

We greatly regret to record the death of our fellow-member, Mr. Frank Hitchings, in New Zealand. Mr. Hitchings was born in Blackheath, near London, but went to the Southern Hemisphere at a very early age. The following account was sent by a correspondent in Christchurch, New Zealand, but who, unfortunately, omits, in his dating, the day or the month:—

CHRISTCHURCH, Friday.

“How a man’s instinctive liking for a study will persevere in spite of most serious handicaps is well exemplified by the life of Mr. Frank H. Hitchings, known as ‘The astronomical chimney sweep,’ whose death at the age of 77 years occurred yesterday. While voyaging to New Zealand in the ship *Silina* in 1869, Mr. Hitchings became interested in astronomy through the good offices of the captain of the vessel, and after his arrival in New Zealand he pursued a lifelong study of the fascinating subject. For a number of years he lectured on his hobby, and was the possessor of the largest telescope in the Dominion. He became a member of the Royal Geographical Society, the Canterbury Philosophical Institute, and the Canterbury Microscopical Society. Further, he became a valuable contributor of records of sunspots to the British Astronomical Association.

“About 10 years ago, with Mr. A. Hitchings, a son, who is now carrying on the chimney-sweeping business, he went to Tasmania to observe an eclipse of the Sun. Mr. Hitchings was a popular figure at some Canterbury schools, where his lectures were listened to with interest. Once, when there was a comet to be seen, he mounted his telescope in Cathedral Square for the use of the public. All this he accomplished in spite of the fact that his sole schooling consisted of only a few weeks at a night school, and that he was by no means a rich man.”

Mr. Hitchings joined the British Astronomical Association in 1902 November 26. He was a bricklayer as well as a chimney sweep, and in this capacity he rendered good service at the Tasmanian eclipse in the laying of the foundations on which the instruments were mounted. He owned a 6-inch refractor, and for many years this was the largest privately-owned telescope in New Zealand.