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**S. LYNN RHORER.**

By **JAMES J. MARSHALL.**

S. Lynn Rhorer, the well-known amateur astronomer and founder of the Southern Cross Observatory at Miami, Florida, died April 21, 1929, at his home in Atlanta. Mr. Rhorer was celebrated for his devotion to the cause of popular astronomical education, in addition to being one of the outstanding amateur astronomers of the country.

He had been in failing health for several months and was unable to be present at the astronomical observatory during the season of 1929, after six years of outstanding attention to its work. The interest of Mr. Rhorer in astronomy was life-long and his part in the movement he characterised as "bringing the stars to the man in the street." This idea found fruit in 1923, when, after having visited the far southern city, he determined that the tropical skies visible there and the unusual climatic conditions made this an ideal spot for popular education. The plan, while apparently chimerical, proved eventually to be one of remarkable foresight. In a park in the down-town section in the center of the city, he obtained permission of the authorities to set up a single 5-inch Clark refractor and attended it personally for the enlightenment of any passer-by who desired to view the skies. The response was so enthusiastic that he at that time formed the plan of gathering about him the most interested of his observers and making them his assistants in his work. The addition of one telescope each year, until the number of seven had been attained, also formed part of the project and was carried into effect this past season. Mr. Rhorer found himself surrounded by amateur astronomers from all over the country who assisted in the work of explaining the objects viewed. The setting of the observatory was and has continued to be unique. The grass-grown plots surrounded by palm trees with the brilliant lights of lofty buildings, far enough away to allow good seeing, proved an attraction to the imagination of the visitors to Miami.

The observatory was opened at seven o'clock every evening and in theory closed at ten o'clock, but the time of closing was dependent entirely upon the interest shown by observers and in the case of the late rising of the moon, planets or interesting objects it has not been unusual for the observations to end with sunrise.

From time to time the work has been extended and during the past few years afternoon sessions given to viewing the sun were added. As the staff grew in proportion various other features were included. At an

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early date lectures of short duration were made a part of the daily program and these were illustrated with stereopticon views from Yerkes, Mt. Wilson, and Harvard Observatories and slides from private collections. These pictures were thrown upon a screen erected in the park and the spectators viewed them from the seats on the grass or such accommodations as were available. In 1927 a weekly radio lecture was given by a member of the staff and transparencies were on view at all times. The observatory attained such a position in the city that it became a public institution and found it necessary to maintain a list of lectures for numerous engagements away from the site. A leading Miami paper published a daily column of some interesting celestial body, most of the articles for which were prepared by Mr. Rhorer. The attendance became phenomenal and it was not unusual to find each instrument the object of a line of spectators extending beyond the confines of the park. The attendance on one evening by actual count reached two thousand people. All these services by Mr. Rhorer and his assistants were rendered by Mr. Rhorer without cost of any sort.

Among those associated with him were Charles D. Higgs, of the Yerkes Observatory, John H. Chase of Youngstown, Ohio, Dr. David Fairchild, geologist, of Washington, Dr. Henry M. Ami, Vice-President of the Canadian Society, of Ottawa, George Babcock, author, of New York City, William Tyler Olcott of Norwich, Conn., Gar Wood of Detroit, Robert Henkel of Detroit, Clarendon Ions, F.R.A.S., Richard W. Gray, Edward Robertson, Dr. Jeremiah George, Gilman Low, and James J. Marshall of Miami.

Mr. Rhorer was himself an interested observer and was the first man in his longitude to observe Nova Aquilae in 1918. He was a faithful member of the American Association of Variable Star Observers and his name frequently appeared in *POPULAR ASTRONOMY* in the reports of this society. He was also a member of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific and president of the Amateur Society in his home city of Atlanta, Georgia. In recognition of his services to popular education he was in 1927 made a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Mr. Rhorer enjoyed the friendship of many of the outstanding astronomers of the country and was able to obtain the services of several of these for large public lectures in connection with the Miami work. Dr. Harlow Shapley and Dr. E. B. Frost each made the trip to Miami to give two lectures, and Dr. Frederick Slocum appeared at the last large public lecture given before Mr. Rhorer's death. These lectures taxed the capacity of the largest auditorium in the city, and, like all other work of the observatory, were financed by Mr. Rhorer. In character Mr. Rhorer was modest to the point of self-effacement. To visitors to the observatory, perhaps more interested in the material aspects of the institution, he described himself as one of the group in charge of the work. He avoided publicity for himself although welcoming it for the movement and invariably refused to be seen in a prominent position