ASTRONOMICAL NOTES

Planets during September 1939.—Mercury will be a morning star for a few days in the beginning of the month and on September 22 will be in superior conjunction with the Sun. Venus will likewise be in conjunction on September 6 and will not be visible during the month. Mars will continue to be a bright object very near the meridian in the early part of the night; it is moving eastwards in the constellation Sagittarius and gradually getting fainter, its stellar magnitude on September 15 being −1·5 (nearly equal to that of Sirius).

Jupiter, which will be in opposition to the Sun on September 28, will be at its brightest magnitude −2·5, and can be seen almost throughout the night. Saturn is moving slowly in a retrograde direction in the constellation Cetus and will be crossing the meridian about a couple of hours after midnight. The ring ellipse is widening, the angular dimensions of the major and minor axes being 44″ and 12″ respectively. Uranus will be found a little to the north-east of Saturn in the eastern border of Aries. A lunar occultation of some interest that can be observed in this country is that of α-Cancri (a fourth magnitude star) on September 11.

Comets.—Periodic comet Brooks II was detected at its return on June 17 by Jaffers and Miss Adams at the Lick Observatory (U.A.I.Circ. 779). The object was exceedingly faint—of the 17th magnitude, and the physical appearance is reported to have been diffuse without central condensation or nucleus. The comet has a period of 6·94 years and is due to pass perihelion on September 15. It is likely to become bright enough to be visible with moderate optical aid. The other comets discovered this year will be very faint and can be seen only with powerful instruments.

Variable Stars.—Two well known variable stars O ceti (Mira) and χ cygni are reaching maxima at the end of August and will probably be visible to the unaided eye in September. The position of the former is given by R.A. $2^h\ 16^m$ Declination 3° 15′ South. The stars are readily identified by reference to a map. The course of their light changes can be deduced by comparing them with surrounding stars.

T. P. B.

International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences

A pre-war organisation, known as the Congress of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archæology, was founded in Europe as early as 1865, and its reunions were held at Geneva (1912), Monaco (1906), Paris (1900), Moscow (1892), Paris (1889), Lisbon (1880), Budapest (1876), Stockholm (1874), Brussels (1872), Bologna (1871), Copenhagen (1869), Norwich and London (1868), Paris (1867), Neuchatel (1866), and Spezzia (1865). A projected session of the Congress which was to have met at Madrid in 1916 had unfortunately to be dropped on account of the Great War. After the War the *Association pour l'enseignement des sciences anthropologiques* at Paris established in the same city, under French law, a permanent organisation with the name *Institut international d'anthropologie*, with the object of "grouping, co-ordinating, and centralising the efforts of all persons engaged in anthropological problems, provided they are accepted by its *conseil d'administration*". Till the year 1927 the *Institut* did good service to anthropology, but most foreign anthropologists were not satisfied with its organisation which was international only in name. Attempts to revive the older congress and enlarge the scope of the *Institut* were not successful, but in 1933, on the initiative of Royal Anthropological Institute of London and the survivors of the Geneva committee of 1912, a conference was held at Basel to consider measures for the establishment of a truly international organisation of which the ICAES was the result. Prof. J. L. Myres (Oxford) who represented the Royal Anthropological Institute invited the ICAES to hold its first session in London.

The first session of the Congress which met in the University College, London, was an unqualified success due particularly to the organising capacity of its British General Secretary, Prof. Myres. The Duke of Onslow was the General President, and the session was opened by H. R. H. Prince George acting on behalf of his brother, the Duke of York (now King George VI) the Patron of the Congress. The work of the session was done in eight main sections: Anatomy and Physical Anthropology, Psychology, Demography and Population Problems, Ethnography, Technology, Sociology, Religion, and Language and Writing. Recommendations were adopted in regard to teaching of Anthropology and Ethnology in Schools and Universities; the need for further research into the mental aptitudes of African peoples; the creation of a permanent census of India; and training of administrators in Anthropology, etc. Committees were set up to encourage the use of films in anthropological work, for the standardisation of anthropological technique, for international research on arctic peoples and cultures, and for the compilation of a comparative vocabulary of anthropological and ethnological terms.

The second session of the Congress was held in Copenhagen in August 1938 under the presidentship of Dr. Thomas Thomsen of the Danish National Museum and the patronage of King Christian X of Denmark and Iceland, "who honoured the inaugural meeting with his presence". It was attended by over 700 delegates from all parts of the world. There were additional sections for Asiatic Ethnography, Arctic Ethnography, European Ethnography and Folklore. In addition to the existing committees fresh ones were constituted for the conservation of aboriginal people and to deal with the problems of megalithic cultures.