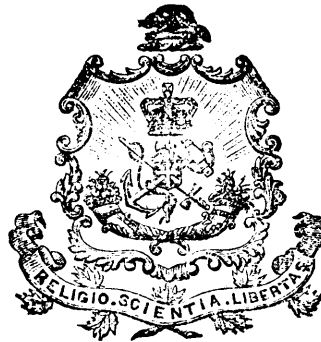


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M. ARAGO, THE FRENCH ASTRONOMER.

The following obituary notice of this celebrated philosopher is copied from the *London Literary Gazette*, of the 8th October:—

On Sunday evening, 2nd October, died in Paris, at the age of 67, the indefatigable and world-renowned philosopher and politician, Dominique Francois Arago, Perpetual Secretary of the Académie des sciences, and member of nearly all the scientific societies of Europe. He had been suffering for some time past from diabetes and dropsy, but was actively intelligent to the last. Beyond a pendulum exhibition, made early in life by M. Arago with M. Biot, which we shall presently notice, the career of this eminent physicist was not distinguished by any elaborate, great work. His mind was chiefly on the alert for the investigation of passing phenomena, and the discussion of passing topics. He made almost an infinity of small researches, of which the publication is scattered in various memoirs during a long series of years, and sometimes they were extremely important. Chemistry, physics, mechanics, natural history, philosophy and literature, all engaged his attention by turns, and it was his boast that every man was an idler who did not work fourteen hours a-day. For his researches in the comparatively new science of electro-magnetism he had the honour in 1852, to receive the Copley Medal of the Royal Society. "Assure M. Arago," said the President, Sir Humphry Davy, in his address to

Sir James South, who was charged with the mission, "of the lively interest we take in his ingenious and important researches. Tell him we are extremely impatient to know the results of his experiments in a field so new and fertile."

M. Arago was born 1786, at Estagel, near Perpignan. His parents were of the middle class, and his father after the great revolution became cashier of the mint in that town. Having evinced an early interest in the pursuit of natural philosophy, M. Arago was sent to Montpellier to study mathematics and the branches of knowledge required for admission to the Ecole Polytechnique. He was prepared at the age of seventeen to pass the preliminary examination, and did so with an *éclat* that made him to be placed first in the list of candidates. Admitted to the schools, he underwent the examinations with distinction, and having decided on a scientific career, obtained the appointment of Secretary to the Bureau des Longitudes. The zeal and acquirements of M. Arago in that capacity attracted the attention of Monge, and he recommended him to the government in 1806 as a fit and proper person to undertake, in conjunction with M. Biot, the measurement of the arc of the terrestrial meridian. This measurement, on the basis of the decimal system, had been made between Dundirk and Barcelona, and MM. Biot and Arago were commissioned to continue it from Barcelona to the Balearic Isles. Provided with the necessary instruments, they established themselves on the summit of Mount Galatzo in Catalonia, and entered into communication with two Spaniards, charged to assist them, located on a mountain in the Isle of Ivica. In 1807 the operations were so far advanced as to enable M. Biot to return to Paris to make some calculations, and M. Arago was left alone on his onerous mission, when a war broke out between France and Spain. The peasantry, imagining from the peculiarity of his operations, that he was a spy, attempted to murder him. He escaped, however, in disguise, to the coast, and managed to embark in a vessel bound for Belver. After remaining there for some considerable time, M. Arago obtained leave to proceed on board an Algerine vessel to Marseilles, but no sooner had he reached the French coast when the vessel was seized by a Spanish corsair, and carried captive to Rosas. M. Arago was detained a prisoner some time, and subjected to much ill-treatment; and when at last the vessel was set at liberty, it was cast ashore in a violent tempest on the coast of Africa, and he was conveyed as a prisoner before the Dey. In 1809 M. Arago obtained his release and returned to Paris, and as a tribute to his energy and talent under these trying circumstances he was elected, at the early age of twenty-three, a member of the Academy of Sciences, in the place of the illustrious Lalande. He was appointed about the same time a professor of the Ecole Polytechnique; and now may be said to have commenced that eminent scientific career which he pursued with undiminished vigour to within a few days of his death. Only three weeks since he was working on a new edition of his memoir on thunder, and he had just requested M. Babinet to prepare for him a table of the best