

keen intellectual alertness and mental activity combined with unusual dexterity of hand and eye, and the lovable nature of his stately personality patent to all who were admitted to his confidence and friendship. In accordance with his last directions, all that was mortal of him was cremated and the ashes, carried out to sea, were scattered on the saline wastes he had learned to love in his boyish sailor days.

ANDREW YOUNG.

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### Hugh Churchill Mason, 1873-1936.

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The late Hugh Churchill Mason joined the Cape Centre of the Society in 1922 and from the first was an active and stimulating member. He early became a member of the Cape Centre Committee and was Chairman of the Centre for the 1929-1930 Session. He also served on the Council of the Society and on the Journal Committee.

Mr. Mason, the son of a Wesleyan Missionary, was born in Truro, England, while his father was enjoying a temporary transfer overseas. The family returned to South Africa in 1876, and for a while young Mason was educated in Natal, and later at Gill College, Somerset East. A protracted breakdown in health however cut short what promised to be a distinguished scholastic career.

Some years on a farm and a visit to England followed. In 1897 he returned to South Africa and joined the staff of the Natal Observatory at Durban.

Outside its routine work, this Observatory, associated as it was with the name of Neisen, specialised in lunar research. In after years, when his career as a professional astronomer was long over, Mr. Mason's interest in lunar problems remained. A full account of his theory of the origin of the lunar craters was printed in the Society's Journal, Vol. II., No. 3, page 101. This account was amplified in a paper he read to the British Association on its visit to South Africa in 1929 (Journal, S.A.A.S., Vol. II., No. 4). In the following year he linked up his theory of the origin of lunar craters with a theory that meteorites are of lunar origin (S.A. Journal of Science, Vol. XXVII., page 139 *et seq.*).

Mr. Mason's theories deserve more attention than they have received. He wrote with considerable literary charm, but perhaps an unfortunate didactic mode of expression has discouraged expert

criticism. To say, without qualification, that the active source of meteorites "is obviously not the sun itself" (S.A. Journal of Science, Vol. XXVII., page 139), is in such direct conflict with the researches of Olivier and others that it is hardly likely to pre-dispose astronomers to a theory of the lunar origin of meteorites.

Mr. Mason's writing was not limited to scientific papers. He was the author of "The Golden Mean," a book embodying his philosophical and religious ideas; "The Inner Court," a series of meditative essays, and a novel, "The Devil's Christmas Box," a book in which much science is pleasantly blended with imagination and romance.

Besides astronomy, Mr. Mason was interested in a wide variety of subjects. He wrote, as has been said, on philosophy and religion. He was keenly interested in every branch of physics. His interest in modern social problems took him to Russia shortly after his retirement from the Cape Town City Engineer's Department in 1933. While planning a second visit to that country, he was struck down by the disease from which he died early in February, 1936.

A quiet yet forceful and courteous debater, his presence is much missed at meetings of the Cape Town Centre, where he would talk with equal facility about Du Toit's conception of "Gondwanaland" or Science in the Soviet.

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## ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA.

Session 1935-1936.

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### Annual Report of the Council.

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The roll of the Society now includes 111 members and associates, 5 honorary members and 2 members emeriti.

The Council has met three times during the year, those members who are eligible under Article VI. (iii.) of the Constitution being represented by alternates.

The Council regrets to record the loss through death of two Cape members, Major G. C. Fox and Mr. H. C. Mason.

During the year Vol. IV. No. 1 of the Society's Journal has been published. This number was printed on a better quality paper of slightly larger dimensions than its predecessors.