

The letters of Thomas William
Webb
to
Arthur Cowper Ranyard

VOLUME II

1874-1885

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Webb's death**

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Letter 149

Ten days later

Hardwick Vic. 10 Jan. 1874

My dearest Arthur,

I am sorry to say that a pressure of business obliged me to break my word with you, and as we were determined to come down if possible by the early train yesterday, I had to leave, very unwillingly. "Le Soleil" which you so kindly lent me in the care of M^r Walduck, the landlord of the Bedford Hotel. Not unwillingly as regards him – for I am sure he is perfectly trusty & attentive – but as regards myself – for I had promised you to leave it at either your house or chambers.

Much loss of time was caused by the Shoolbred¹ Shop-folk afterwards, as the young man came down several times - &, missing me, I had to go there. What he wanted was an explanation that M^{rs} Webb did not impute to him dishonesty – This she had already given in the shop – but they repeated the request in a way that led me to suspect it was intended as a ~~conspiracy~~ mode of extorting money – but none did they get from me, nor any explanation from my wife ^but one^ that while removing every idea of dishonesty retained the charge of uncivil conduct. A solicitor of eminence who was dining at my brother-in-law's thought her perfectly correct in what she said in the shop, & that she would have been justified in even going farther, and would not have had her purse on easier terms - & so thought the hotel people. It was a kind of petty conspiracy – but they missed their mark this time - & it may have been well for some of the impudent fellows that I did not care to stop in London, to complain to their employers.

I have got it all straight about the Birch & only regret extremely that you won't have the copy I intended for you. It is a disappointment to me – for your name was among the first on my list, & you are thanked by name in the introduction.

It was most kind of you as regards my poor Nephew – but I find the Sol^r to whom he is articled is his father's great friend, so that he will have no occasion to avail himself of your truly considerate offer.

Must I add one more thing? I fear I must, or not be the affectionate old friend which I hope I am – I don't know how to express it to you – but I certainly did feel a good deal concerned to find that a letter had been perused which, had I intended you to read, I should of course have put into your hands. I suppose opinions & feelings differ about this – but for myself I have never looked at a friend's letter or papers during his absence, however intimate.

Believe me, dearest Arthur,

Your truly affectionate old friend,

T.W. Webb

Pdfs 161 & 162

¹ Probably the cabinet making and furniture firm of James Shoolbred in Tottenham Court Road, estbd 1820s

Letter 150

Three days later

Postcard

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay

13 Jan 1874

Many thanks for kind letter.

Speculum just rubbed up, recentred & a Red star, suspected Var. by Birmingham, proved so, 10 Jan – 280 Schj. (last of list).

T. W. W.

Second side half penny stamp addressed to:

A. C. Ranyard, Esq.
25 Old Square
Lincoln's Inn
London W.C.

[Pdfs 163 & 164](#)

Letter 151

One week later

Hardwick Vicge. Hay 21 Jan 1874

My dearest Arthur,

I seem to be always writing to give you trouble in some form or other, and I should think you must be growing tired of my hand. However, coûte qui coûte, [at any rate] here I am at it again.

Yesterday morning I received, in broad astonishment, a copy of a very interesting essay on the dark side of ♀ [Venus] – evidently part of the ~~publication~~ memoirs of some Society, but only headed “Sitzung der Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftlichen Classe am 18. Juli 1873” [*Session of the maths and science class/department on 18 July 1873*] – But where there is no evidence to show, except the enclosed Defacing Stamp - & the notice at the end “Verlag der königlichen böhmischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften Druck v. Dr. Ed. Grégr Prag. 1873” [*Publishers of the Royal Bohemian Society of Sciences. Printed by Druck v Dr. Ed. Grégr, Prague, 1873*] – I have filled up the parentheses as seemed most probable, & am left to infer that my unknown correspondent must be Dr. Šafařík (How in the world do you pronounce this?) the author of the essay who lives I assume in Prague. He ought to be thanked. I “guess” I may do so in English, as he evidently understands it well – (witness the dissertation on the enclosed) & shall have the more readiness to write, as I happen to have the Editio Princeps of Derham’s Astrotheology¹, which he has been obliged to get at through a translation. Can I do better than address Prof. Doctor S &c.&c.&c. Prague? (What by the way is the correct mode of opening a letter to a German of this standing? I mean, in English)

The address he has given is evidently from the title of “Celestial Objects” – a gratifying proof how far that brochure has found its way.

I thought in my simplicity that I was fairly “out of” the Nature² job – but two days ago comes a mighty vol. of Leiden Obs. Annals, & I am “in for it”. I could have done the paper much better in London, where are books I want to see, to make it really sound – but I must do the best I can. You Londoners have marvellous advantages in some things.

I do not feel quite sure, but I think you have some pencil sketches of ♂ [Mars] by Dawes which he gave me - & Dr. Terby’s little essay on ♂. I know I own them, & had them here, but cannot find them, & have a pretty strong impression you borrowed them. Please let me know, that I may enter them, as I ought to have done at the time, in my little Borrowed Books Register. I value them, especially “dear Dawes” sketches, very highly.

