



Françoise Launay

The Astronomer Jules Janssen

A Globetrotter of Celestial Physics

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- Presents the first ever published biography of Jules Janssen, the father of French astrophysics and the founder of Meudon Observatory
- Provides a story which is enriched by many quotations of unpublished letters, illustrations and other archival manuscripts
- Illustrates the importance of Jules Janssen's contribution to astrophysics, even today

A physicist and an inventor, Jules Janssen (1824-1907) devoted his life to astronomical research. He spent many years traveling around the world to observe total Solar eclipses, demonstrating that a new era of science had just come thanks to the use of both spectroscopy and photography, and persuading the French Government of the necessity of founding a new observatory near Paris. He became its director in 1875. There, at Meudon, he began routine photographic recordings of the Sun surface and had a big refractor and a big reflector built. Meanwhile, he also succeeded in building an Observatory at the summit of Mont-Blanc. The story of this untiring and stubborn globe-trotter is enriched by extracts of the unpublished correspondence with his wife. One can thus understand why Henriette often complained of the solitude in which she was left by her peripatetic husband: "There are men who leave their wives for mistresses; you do it for journeys!" ... Basking in the glow of his success, Janssen was able to undertake the construction of the great astrophysical observatory of which he had dreamed. It was at Meudon that he had it built.

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