

The late T. H. Astbury.

AN APPRECIATION.

Thomas Hinsley Astbury, whose death has not been formally recorded in the *Journal*, was born at Shifnal, and educated at Cheltenham College. He was headmaster of the Council Schools at Wallingford for 36 years, and retired in 1920 on account of ill-health. He died on 1922 Sept. 28, at the age of 64 years, his funeral being attended by representatives of education and science. Many of his old pupils can testify to the great interest Astbury took in his boys, and the kindness and help he showed them both at school and in after years.

But it is in Astbury, the amateur astronomer, we are here specially interested. He had a good general knowledge of astronomy, and papers or notes by him on such subjects as "Solar Prominences," "Variation of Latitude," "Occultation of Saturn," etc., lie scattered through back volumes of the *Journal*. But it became his line to concentrate, and it was about 1903 that he took up the observation of Variable Stars, fortified only with a binocular and a refractor of $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches aperture. He had a very keen sight in the discrimination of small differences of stellar brightness, and he also showed judgment in selecting certain small fields of the sky, which he was to study closely, principally with the binocular. He had joined the Variable Star Section in

the year above mentioned, and a search for Novæ was then being inaugurated, the sky being divided up into certain moderately sized areas, which were allotted to a few Members, each taking one area, which he was to watch, constantly reviewing the principal naked eye stars contained therein.

The area allotted to Astbury contained the constellations of Orion, Monoceros, Canis Minor, with part of Taurus and Auriga. It was while studying this part of the sky that he made his first discovery, the now celebrated Cepheid Variable RT Aurigæ, period about 3.7d., with variation from 5.1 to 5.8. Mr. A. Stanley Williams, himself a past master in the discovery and treatment of variable stars, wrote at the time: "It is no mean feat to discover the variability of a short period star like this, in which the whole range of variation barely exceeds half a magnitude! . . . I always feel great admiration for a visual discovery of this kind."

Astbury continued his watches, and between 1905 and 1913 had announced, at least, nine new variables, particulars of which are contained in the following table. Of these, seven have received permanent lettering; but the variation of No. 4 does not appear to have been since confirmed, while further information is required about Nos. 5, 8, and 9.

Number.	Provisional No.	Letter.	Constellation.	Position 1900.0.		Type.	Period.	Range.	Notes.
				R.A.	Dec.				
1	47.1903	RT	Aur.	6 22.1	+30 34	Cephd.	3.75—	5.1 to 5.8	
2	16.1908	RS	Vul.	19 13.4	-22 16	Algol	4.47—	7.4 to 8.2	
3	26.1900	Z	Vul.	19 17.5	-22 23	Algol	2.45+	7.1 to 8.8	Suspected by Flint in 1900. Discovered independently by Astbury in 1908
4	13.1909	RT	Vul.	19 7.2	+22 13	? Algol	?	8.0 to 9.0	
5	1.1911	VW	Dra.	17 15.3	+60 47	?	?	6.4 to 7.0	
6	45.1911	TV	Cass.	0 13.9	+58 35	Algol	1.81+	7.3 to 8.3	
7	12 and 23, 1913	W	UMi	16 34.8	+86 26	Algol	1.70+	8.4 to 9.3 (photo)	Independently discovered R.O. Greenwich by Dani & Son. A.N., Bd. 184, p. 301. A.N., Bd. 19, p. 413.
8	39.1910	—	Cep.	21 28.3	-71 30	?	?	?	
9	13.1913	—	UMi	16 58	+86 36	? Ant. Algol.	?	?	

This summary of seven new variables surely redounds to Astbury's credit; it is the outcome of a well-organised campaign, carried out quietly by himself, with but little outside help beyond what Prof. Turner furnished from Oxford, and this was always *after* the man had first pointed out the variable. Such good work done "by stealth" is now become "fame," and we honour our deceased Member for what he did, feeling also that the lustre is reflected on the Association of which he was a Member.