There is a thing in Prof. Dr. S****’s memoir that I must copy for you. I think you may be interested in it, tho’ of course its absolute value is small. –

“Ich habe mich nun selbst überzeugt, dass die Helligkeit der Corona gross genug ist, um auch in unseren Breiten ohne totale Finsterniss gesehen zu werden. Am 15, und 16. Sept. 1871 konnte ich in mitten der ausgedehnten Nadelwäldern von Houska, unter einem Himmel, der beinahe bis an den Horizont tief ultramarin blau war, bei gehörig gedeckter Sonnenscheibe das Licht der Aureola beinahe bis an den Sonnenrand vertragen, und sah entschieden aus den Photographien des Finsternisses von 1870 bekannten trapezoidalen Umriss der Corona, wie die auch [Tacchine] zu Palermo gelang.”

[I have now been able to witness for myself that the brightness of the corona is great enough to be observed, even in our latitude, without the need for a total eclipse. On the 15th and 16th of September 1871, in the middle of the extensive coniferous forests of Houska, under a sky which was deep ultramarine blue almost to the horizon, and with a [properly; appropriately ?] [– not sure at all what the German writer meant by that] covered disc of the Sun, I was able to manage [I

¹ William Derham, British physicist (1657–1735) *Astro-theology* (1715).

² The Journal *Nature*

think he means in the sense of observing without injury to his eyes, through some kind of ‘covering up’ (“gehörig gedeckter”) of the Sun’s disc – not sure how he did this though] *to observe the light of the aureola almost to the very edge of the Sun’s disc, and was actually able to see the trapezoidal outline of the corona as seen in the photographs of the 1870 eclipse successfully taken by Tacchini in Palermo.*] I dare say the worthy P D S was quite right. But surely this assertion which Prof. Young makes (I hope I am not detaining him too long – I like him so much) that the light of the Corona “several times exceeds that of the Full Moon” – must be a slip. If so, how can the darkness in a total eclipse be so great as it is found to be? You were so kind as to say you would let me see Huggins’s paper in the Vierteljährbe. [NOTE: some kind of German “quarterly” publication – but don’t know what exactly he is referring to...] I should be very glad if quite convenient, & would return it in a day or two. I hope you got “Le Soleil” quite safe. And I trust your dear Mother is quite recovered. Kindest regards to her & your good Father & believe me, dearest Arthur,

Your affectionate friend

T. W. Webb

[Pdfs 165/166](#)

Letter 152

Next day

postcard

Hardw. Vicarage

22 Jan. 1874

I am going to say "It is ~~greatly~~ [^]much to[^] be regretted that only a portion of the exquisite drawings of this great observer have as yet been copied in facsimile. Those in Monthly Not. omit some of the most curious presentations of the globe [of Mars] & the reproduction by Proctor does not profess minute accuracy."

Is not this right (I know the part about Monthly Notices is). One line, please, by return.

T. W. W.

Post Card – half penny stamp addressed to:

A. C. Ranyard, Esq.
25 Old Square
Lincoln's Inn
London W.C.

[Pdfs 167 & 168](#)

Letter 153

One week later

Postcard

Hardwick Vic. 29 Jan. 1874

Many thanks. I did not want the Dawes' drawings at present, but only to know who had them. You have not told me whether you have a memoir of Terby's, I think you borrowed it but am not sure. I don't want that either at present, & you can let me know at any time. - It is quite marvellous about the Cometary appearance – but surely had it been an ordinary one it w'd have been seen before or after. – Qu. some ejected matter that fizzed off when released? A very curious thing anyhow. I will send back the ¼ jählinge¹ tomorrow – your envelope for it was thin, & it was rather creased thro' post. Thanks about Prof S*?∞ &c [*Schjellerup?*]- I have sent so long an essay on [Mars]♂ that I doubt its being accepted. It opens like a paper of Pr^{r2} But I did not find this out until after sending it. T. W. W.

Post Card – half penny stamp addressed to:

A. C. Ranyard, Esq.
25 Old Square
Lincoln's Inn
London W.C.

[Pdfs 169 & 170](#)

¹ Possibly "1/4 jaehrlich" German for "quarter-yearly" and may refer to a quarterly publication of some kind.

² Proctor?

Letter 154

Two weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage, 13 Feb. 1874 (after post)

My dearest Arthur,

On returning today from Cheltenham, where we have been this week, I find your letter, tho' not in time to post a reply, being obliged at once to go & commit to the ground the body of my good friend Mr Trumper of Clifford (Walwyn's father) who died last Saturday after a fortnight's illness.

I am sorry to hear that there is still some chance of a commotion ^in the R.A.S.^ - we have had but too much of it already – and to me, who knows so very little about it, it has the demerit of being uninteresting as well as annoying. However, I send you my proxy in the earnest hope that it may do some good. I am very sorry indeed to hear of Mr Huggins's accident. I wonder whether it happened in the Observatory, where I well recollect your nearly having had a tumble among all sorts of indescribables. Old Struve¹ once got a broken leg by an upset from his great instrument – which he observed was justly called a “refractor!” - You sent me a post card some time ago which I thought to have answered from Cheltenham – but found my time strangely messed about & run away with. Would you kindly write my name on the two ♂ [Mars] memoirs by Terby that you have of mine? The MSS that your Uncle has sent you must be of considerable value, & I should think would well deserve publication. Sir Kenelm Digby² & a brother of his (whether this Lord George Digby or no I cannot tell, but I fancy not) had a remarkable controversy as to Popery – with the imagined (I should think) result, that each converted the other! The letters have I believe been published; & if this Ld.G. Digby should turn out to have been his brother; these letters may have formed part of that controversy. I have received, with yours, proof of part of my ♂ Essay for Nature. I should think Lockyer will have had enough of me this time. It does not read as well as I anticipated – but I was much hurried & pressed at the time, having 3 lectures on hand, one for the parish & two for Cheltenham: & altogether I was in a mess, on the other side of which I am very thankful to find myself now – though I must immediately plunge myself into fresh heaps of work in connection with my dear father's other publication.

