

ASTRONOMICAL NOTES

Planets during February 1940.—During the last week of February and the first week of March 1940, the five brightest major planets visible with the naked eye, will be well placed for observation in the evening sky towards the west of the meridian and will lie along the ecliptic within 40° of each other. Both Mercury and Venus can be seen low down in the west about sunset; the former reaches greatest elongation from the sun (18° 9' E) on February 28 and will appear at that time as a star somewhat reddish in colour and slightly brighter than magnitude zero. Venus continues to move slowly eastward increasing its apparent distance from the sun and will be a conspicuous object in the western sky in the evenings. On February 20, there will be an interesting conjunction of the planet with Jupiter, the two being just over a degree apart at the time. Another conjunction that can be observed with interest will be that of Mars with Saturn on February 13. During the month, the moon will be in conjunction with planets as follows: Venus, February 11; Jupiter, February 12; Mars and Saturn, February 14; and Uranus, February 15.

Comets.—Periodic Comet Faye was re-discovered by Jeffers at the Lick Observatory on November 3, 1939; the object is reported to

have been faint (about the 16th mag.) and diffuse with a small nucleus. The last apparition was in 1932, the period being 7.4 years. The comet is due to pass perihelion on April 23, 1940. Information has also been received (U.A.I. Circ. 798) of the discovery of a new comet by Friend at Harvard on November 4, 1939. The comet was, at the time, in the constellation Hercules, and moving in a southeasterly direction. A parabolic orbit has been computed by Maxwell and Grosh which shows that the object passed perihelion on November 6. The comet appears to have become as bright as the 8th magnitude on November 10.

A Recurrent Nova.—The star U Scorpii was discovered to be invariable by Pogson at Madras on May 20, 1863. Subsequent observations showed that the star was without doubt, a nova. Recently Mrs. Helen L. Thomas has examined the star on 1508 photographs taken at Harvard between 1891 and 1939, and finds (U.I.A. Circ. 802) that the nova was at maximum (magnitude 8.8) on May 12, 1906 and again on June 22, 1936 when its magnitude was 8.8. During the intervals between maxima the star appears to have been fainter than the 17th magnitude.

T. P. B.

MAGNETIC NOTES FOR DECEMBER 1939

THE magnetic conditions during the month of December 1939 were slightly more disturbed than those during the previous month. There were 3 days of *Moderate* disturbance (international character 2), and 18 of slight disturb-

ance (character 1). Quiet days numbered 10 during the month.

Seventh was the most disturbed day during the month and 18th the quietest. The above table shows the distribution of days of different characters during the month.

Only one moderate storm was recorded at about 20½ hours G.M.T., on the 6th December as against a moderate storm during December of last year. The mean monthly character for December 1939 as determined at Bombay is 0.77 as against 0.97 for December 1938.

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Colaba, Bombay,
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Dates of the month	Quiet days	Disturbed days	
		Slight	Moderate
December 1939	2, 4, 14, 17 18, 19, 25, 29, 30, 31	1, 3, 5, 6, 8- 13, 15, 16, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 28	7, 21, 27.