

Ship, "the glory of the southern skies." Halley, as long ago as 1677, on his return from his voyage to St. Helena, expressed strong doubts concerning the alternation of light in the stars of Argo, especially on the shield of the prow and on the deck (*ἀσπιδίσκη* and *κατάστρωμα*), whose relative orders of magnitude had been given by Ptolemy.* However, in consequence of the little reliance that can be placed on the positions of the stars as set down by the ancients, of the various readings in the several MSS. of the *Almagest*, and of the vague estimates of intensity of light, these doubts failed to lead to any result. According to Halley's observation in 1677, η Argûs was of the fourth magnitude; and by 1751 it was already of the second, as observed by Lacaille. The star must have afterward returned to its fainter light, for Burchell, during his residence in Southern Africa, from 1811 to 1815, found it of the fourth magnitude; from 1822 to 1826 it was of the second, as seen by Fallows and Brisbane; in February, 1827, Burchell, who happened at that time to be at San Paolo, in Brazil, found it of the first magnitude, perfectly equal to α Crucis. After a year the star returned to the second magnitude. It was of this magnitude when Burchell saw it on the 29th of February, 1828, in the Brazilian town of Goyaz; and it is thus set down by Johnson and Taylor, in their catalogues for the period between 1829 and 1833. Sir John Herschel also, at the Cape of Good Hope, estimated it as being between the second and first magnitude, from 1834 to 1837.

When, on the 16th of December, 1837, this famous astronomer was preparing to take the photometric measurements of the innumerable telescopic stars, between the eleventh and sixteenth magnitudes, which compose the splendid nebula around η Argûs, he was astonished to find this star, which had so often before been observed, increase to such intensity of light that it almost equaled the brightness of α Centauri, and exceeded that of all other stars of the first magnitude, except Canopus and Sirius. By the 2d of January, 1838, it had for that time reached the maximum of its brightness. It soon became fainter than Arcturus; but in the middle of April, 1838, it still surpassed Aldebaran. Up to March, 1843, it continued to diminish, but was even then a star of the first magnitude; after that time, and especially in April, 1843, it began to increase so much in light, that, according

* Delambre, *Hist. de l'Astron. Ancienne*, tom. ii., p. 280, and *Hist. de l'Astron. au 18ème Siècle*, p. 119.