I got, when in Town, one of Browning's achromatic eyepieces (I had never seen one, except one of his early attempts). It is said, you cannot have a perfect eye-piece - & this is not so – for the field tho' remarkably flat as to focus, is distorted somewhat towards the edges – nevertheless the light & achromatism are very fine, though in sharpness it is not quite equal to an ancient Huygenian by Tully, which I got by happy accident. Hind's variable neb. in Lepus is very small now – 10 mag – but for colour, there is nothing like it of the many I have seen. Chambers seems to have saved {symbol = Herschel}'s memory from a mistake as to his star in Schjellerup – but it was suspicious enough that there should have been 2 so close together. My little S Orionis continues in an extremely minute place: & I suspect has an irregular period.

Saturday. I wrote the preceding in a travel-tired & very dull mood last night. This morning (not yet 7 G.M.T.) I have to add best thanks for a little book which I return by Post & hope you will

¹ Friedrich Georg Wilhelm von Struve (1793-1864) was a Baltic-German astronomer from a famous dynasty of astronomers. He is best known for his observations of double stars, and discovered a very large number. In 1827 published his double star catalogue *Catalogue novus stellarum duplicium*.

² Sir Kenelm Digby 1603 - 1665), English courtier and diplomat.

get safely – Young’s Lecture on ☉¹ [Sun] which seems to me one of the very nicest on the subject, & which I have found of great use.

I came across the Transit article in the Edin. Rev. at Cheltenham & soon saw how justly? you had characterised it as unreliable. I had on the former occasion merely looked at the earlier part of it & been greatly pleased with its style – but when I came to find that it ignored the transit of 1761 ! and spoke of Fraunhofer² as a living artist !! I began to wonder how any man knowing so little about it should have ventured upon the subject. I think you said it was a Dr. Mann. Who is he ? at any rate not the mann for such an article.

My wife sends her love & I remain my dearest Arthur
Your very affectionate old friend
T. W. Webb

[Pdfs 171 & 172](#)

¹ Charles Augustus Young, 1834–1908, American astronomer, He was a pioneer in the study of the spectrum of the sun and experimented in photographing solar prominences in full sunlight. His works include *The Sun* (1881, rev. ed. 1896), *Lessons in Astronomy* (1891, rev. ed. 1918), and *The Elements of Astronomy* (1890, rev. ed. 1919).

² See Letter 5

Letter 155

Four days later

Hardwick Vic. 17 Feb. / 74

My dearest Arthur,

I don't think I shall catch the post, but am trying. Many thanks for yours. – The fault in the reflector is perhaps in the eyepieces – or it may lie in some bright spot in the tube not properly blacked. The great Chicago achrom: has a “milky” field from some internal reflection. Experiments w^d. probably detect the cause. – your poor clerk's death must have struck you much. It is well to be brought face to face with the last enemy – as you have been several times – no doubt with special meaning.

Your very affect. old friend
T. W. Webb.

Pdf 173

Letter 156

Two weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay, 2 March 1874

My dearest Arthur,

I do not think I have written to you since an event which, though long expected, has caused in its accessories, no small ferment in the neighbourhood – the decease of our old friend M^{rs} Napleton Penoyre¹. This took place last Saturday week. She had for some time previously been rather improving in bodily health - & her doctor so changed his opinion as to think she might even live a twelvemonth – but with this had come a great deal of oddity - & she was certainly in some respects hardly of sound mind towards the last: when some kind of fit came on, followed by unconsciousness, & it pleased God at length to release her after a life of great helplessness & misery for 16 years. What a lesson as to the vanity of all earthly possessions! – And then came intense curiosity as to the Will, which had been kept a profound secret – not on our part, as regarded ourselves – we had been told long ago by M^{rs} Oswald that her cousin would do nothing more for this living - & I rather expected the withdrawing of some allowances on the Farm &c. – about £23 per ann. – which I could certainly afford to lose, but would much rather have kept. But the great point so debated through all the neighbourhood was, Who would succeed at The Moor? There was good reason to believe that ultimately it would go (fully by inheritance, tho' M^{rs} Nap. had entire power over it) to the grandchildren of a 1st cousin on the male side – M^r Raymond, still living, who has always expected his life interest in it. But who would be there in the minority? M^r Raymond, on the 1st cousin's maternal, M^r Brown, M^{rs} Oswald, & her children? The Will has settled it in a way to give little satisfaction, & much trouble. M^r Brown (besides £15,000) has it for life – then Raymond for life – a much older man & in feeble health, so I fear his disappointment, which he will hear today – will be very sad – the affair has just been reversed – poor M^r R. might have had it for his few years - & then M^r B. if it had not been better, as it would, by far, to have given him more money, but not the estate. M^r B. by his faithful attention to their interests, & in consideration of a good deal of strait keeping & short allowance in former days, might well have had a very handsome share – but not quite so well in this annoying form. – After these 2 lives come M^r R's married daughter's life, & then her children – the first male heirs in the right line (after R. himself). But then, poor M^{rs}. Oswald, the most devoted of nurses - & the only person for whom M^{rs} N.P. had expressed the most concentrated affection – gets ~~nothing~~ little or nothing besides clothes & jewelry[sic] - & her 3 children have £10,000 in trust among them, divisible & manageable as the Trustees see fit – this seems a very poor recompense for the devotion of great part of a life – but then in all probability the Testator thought M^r B. would always keep a home for his sister – for she (M^{rs} N.P.) was fully persuaded – in her simplicity – that he would never marry - & now the truth, so long suspected by the whole neighbourhood – is officially proclaimed by himself – that he is married - & has no doubt long been so ^{^(no children)^} - no reason to suppose anything very creditable, as it has been such a secret - & now the O. party – mother & children, are sorely disappointed. I have made so much longer a story than I had any idea of that I must take another piece [of paper], & ask you to excuse it. And I could write a lot more – but must confine myself now to what I know you will feel a kind interest in. To my utter astonishment I come in for a legacy (originally intended for my dear Father) of £500. – and the living is augmented to ± £65, per annum (nominally upwards of £90, but I have to give up some privileges & allowances I had before, which makes it stand thus to me. I ~~he~~ am very thankful for it – especially as it is an acknowledgement of what, in later years, had been painfully overlooked & ignored, his most valuable & faithful services to that estate. And I rejoice to think it comes to us perfectly clean, & without a spot of interest or influence – the will made

