

of the method of examining nursery stock in the District of Columbia, and it was shown that such stock was naturally divided into commercial material, including plants and plant products received by florists, department stores and private individuals; and departmental material, including plants and plant products introduced by the various offices of the Department of Agriculture, more particularly the Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction. Some time was devoted to discussing the new method of disinfecting cotton, and lantern slides were shown exhibiting the plants which are now operating in Boston, Mass., Brooklyn, N. Y., Newark, N. J. and Oakland, Calif.

An Outline of the Glow-worms of the American Family Phengodidae: H. S. BARBER.

M. W. LYON, JR.,
Recording Secretary

THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF VARIABLE STAR OBSERVERS

ON November 18, 1916, the American Association of Variable Star Observers held its fourth annual meeting at the Harvard College Observatory, Cambridge, Mass., at the invitation of the director, Dr. E. C. Pickering. The meeting was called to order in the library of the institution at three o'clock with twenty-two members present. The results of the previous year's work were carefully discussed and more definite plans adopted for the future course of the association. Numerous light curves and plottings pertaining to the work were on exhibition, illustrating the observations on variable stars, particularly those of long period.

Later, a tour of the observatory was made, at which time Professor Pickering and Miss Cannon explained in detail the work of the astro-photographic department, and Professor King explained the manipulation of the different photographic telescopes. This was followed by a lantern-slide exhibition of views of Arequipa, Peru, and the work of the Southern Station of the Harvard College Observatory by Mr. Campbell.

The meeting then adjourned to the commodious quarters of the 12-inch polar telescope, when nineteen experienced observers had the unique opportunity of observing the same variable star, *SS Cygni*, under like conditions,

with an average deviation between observers of only 0.14 magnitude.

From seven until ten o'clock Professor Pickering acted as host at a dinner given to the members of the association. Following the dinner many of the members enjoyed the opportunity of observing with the historic 15-inch equatorial until the wee sma' hours of the morning.

The next day a small party availed themselves of the chance to visit the well-equipped students observatory at Wellesley College, by the courtesy of the director, Dr. J. C. Duncan.

In no period in the history of astronomy has an opportunity offered itself, as at the present time, whereby a group of amateur astronomers has been able to combine and organize themselves for such useful scientific work. In fact no other branch of science offers this possibility so completely, in which a two-fold purpose is so well accomplished, namely: service and contribution to science and personal pleasure to those taking part therein.

Not all the problems of astronomy are so easily adaptable or inviting to amateurs, as this study of variable stars. Nevertheless, in the past five years a most productive field of research has been developed, and one which has called together one of the most enthusiastic assemblages of men and women, some forty in number and from all the different walks of life.

The study of variable stars is one of the oldest branches of astrophysical astronomy, and it was not until twenty-five years ago that systematic work was undertaken. To this work the Harvard College Observatory has devoted, under the directorship of Dr. E. C. Pickering, the greater part of its time and resources. The methods and results in this study have proved so simple and attractive that it has lent itself admirably to non-technically trained astronomers, with the result that in 1911 there was formed this association of amateur observers, with Mr. Wm. Tyler Olcott as its secretary and prime mover. From the character of the work thus far performed, a number of its members have recently received recognition by election to membership in the American Astronomical Society. F. E. B.