

Mary Acworth Evershed, third daughter and fifth child of Captain Andrew Orr, R.A., and Mrs. Orr (née Acworth) was born at Plymouth on January 1, 1867. On the death of Captain Orr in 1870 the orphaned family were received by Mrs. Orr's father into the large country vicarage of South Stoke near Bath. She and her sisters were educated at home and from 1875 to 1885 one governess only taught the younger children. Mary was an apt pupil and in early years became interested in astronomy, learning the stars from Gall's "Easy Guide to the Constellations". In 1887 she went abroad and studied the German and Italian languages and also the art of those countries. She then went to Australia where she spent the years from 1889 to 1895. It was here that she met Mr. Tebbutt of the Observatory at Windsor, N.S.W., from whom she received most kind encouragement and help in her astronomical studies. For some time she had planned to write a small book on Southern Stars on the model of Gall's guide to the northern constellations. This she carried out and for it Mr. Tebbutt kindly wrote a Preface. It was published in 1896 under the title "Southern Stars—a guide to the Constellations in the Southern Hemisphere."

In 1895 she returned to England and a year later joined the B.A.A. working at Variable Stars and becoming a member of the Lunar Section. Amongst the many friends she now made may be mentioned Mr. and Mrs. Maunder and Miss Agnes Clerke. She was one of the B.A.A. party which proceeded to Vadso in Norway to observe the Total Solar Eclipse in 1896, an expedition which met with disappointment due to cloudy skies. Four years later she was more fortunate and observed the eclipse of 1900 May 28 in Algiers under ideal conditions.

In 1905 she was arranging to work at Dublin Observatory under Mr. (now Sir Edmund) Whittaker. This plan, however, fell through, for in 1906 she married Mr. John Evershed. In the same year they went to India where Mr. Evershed was to take up the post of Director of Kodaikanal Observatory. Travelling via the United States and Japan they visited important American observatories and met many leading astronomers to whom introductions had been given by Prof. Turner. Taking great interest in the work being done at Kodaikanal Observatory, especially that relating to sunspots and prominences, she was able to write an important memoir on Prominences and a paper published in the *Monthly Notices of the R.A.S.* (73. 422. 1913) on "Types of Prominences associated with Sun-spots." In the work of the observatory her influence in maintaining happy relations with the Indian staff may be recalled. Her stay in India, from 1907 to 1923 was varied by two expeditions to Kashmir where a temporary observatory was established, and by a visit in 1914 to Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania. She also went on an expedition to the North West coast of Australia to observe the Total Solar Eclipse of 1922 with the American and Canadian astronomers. It was whilst in India that she completed and published her great work "Dante and the Early Astronomers", a task which involved considerable research. After giving an account of the astronomy of the ancients from primitive times up to 1300 A.D. she gives an account of the state of astronomical knowledge in Italy in Dante's time and passes on to consider the many references to Astronomy in Dante's immortal

work. On its publication the book received high praise and it remains much in demand by Dante scholars. In 1915 she published a more comprehensive book on "Stars of the Southern Skies" which includes interesting notes on individual stars, clusters, nebulae, etc.—a book still in use. She contributed a number of papers to the *B.A.A. Journal* and to the *Observatory* magazine, many of which have reference to her work on Dante. Not long after her return to England, on the retirement of Mr. Evershed from the directorship of Kodaikanal Observatory in 1923, she was elected a Fellow of the R.A.S. and for a time served on the library committee. She also became a member of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, maintaining always a keen interest in all modern developments of astronomy. The solar prominences as seen in all their wonderful detail at the Ewhurst Observatory were always a great joy and wonder to her. When in 1930 the Council of the B.A.A. decided to form the Historical Section they invited Mrs. Evershed to become its Director and it was a source of pleasure and gratification to them when she accepted the office—no better and more enthusiastic Director of the new Section could have been chosen. It is due to her painstaking efforts that the Historical Section was so successfully launched and that it continues to flourish. Besides the many papers contributed by members of the Section to the *Journal* the *Memoir* "Who's Who in the Moon" may be mentioned as an example of the team work carried out under her direction. Nor can we omit to refer to the "History of the Association", in the preparation of which she did the pioneer work. Failing health prevented her from carrying out the task to its completion, but when in 1944 she felt compelled to give up the Directorship she had already prepared much of the groundwork for the History.

Those members of the Association who can look back to earlier times will always remember with pleasure the occasions when Mr. and Mrs. Evershed attended the meetings bringing with them some splendid example of the work being done at Kodaikanal.

In the somewhat isolated conditions of life at the Kodaikanal Observatory the natural history of the surrounding district and especially the plant life of the mountains, both temperate and tropical, were always a source of great interest to her.

Mary Acworth Evershed passed to the Great Beyond on October twenty-fifth, 1949. Her friends will treasure the memory of a gracious, gifted and cultured lady and will mourn the loss of one whom it was a privilege to know.—P.J.M.