¹ See Penoyre family

formerly by my father's lawyer & friend having been superseded by one made by M^r Brown's especial friend. I desire to thank God for this most unexpected addition to our means, and I humbly by the grace and direction of the Giver that I may be guided & enabled to make good use of it, for His glory, & the benefit and extension of His Holy Church.

My wife sends kind love & I remain

My dear Arthur

Your very affectionate Old Friend

T.W.Webb.

I don't know that I can advise you further about the Reflector. But it would make much difference what construction it is of, - which did not occur to me before - writing I daresay in haste. -

[Pdfs 174/175/176](#)

Letter 157

Ten days later

Hardwick Vic.: 12 March 1874. (86)

My dearest Arthur

You have asked me rather a hard question - & the more so because I don't see whether you want a single word, or an expressive adjective combined with "zone" - which indeed is the only plan I can think of. In the latter case, you would have the N x zone, and the S x zone. I could suggest plenty of adjectives to replace x - but none that I much like - however here goes for a choice. -

Inarched (from the process of inarching as applied wheels - i.e. connecting the branches by grafting.)

Interlaced. (not good - you want to express the summits only.)


Reflex.

Interwoven - subject to the same objection as interlaced.

Recurved (but the zone is not recurved, only the rays in it.)

If you want a fine Greek name, you may call them the Ana-Camptic or Encamptic or Epicamptic or Syncamptic Zones. - None classically bad - but would they not be thought needless finery? - The Solar Geo. [?] Robius? -

I really am quite sorry to find myself so much at fault and so I fear you will be too.-

I have begun drawing  [Jupiter] for Dr. Lohsen or whatever his name may be. I had thought of not caring much about him this season - but the Bothkamp challenge has decided me otherwise.

Thank you for your friendly congratulation. Mrs. O. is to be pitied in some respects - but I doubt whether any of the party (except your namesake) are quite clear enough to make any great demand upon one's interior & deeper sympathies. Some poet or other says "pity is akin to love" - but for love deserving the name, there must be a foundation of respect & esteem.¹

However - more than enough of this. - I have been greatly amused by the idea of a correspondent whose letter was many days reaching me - from having directed Hardwick Vic.: merely that he supposed R.S.O. must mean Royal Society of something - not a bad notion in these days of societies - So I think I may well dub myself F. R. S. O. (Fellow of Royal Society of Oddities.). - And with this newly acquired dignity - though not newly deserved, I remain

My dearest Arthur
your affectionate old friend

T. W. Webb.

Pdfs 177/178

¹ See Letter 156

Letter 158

Ten days later

Troy House, Monmouth 22 April 1874

My dearest Arthur

You have long ago found out that I hardly ever write except for some selfish motive or other - & here I am at it again! The fact is, I have been asked by Burnham to propose him as Fellow - and I should have written to Williams¹ for a form - but I don't know whether he may not have left Som^t House - & tho' I have heard of a celebrated Musical composer who said "London" was a sufficient address for him, I am afraid that would hardly do for J. Williams. - I am ashamed to say that under much pressure of business I had forgotten Burnham's wish for some time - I hope it will not be too late to carry it out during the present session. Will you kindly ask Williams to send the form to me at Hardwick as usual (unless you prefer enclosing it yourself) We shall be returning there on Saturday - we have been driven out by painters. Will you do me the favour to second Burnham's nomination? I dare say there will be no difficulty in getting someone to third it. -

-With is now working up a 15 inch mirror - the first of that size. If I could dispose of my present without loss - & if I were to have but little trouble through the exchange, I should probably start a short-focus 12 ¼ inch

- There are eggs still on Jupiter - & redness; but neither so regular as before. I am especially glad the Society has published Lord Rosse's drawings. What do we know about Jupiter? - Is it even certain that the brighter parts are vapours? They would be so with us - & I used to think the analogy as relates to ²[Jupiter] more conclusive than I do now. (I don't however deny the probability)

Do you ever go to the Office of "Nature"?

