officers of the Association, and ranged behind them the invited guests, notabilities, and chairmen of sections or committees, &c., evening dress being practically *de rigueur*. The business commenced by the Maire of Besançon reading an address of welcome to the Association, and of hearty sympathy with its objects. Then the president for the year, Dr. Bouchard, Membre de l'Institut and de l'Académie de Médecine, Professeur à la Faculté de Médecine de Paris, read his address, of which the following may be taken as the leading points. Having thanked the town of Pau for the reception given to the Association in 1892, and thanked the Maire of Besançon for the cordiality of his welcome, he defined the double object sought by the French Association's scientific progress, having for ulterior aim the greatness of their country. He paid a well-merited compliment to Besançon for its traditional love of learning and spirit of culture manifested in its celebrated men and scientific institutions. Turning then to the subject proper of his address, he expressed the desire to speak of the scientific movement and the position of scientific men at the present period, and in order to speak with competence he proposed to take his examples from the profession "which he cultivates, teaches, and practises," being justified in doing so by the fact of his having been called on to preside in his quality of a doctor. He then pointed to the wonderful development of scientific study at present, and stated that in the Faculty of Medicine of Paris 1200 students present themselves each year for the degree of M.D. (Docteur en Médecine); of these 700 soon give up, while 500 persevere and attain their degree.

He pointed out that, whatever the causes, it is manifest that during the past fifteen years the number of students has been on the increase. He then entered on an analysis of the causes of this movement which extend to other branches of science.

"It has been said that the German schoolmaster was the conqueror at Sadowa; it was repeated after more recent disasters. It is false," but the "*mot fit fortune chez nous*," and the