

NOTES.

WE print the following interesting letters from the 'Times':—

"A MUCH-NEGLECTED ASTRONOMER.

"To the Editor of the 'Times.'

"SIR,—As the proposal to erect a memorial in the Westminster Chapter-house to a distinguished American has been received with favour, may I venture to call attention to a notable but much-neglected Englishman? In looking over the parish register of burials of Burstow not many days ago I discovered the following:—

1719.

"'Buried Jan. ye 12th The Revd. Mr. John Flamsteed, Rector of this Parish.'

"John Flamsteed, the first Astronomer Royal (which position he occupied for 43 years), made the earliest reliable catalogue of the fixed stars, described by his biographer, Francis Baily, more than a century afterwards, as 'one of the proudest productions of the Royal Observatory at Greenwich.' A most careful scientific observer, he supplied his distinguished contemporary, Sir Isaac Newton, with data for the illustration and verification of the Newtonian lunar theory. Between the years 1676 and 1689 Flamsteed made and recorded 20,000 observations of the stars, which he subsequently greatly increased, and he is allowed to be the founder of modern practical astronomy. Flamsteed made his own instruments at a cost of £2000, and paid his own assistants. His official salary at Greenwich was £100 a year, which he supplemented by teaching. Sir Isaac Newton has a splendid monument in Westminster Abbey; Flamsteed is without a memorial of any kind, either at Denby, near Derby, where he was born, or in the parish church of Burstow, Surrey, in the chancel of which his remains were deposited 173 years ago. It is proposed to remove the reproach by the erection of a suitable memorial window, with an appropriate tablet. Burstow is a large, thinly-populated rural parish, without town or village, though there are small scattered hamlets. Whether there are any astronomers living amongst us willing to co-operate in the project I know not, but some readers of the 'Times,' students of the starry realms, may be not unwilling to acknowledge indebtedness to Flamsteed in this way for his important astronomical researches. These researches were carried on with unparalleled ardour under great physical infirmities, until within a few days of his death. In reply to a recent letter on the subject, Mr. W. H. M. Christie, Astronomer Royal, writing from the Royal Observatory (also known as Flamsteed-house), Greenwich, August 10, says:—'It is strange that there should be no memorial of him (Flamsteed) in the church: I heartily concur in your proposal;' and the Astronomer Royal for Ireland, Sir Robert Ball, writes:—'You have rightly surmised that your proposal has

my hearty sympathy, and if a subscription is got up my mite shall not be wanting.'

"John Flamsteed's portrait was painted by Gibson in 1712, but I have been unable to learn if it is still in existence.

"Yours faithfully,
"WILLIAM TEBB."

"Rede Hall, Burstow-by-Horley,
"Surrey, Aug. 19."

"SIR,—I may inform your correspondent, Mr. Tebb, that the original portrait of John Flamsteed, by T. Gibson, an engraving of which forms the frontispiece to his 'Historia Cœlestis Britannica' (edition of 1725), is in the gallery of the Royal Society at Burlington House. It was presented to the Society by Mr. John Belchier, F.R.S., who bequeathed to the Greenwich Observatory in 1785 a terra-cotta bust of Sir Isaac Newton, and from the terms of this bequest it would appear that the Flamsteed portrait had already been given by him to its present holders. The exact date of the gift, however, is not known.

"Your obedient servant,
"T. E. J."

"August 22."

COMET NOTES.—Swift's Comet may still be faintly seen with moderately sized instruments. The following ephemeris is by F. T. Archenhold, and is for Berlin Midnight :—

R.A.					N. Decl.				
h m s					° ' "				
Sept. 1....	0	41	24	52	38	Sept. 21 ..	0	15	24 49 45
5....		36	22	52	17	25 ..		10	28 48 52
9....		31	8	51	49	29 ..		5	52 47 53
13....		25	50	51	14	Oct. 3 ..		1	36 46 50
17....		20	33	50	32	7 ..		23	57 42 45 40

The brightness is steadily diminishing from 0.08 (compared with that at discovery) on Sept. 3 to 0.05 on Oct. 5.

The following ephemeris of Denning's Comet is by Herr Schorr :—

R.A.					N. Decl.				
h m s					° ' "				
Sept. 5....	6	26	21	22	51	Sept. 17 ..	6	28	10 18 55
9....		27	20	21	35	21 ..		27	57 17 31
13....		27	57	20	16				

NOVA AURIGÆ.—Mr. Espin calls attention to the increase in brightness of Nova Aurigæ. On Aug. 21 it was examined at Welsingham Observatory, and was found to be 9.2. Its spectrum was monochromatic with one intense line (500?).

ERRATUM.—No. 191, p. 318, line 24, for Wollatan read Wollaton.