

THE LATE C. RAGOONATHA
CHARY, F. R. A. S.

ON Thursday evening last there passed away from amongst us, an unassuming and distinguished native gentleman,—Chintamanay Ragoonatha Chary, F. R. A. S., Head Assistant in the Madras Observatory for the last seventeen years. Attached to that institution for a period of over thirty-five years, he served in succession, in every grade, under the late Major W. S. Jacob, Colonel W. K. Worster, Colonel J. F. Tonnant, &c., and the present Astronomer, and won the esteem and regard of each, by his intelligence, assiduity, and attachment to the pursuit he had adopted. His strict honesty and ready skill as an observer, combined with accuracy and speed in computation, and a fair and useful amount of self-acquired mathematical knowledge, rendered him, until disabled by impaired health, invaluable in the Observatory; and the chief share in the Catalogue of Stars in hand, with the Transit Circle, since 1862, comprising already over 38,000 separate observations, is due to his personal exertions; besides many other special researches of a nature not often undertaken by ordinary assistants in observatories. His first paper communicated to the Royal Astronomical Society of London, "On the determination of personal equation by observations of the projected image of the sun," was dated 25th April, 1859, and was followed by other occasional contributions highly creditable to their author. He was selected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in January 1872, upon the joint recommendations of his immediate chief, the Government Astronomer, and Mr. E. B. Powell, C. S. I., then Director of Public Instruction. He was twice successfully engaged in observations of total eclipses of the sun; on the first occasion in August 1868, at Vunpurthy, in the Nizam's Dominions, in independent charge of a branch expedition for the purpose; and on the second, in December 1871, at Avenashy, in the Colmbatore District. He was the first and only native of India who has yet entered the lists as a discoverer of new celestial objects, having detected two new Variable Stars, viz., R. Reticuli in 1867, and V. Cephei in 1878. As editor of the astronomical portion of the Asylum Press Almanac, and of a native calendar published on his own responsibility, he has been before the public for the past twelve years; and he latterly took great interest in delivering public lectures on Astronomy, with a view to enlighten his countrymen upon the subject, and to convince them of the absurdity of their notions in regard to celestial phenomena, by familiar explanations, in simple terms, of the true principles of the science, as opposed to the ignorant superstitions and rough predictions of Hindoo astrologers and empirics of the old school.