Those folks behave very ill to my bookseller, & as no case of malice prepense can be suggested as regards him - or I hope myself - I can only suppose the carelessness may be widely-extended. A few weeks ago I got a copy so torn it rendered it incomplete and I had to return it - & the week before last I think, I had another minus the outside leaves.

I am very hard at work at my dear Father's memoirs of the Civil War in Herefordshire. Do you think there would be any chance of having it subscribed for by the Librarian of the Temple? - I hope it will not be very long before I can receive the Record Commissioners².

Believe me, dearest Arthur,
Your very affectionate friend

Thomas William Webb.

Pdfs 179/180

¹ Secretary R.A.S.

² See Letter 148

Letter 159

Six days later

Hardwick Vicarage, 28 Ap^r.1874 (after post)

My dearest Arthur,

I am much obliged by your kindness as to the form of application. I do not know whether in these too-late-in-the-season cases, it is customary to propose, or to wait – but supposing the former to be the more likely, I have taken the liberty of sending the nomination to you, thinking that probably you would feel no objection to sign it, & get me some other name, which in this case would I should think, entail no difficulty.

I don't know whether you ever go near the "Nature" office – or if you do, would like to say anything about it – but it would be well that they should know that someone there is not careful enough as to the goodness of the copies that are sent out. Twice lately – I should say in less than 3 months, I have had to complain to my bookseller in Hay of defective copies, & to get better ones sent: and this not from any fastidiousness or over accuracy. In the first instance, a portion of a leaf had been torn away so that some lines were incomplete – in the other, the outer 2 leaves were altogether wanting.

We have at last got back, thank God, into our comfortable home – the painters are in it still, and will not be out before the end of the week; but they do not now trouble us much.

The air was fine last night - 2| very curious – the eggs have rather degenerated (qu: addled?) but they are there - & sometimes one gets a perfect one. The more I look at 2| the less do I feel that we have got any key to his mysteries.

ζ Caneri is now very difficult, & slipping off the ~~mid~~ meridian.

Your affectionate old friend

T.W.Webb.

Letter 160

One week later

Hardwick Vicarage, 6 May 1874

My dearest Arthur,

Here I am again – always bothering – it is “the nature of the beast” –

I am not a little mortified to find that owing to some inattention or forgetfulness of mine, my good & valued friend D^r Terby will lose his election as F.R.A.S. in May, & have to wait until Nov^r – Now, I don't know that this will make much difference to him, beyond the name of the thing, & the reception of any interim M. Notices¹. The first I cannot help. But should any Notices be published between May & Nov. – as I believe there are always some extra copies, could I buy or beg one for him.

This, however, I am sorry to say, is not the only matter as to which your old friend is going to bore you! You must know then that just as I am in the thick of my preparation for the publication of my dear father's MS. *Memoirs of the Civil War in Herefordshire*² – I suddenly find myself under the cross-fire of a heavy battery in flank – the first report being that of a Programme of a work actually in the Press.

Memoirs of the Civil War in Wales & the Marches (or adjacent Counties, including this, of course) by John Roland Phillips of Lincoln's Inn, Barrister at law &c. &c.³

For which he professes to have been at work for many years, & to have searched Brit. Mus. & Record office thoroughly &c. &c. . .

And in which he not only will have the advantage of priority in the press, but also he takes in the whole subject, while my dear father only completed half or 2/3rd

“This here's a purty go! as poor Akerman said.-

Nevertheless in faith to my subscribers & honour to my dear Father's memory, I mean (D.V.) to persevere. – I should have told you his list of subscribers is somewhat longer than mine – nearly 100. But of course it is the general unsubscribed-for sale that will be damaged.

Now the favour I want you to do for me, is to let me know – if you can do so without inconvenience – who & what is my opponent? He hails from 1 Mitre Buildings, Temple. From the tone of his Prospectus I rather suspect, but it is only a suspicion – that he is Rad: or Non-Con: [Radical or [Non Conformist]- or very likely both. If possible, I should like to know whether he is a real faithful antiquarian & historian, or merely a charlatan – a penny-a-liner on stilts – of whom I could tell you of one if not more of your honourable profession. One I recollect I wanted to stick my pen into - & he deserved it – but my dear father bid me let him alone.

By the way I detected a very strange omission (or suppression) the other day in Froude's *English in Ireland*.⁴ Had I more leisure I think I sh^d stick my pen very quietly into him - & perhaps I may do it still.

If I can afford it I think I shall illustrate pretty freely with photography – thus mounting heavier artillery than my antagonist – a well-illustrated book after all has a better chance & then I must hunt up the portraits of some of the big men to copy. Can you tell me of anyone who is well up in that? I mean who ~~tells~~ knows where portraits are likely to be found? Those I mean are I fear a little out of the common line –

¹ Monthly Notices R.A.S

² See Letter 142

³ John Roland Phillips 1844-87 *Memoirs of the Civil War in Wales and the Marches*. Longman, Green. 1874 [A reviewer in the *Archaeologia Cambriensis* of 1875 accused Phillips of bias towards the republican party in his narrative in the first volume of the work, but the collection of original documents in the second volume proved to be valuable]

⁴ Froude, James Anthony (1818–1894), historian *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* 3 vols. 1874. See ODNB

Viscount Scudamore, Sir ~~W~~ Rob^t Harley, Lady Harley, Fitzwilliam Coningsby, Sir W. Waller, E. of Stamford.

