

societies and was elected to membership in them both here and abroad. And he who had sat but little in a classroom of any kind, was elected to membership in the Corporation of Harvard--a group of seven men who controlled the University.

It is an interesting and readable story, although the reader will find only an occasional allusion to the stars at which this Yankee is alleged to have gazed.

---George L. Skirm

THE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY group will hold its last meeting of the season at the home of Dr. Woolard, June 12th at 7:30 p.m.

CORRECTION to May issue, page 2, par. 6, VI was discovered in December 1904; VII in January 1905. Page 3, par. 2, X is the triplet of VI and VII; XI is the triplet of VIII and IX.

PLANS ARE UNDER WAY for observation-picnics during the summer months. They will be discussed at the next meeting and described in the July bulletin.

Ah! what is all this mighty whole,
These suns and stars that round us roll!
What are they all, where'er they shine,
But Fancies of the Power Divine!
What is this globe, these lands, and seas,
And heat, and cold, and flowers, and trees,
And life, and death, and beast, and man,
And time, that with the sun began--
But thoughts on reason's scale combin'd
Ideas of the Almighty mind?

---The Power of Fancy,
Philip Freneau

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STAR DUST

National Capital
Amateur Astronomers Association
Washington, D. C.

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"THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASTRONOMICAL WORK OF COPERNICUS" will be Dr. Woolard's subject on June 3d, 8 p.m. at the National Museum. For background it is suggested that you read "Copernicus the Founder of Modern Astronomy," by Angus Armitage, published by George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., London, 1938.

DR. ECKERT'S LECTURE on the National Almanac is still discussed among small groups. The American Ephemeris is correct to .01 of a second of time, the Nautical Almanac .1 second, and the Air Almanac 1 minute of angle. The first two are published annually and the last, three times a year. All the computing and proof reading are done by machines.

He compared the British, French, and German almanacs with the American and showed slide reproductions of each. Dr. Eckert pointed out some of the shortcomings of our publication but added that no change would be made until after the war. Questions from the floor and subsequent discussion brought out other points of interest.

ASTRONOMY IN THE MAKING

A study of modern astronomy, with its advanced ideas and complex principles, soon leads to a desire to know how and when and by whom these ideas and principles were worked out, and what methods were used to accomplish astronomical observations and calculations before modern refined instruments and highly developed theories were available. An adequate and satisfying answer to these questions can be obtained only from the original writings produced at successive periods throughout past history by the astronomers who made the significant advances and recorded their work and the knowledge of their times in authoritative treatises. Moreover, the frequent references in modern writings to Ptolemy's great "Almagest," or to the epoch making book by Copernicus, or to Newton's monumental "Principia," can hardly help stimulating a curiosity to see these historic books themselves.

In this way, the writer was led several years ago to begin to collect for his own library the more outstanding original astronomical writings from ancient to modern times; and the collection now comprises most of the principal Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek, Hindu, Arabic, and western European works. It proved to require an extended search through many scattered sources to compile a list of the extant writings, and to find what editions exist and which ones might be obtainable; and therefore, to make this information more easily available to others, the writer has since published a paper on "Great Astronomical Treatises of the Past," (Jour. of the Washington Academy of Sciences, 32:189-216, 1942) in which the more noteworthy writings from ancient times to the 19th century that are of greatest interest for the general reader are briefly described, and bibliographical references provided to the printed editions now available.

Only the writings which have been of the greatest significance and most influential in the historical evolution of the astronomy of modern western civili-

zation have received attention, no consideration being given to the profusion of secondary works. Since the content of these writings is the entire objective, no attempt has been made to collect original editions; some important works exist only in old and rare editions, but most of the volumes are recently published, and are immediately available through the ordinary book trade in normal times. However, the majority must be imported from foreign publishers. A few rare items have been secured on microfilm.

Anyone may have all the greatest astronomers of history for his personal teachers if he will let them speak to him from the pages of their writings. Immeasurable pleasure may be found in reading Tycho Brahe's own description of his planetary theory, or Kepler's account of how he worked out his three laws of planetary motion, or the explanations by the ancient Greeks of how they measured the size of the earth. The enjoyment and inspiration that may be derived from the night sky are greatly enhanced by this direct contact with those who have watched this same sky from many lands through many ages, and who have effectively added to its beauty and fascination by increasing our comprehension of its impressive phenomena.

---Edgar W. Woolard

BOOKS WE ARE READING

YANKEE STARGAZER, The Life of Nathaniel Bowditch, by Robert Elton Berry. Whittlesey House of McGraw-Hill Book Co. \$2.50. Nathaniel Bowditch of Salem, Mass., (1773-1838) has several basic claims to fame although his name has been perpetuated by the book, "The New American Practical Navigator," known to seagoing men as "The Bowditch."

He was a self-educated man having taught himself mathematics, Latin in order to read Newton's "Principia," and French, and translated Laplace's "Mécanique Céleste." He contributed papers to scientific