

The Journal

of the

Astronomical Society of India.

VOL. I.]

SESSION 1910-1911.

[No. 1.]

Origin of the Society.

A proposal was made in the middle of the month of July 1910, by a few gentlemen in Calcutta, to form an Astronomical Society in India. The idea arose from the interest which had recently been taken in the appearance of Halley's Comet, and it was felt that, given the chance, there were probably many in India who would join a Society of the kind. A Meeting was therefore called on the 26th July 1910 at which the matter might be discussed. A room in the Imperial Secretariat was kindly placed at their disposal by the Comptroller-General. The attendance at this Meeting was large, and Mr. H. G. Tomkins, F.R.A.S., having been voted to the Chair, explained what it was proposed to do, and showed how astronomical work could be undertaken by amateurs in India at trifling cost if they combined together in their work. The work of similar Societies in England and other countries was also referred to, and it was pointed out how a similar Society in India could do good work. After some discussion, it was unanimously resolved to form an Astronomical Society in India, and fifty-seven gentlemen promised their support on the spot. A Preliminary Committee was then elected with instructions to draw up rules and take other measures at once to carry out the decision of the Meeting. A second Meeting was called for the 26th August 1910. In the meantime the Preliminary Committee sat twice a week and drew up a code of Bye-laws. They also advertised the fact of the formation of the Society and made other arrangements for putting it on a proper footing.

The first measure of the August Meeting was to name the Society, and it was unanimously decided to call it "The Astronomical Society of India." Those original members who had joined and were present then formally signed the roll of the Society. With a few modifications the Bye-laws as drawn up by the Preliminary Committee were passed, and the subscription was fixed at eight rupees a year and an entrance donation of four rupees. It was decided that those who joined by the end of September should be original members free from entrance donation, and that the first Session of the Society should begin on the 1st October 1910. The Preliminary Committee were requested to propose a Council for election during the next month, and special provision was made to enable this Council to be elected by the time of the next Meeting on the 27th September 1910. The membership at the Meeting of the 26th August stood at one hundred and seventeen. It was decided to register the Society.

During September a Council was elected and sections formed. To start with, these were limited to a variable Star Section, Meteors, the Moon and a General Section comprising solar work, Comets, the Milky Way, and work not dealt with by the other sections. Major Lenox Conyngham, R.E., F.R.A.S., Mr. Rakshit, The Revd. J. Mitchell, M.A., F.R.A.S., and Dr. E. P. Harrison were appointed as Directors of these sections, and requested to consider programmes of work for those who joined them. Mr. R. J. Watson was also appointed as Director of Photography.

The Director of the Kodai Kanal Observatory was written to, and he promised his support to the Society, beside himself joining it.

The question of a library was taken up; a librarian, Mr. A. Lawrie, was appointed, and some donations for the purpose having been received, a consignment of books was ordered from England.

Communications having been received from a number of members asking when they could obtain instruments, several firms in England were written to on the subject with a view to facilitating the acquisition of these in India. The third Meeting before the commencement of the Session was held on the 27th September 1910, and the minutes of the previous Meeting having been passed, the Chairman stated that the Preliminary Committee had finished the business for which it had been appointed and would retire on the 30th September. The result of the election of the Council was then announced by the scrutineers and a vote of thanks was passed to the retiring Committee. In acknowledging the honour the Society had done him in electing him as their

first President, Mr. Tomkins asked, on behalf both of himself and the Council, in which he specially included the Directors of Sections, for the active support of the members, pointing out that, without such support, it would be impossible for the most energetic Council to make the Society all that it should be, and that the measure of success attained must of necessity be what the members themselves made it. If observations were to be published, they must first be made; and if work was to be discussed at Meetings and in the Journals, it must first be done. In the same proportion therefore as members were themselves active, would the Meetings and Journals be interesting and valuable. He therefore asked members to very carefully consider the proposals which the Directors of Sections were about to put before them, and then to decide on a line of action and take it up energetically.

The membership of the Society was announced to have reached the satisfactory total of 184, and those members present who had not already done so signed the roll.

The President then called upon the Director of each Section in turn to set before the Meeting the outline of work which they had prepared, as well as the instructions which they proposed to issue, to enable the observations required to be made. This was done with the aid of magic lantern slides.

The Meeting then adjourned until the 25th October 1910.