“The Welshmen rave quoth Stamford,
And call me villainous Goate”.

I should have told you that M^r Phillips’s work squeezes the whole war into one vol.- his 2nd vol. being occupied with “pièces justificatives” [supporting documents]– while my father’s – tho’ not discursive or garrulous, spreads half the war over 2 vols.

I think there is a prospect of our paying a hasty visit to Town in the beginning of June

Your affectionate old friend
“Deffro! Mae Dydd!”

Letter 161

Five weeks later

Black border

Hardwick Vicarage, 10 June 1874.

My Dearest Arthur,

You will sympathise, I know, with the cause of the cause of this mourning – the unexpected removal of my wife’s elder brother – the Rev. Arthur M. Wyatt. We heard in Town on Friday that he was very ill – but as he had been suffering for many years from asthma, the news caused us but little anxiety – especially as at Ross station we saw a friend of his who had recently seen him in good health – but yesterday morning came the intelligence that he had bronchitis (brought on I fear by 3 duties the Sunday before last) & was in great danger – but before we received that announcement he had been, several hours departed. – To us therefore this has been a very unexpected and afflictive sorrow. – But, what is life? Why should these things surprise us, who are all of us standing on the threshold of eternity? And, with the momentous issues of that eternity before us, how small all the corporeal & even intellectual affairs of life appear! God grant that we may each of us be found watching!

This will not, I see, go today, as I am obliged to go to Hay before post – but I will write on as long as I can.

I wanted a great deal more talk with you about many things - & especially an account of your Clerk’s death, which you promised me viva voce. But our time together was short. I had a letter this morning from M^r. Berthon, by which I see his idea of reading a paper has dropped through: I suspect on several accounts. – A N^o. of M. Notices reaches me by this morning’s post. As you asked me to remind you, will you kindly send a copy to D^r. Terby - & one or two back one’s if conveniently to be spared. –

Thank you for kindly sending me to M^r. Davies. I just caught him that same day, & found him pleasant & communicative. He gave me Gilbert & Riv^s. Terms. One thing puzzled me greatly, & he was unable to explain it. In addition to their charge for Negative, they make an extra charge for scratching the name on said Negative of 3s. 6d. – which may be all very well, tho’ surely out of proportion to the trouble – But when they go on to charge 3s. per 100 again on these “titled” proofs, which cost them not a farthing more in labour or paper, I can’t make it out at all, and think it positively unfair. With this exception I am quite satisfied. –

I see this can go today so remain in haste with my wife’s kind love,

Your very affect. Old Friend

T. W. Webb.

Pdfs 185, 186

Letter 162

Five days later

Postcard

H. V. 15 Jun 1874

Could not the Greenwich people apply the pile [?] to detect any possible heat from the Comet – w^d. not you give them a hint before it goes too far ? In utter haste

T.W.W

Reverse side addressed to 25 Old Square, Lincoln's Inn. NB The cancellation stamp is JY 15 ie July. Whose mistake??

Pdfs 187, 188

Letter 163

Eight days later

Black edged

Hardwicke Vicarage, 18 June 1874

My Dearest Arthur,

We are very much obliged by your kind and sympathising letter. Being fortunately able to have my duty taken on Sunday, I had the painful opportunity of attending the funeral at Raglan¹ on Monday, and we returned on Tuesday. My wife is as you may suppose none the better for this distressing shock. – But we must shut up all our thoughts in the Holy Will of God.

I am not without hope of being able to take her abroad – but at present have got no substitute - & our plans are very uncertain. One little thing has happened to cheer me in the midst of many depressing circumstances. For a length of time I have been unable to get from my slow, sickly, stupidish publisher in Hereford (what one would think simple enough) a list of subscribers² - at last they have done it, though incorrectly – but I am quite surprised at the length of the list. I expected some 80 or 90 – and there are nearly 100 more. This places me beyond much risk of pecuniary loss, & enables me to go forward cheerfully & to illustrate more plentifully without it being so speculative. But there is a point about that illustration, which I want to mention to you, as you took so kind an interest in the matter, & sent me to M^r Davies of Heliotype position. Well and good. I was very glad I went. He was very obliging & put me up to a good deal. But one thing puzzled me very much – & he could not explain it, or throw any light upon it. –

Gilbert & Rivington have a certain tarif [sic], of which he gave me a copy - varying of course according to size & no. of plates. And very reasonable I found it. But this is merely the tarif of untitled plates – i.e. of such as have no name attached to them - & such usually speaking, would not answer my purpose. For adding a name to the Negative, they charge 3s 6d extra. Plenty, I think, considering how little trouble it would give to a practiced hand. Still I should not object if this were all. - But they proceed to another item of 3s per 100 extra for printing these titled plates. *Aben warum ist das?* [Why is that?] There is no additional expense to them in materials, paper or labour. A titled & untitled ~~print~~ negative print exactly alike - & therefore I am quite unable to comprehend the fairness of such a charge. Nor would it be a trifle if there were 12 or 20 titled illustrations to an Edition of 300. I confess it rather surprises me that a respectable firm should condescend to make money in such a way, by charging as for work, not done. Would it be giving you much trouble, if I were to ask you to make some enquiry for me about this queer thing. There is no kind of hurry but it is best to be fore-armed. I think even with this extra I should get the work done at about 2d per illustration – the lowest photography offered being 2½d. – and the heliotype cockles³ less and therefore binds better.

I was very sorry to find from Berthon that some misapprehension had hindered the reading of his paper at R.A.S. Is Lord Lindsay now Earl of Crawford? and author of a curious speculation as to Etruscan antiquities – (much more curious than probable, according to the Guardian review of it.) ? –

Believe me, my dearest Arthur
Yours very affectionately,

¹ See Letter 161. Arthur Montagu Wyatt was vicar of Llandenny & Raglan 1866-74

² Subscribers for the Memorials of the Civil War

³ to cockle = to pucker, wrinkle (of paper). SOD.Heliotype – a picture obtained by printing from a film of gelatine which has been sensitised with bichromate of potash and exposed to light under a negative SOD

T.W. Webb

Since writing this I have found your kind letter which I had mislaid – Many thanks ~~about~~ for the prospectus – the author had already been making some enquiries of me about an old Eclipse in which I could not help him. Thank you for offering to send the book - but at present I could not read it & old eclipses don't much interest me. Will you please tell M^r Hamilton when you see him that I felt much disappointed at being so hurried that it was quite impossible for me to call as I very much wished to have done. -

[Pdfs 189, 190](#)

Letter 164

Nearly two weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage, 29 June 1874

My dearest Arthur,

The book you kindly lent me has arrived quite safe, & I am much obliged, but have as yet had no leisure to examine it. I have just now a heap of other business on hand, and some about which I am induced to draw upon your good-nature. I don't like giving you all this trouble, but I know how kind you are - & I hope my query may admit of a ready & speedy answer. -

The case is this. -

In 1856 I was presented to this ~~pl~~ benefice, ~~aws~~ under the Bishop's License, as Perpetual Curate of the Church of the Holy Trinity, Hardwick, in the Parish of ~~Hardwick~~ Clifford, a district being ~~at the same time~~ ^also^ attached to the Church, with the right of performing Baptisms, Burials, & Marriages ^receiving the Fees: - the Tithe and Church Rate being reserved to the Mother Church of Clifford, (and according to Counsel's Opinion, the right of seats in Church) - and the new District being endowed with Glebe, the Rent of a Farm, and the Interest of a sum invested with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. - This was my original "status" - Subsequently, Lord Blandford's Act.¹ (29 Vict. cap. 104) made Hardwick into a parish, ecclesiastically - and another act has conferred upon me the title - but not the tithes - of a Vicar.

There was a sum set apart at the consecration of the Church, and subsequently vested in the Church Building Society as Trustees - but subject to my Cheque for the Interest - for the purpose of repairing the Church. Such I believe to be the expression, without reference to any distinction between Church, and Chancel. (The deed is I think with the Church Commissioners.) The Church and Chancel have been till recently insured by the Moor estate from which the foundation & endowment proceed. -

Things have gone on this way for years. But recently an act of parliament, enforced by the Bishop, requires the Insurance of the chancel by the Incumbent - and this has led me to consider as to the Repair of the Chancel also; both I presume going together. And what I want to know is, whether being only Vicar by courtesy, and possessing no portion of Vicarial Tithe, ~~and~~ any liability lies upon me either to repair or insure the Chancel. (I have no doubt that as Incumbent I am liable to the ^Repair and^ insurance both of the Glebe House and the Farm house & buildings.)

The Moor Estate has just passed into fresh hands, & it is important that this point should be cleared as soon as possible: for if I am not liable in any way, the repair of the Chancel would I presume fall upon the ~~R~~ Church Repair Fund, & the Insurance either upon that, or the Estate. A collateral question is this. There is as you know an Organ Chamber containing a valuable Organ, opening by a window into the Chancel, but not communicating with it by a passage. If the Repair & Insurance ~~are not mine~~ of the Chancel are not mine, of course the question drops through, but if they are, it is important that I should know whether these adjuncts are to be considered part of the Chancel, or not.

I have consulted the Bishop about all this, but he tells me it is entirely a legal question. ^and says "it must be answered by some competent authority."^ - Now what I want you kindly to tell me, is this. Would it be sufficient to take an Attorney's opinion about it (in which case I should apply to the Bishop's Secretary - though by the way his Lordship has not suggested that course) - or do I require Counsel's opinion? In the latter alternative, I suppose it would be well for the Bishop's Secretary to prepare the case. -

You would do me a great kindness if you would just tell me what I had best do - I am very sorry to plague you in such a way, but I know you will forgive it.

¹ See Letter 82

I think it is pretty certain that the Insurance of the Church would have been specified in setting apart the Repair fund – but at that time insurance was a voluntary matter – as I believe it still is as to Churches – that of Chancels is now thrown upon Incumbents by act of parliament.

“Celestial Objects” is about to appear in a French dress - & the Abbé Moigno¹ [sic] who expects nothing from it, wants to get the right for nothing, or as little as may be. I have ~~to~~ suggested to Longmans that it might be fair to charge him nothing now, but to claim a royalty on all paying copies. What L. Will do I don't know. – I have never yet seen Coggia².

Believe me my dearest Arthur

Your very affectionate old friend

T. W. Webb.

Pdfs 191, 192

¹ François-Napoléon-Marie Moigne 1804-1884 French Jesuit physicist and author

² Coggia's Comet was detected by Jérôme Eugène Coggia 1849 –1919, French astronomer, April 1874 .According to Huggins it was the first bright comet to which the spectroscope was applied (Report to Royal Society 1874)

Letter 165

Eleven days later

Hardwick Vicarage, 10 July 1874

My dearest Arthur,

I am especially obliged by your very great kindness on the present occasion. I shall have an opportunity of seeing the Bishop next Wednesday, when I will ascertain from him what amount of legal opinion will meet his requirements as to Insurance (about which he has an annual return made by the Clergy) and then I shall better know what to be at.

I have written to Mr. Martin to thank him for his kind present. Tonight if clear, as it is promising, I will attack Coggia with the little prism, & let you know the result. Unfortunately a great tree has all along prevented my levelling the big gun at him & I have only seen him with a binocular field glass. With tells me he is a beautiful fellow, the nucleus throwing out a kind of cock's comb of jets. – Whence, the continuous spectrum? Hardly Gas? How can we conceive it sufficiently condensed? I see Konkoly¹ finds the “marsh gas” spectrum – of course in the coma. What wonders these objects are! I do hope your Hayfever is passing off. I have had a touch of it – but nothing like your annoyance.

Ever your affect. old friend

T. W. Webb

Very many thanks for the book which I return today if I have time. “Nature” has also sent it me for review.

[Pdfs 193/194](#)

¹ Miklós Konkoly-Thege 1842-1916 Hungarian astronomer

Letter 166

Five days later

Hardwick Vicarage, 23 July /74

My dearest Arthur,

I have written to ^today^ to Mr Hankey¹ – but not having heard from him for a long time I have no idea what arrangements he may have been making. I am very sorry for poor Mr Marth² – if all else fails, could not a subscription be got up for him? I would contribute a trifle. But, how comes him to be in such need? Is there any habit of imprudence or mismanagement in the way – which would materially alter ones view? or is it a wife & large family? If single, he ought scarcely to be so distressed. He has had good posts & ought to have laid something by – if single. –

By the way, - excuse me – have you any official connection with Her Majesty's Post Office, of a mysterious nature, which induces you so frequently to put two Queen's Heads on weight not enough for one ?

We think of starting a trip, D.V. 17 Aug. – but I don't suppose I shall have time to see more than 5m. of you in town

Your affect. old friend
T.W.Webb

Pdfs 195, 196

¹ Henry Hankey was a merchant, City banker and developer who was much involved with the development of Queen Anne's Mansions (1873-90) London's first high rise flats. He tended to ride roughshod over building regulations and was involved in several retrospective applications. His unfinished Observatory on the roof of his private residence which was adjacent to the Mansions gave rise to fears about the danger to residents in the Mansions in the case of fire. [Grateful to Richard Dennis's article in London Journal Vol 33. No.3 Nov. 2008 for this information].

² Albert Marth. See biographical notes.

Letter 167

Five days later

Hardwick Vic: 28 July 1874. -

My dearest Arthur

Your fair correspondent has put me rather “in a fix” – partly because I am not (I hope) of a refusing nature – partly because of the “honneur aux dames” which is a great ingredient in my ideas. Nevertheless I am afraid I must make my exit from the trap by wriggling downwards instead of upwards – i.e. making the best excuse I can, or getting you to do so for me – for non-compliance. The fact is, that though my means are (or rather will be) somewhat increased – I have so strong a sense of the exceeding needs of my poor brethren – especially in spiritual matters – that I do not like to contribute to a thing of less importance, as long as I think there are plenty of people who will do it without me. I cannot doubt that this will be the case in the present instance & that therefore my subscription would be so much taken from some more pressing object. If the memorial were about to fail for want of one more subscriber, I would be the man. But it won't and therefore I should feel that what I gave would be so much ~~taken from some~~ loss ~~to~~ in the account I have to give to the Steward's Master¹ N.B. As you got me into signing the ~~Memorial~~ application I must trust to you to get me out of the subscription.

With your's came one from Mr Hankey², saying thus (after telling me his Ob^y [= Observatory] is not complete enough to be at work) –

“Respecting M^r Marth, I am much obliged for your remembering my enquiry, but since you informed me that Proctor was the only hand who c^d have made it worth his while to use the ins^t. [instrument] I have assumed that an unsalaried astronomical utilizer cannot be found.”

So you see he wants someone (as indeed he told me first of all) who would make up his salary by writing & have the use of the instruments to help him out. This won't do for poor Mr M. - Would it not be a good plan for him to insert a notice in Astron. Nach^r.³ I never see that now. I used to have it gratis when on Intell: Obs:⁴ staff, but since that has dropped, I do not choose to subscribe for it, exactly on the principle mentioned above - & so I do not know whether notices are still inserted at the end – as I think they used to be – certainly of instruments for sale – so surely an Astronomical Assistant – especially a German, might prevail with D^r Peters to state his dis-engagement.

With – than whom a more dependable observer is not likely to be found – has seen some very curious movements in Coggia's hair – blowing about in the wind of space – ~~so~~ & I & M^r Key unite in begging him to send the results to the next meeting – when I hope they may have a chance of being read. He is very shy about it, but I have pressed him, & shall get him to make diagrams large enough to be stuck up at the meeting. The mobility of the jets, &c. has been established, as you well know long ago - & even their rapid motion – but he has more decided evidence than any that I know of. I hope his paper will not only get read but printed. It is curious how much of Newall's⁵ 26 in. achrom: image he saw with 8½ inch silvered glass (not, of course, all.)

¹ Steward's Master: i.e. “God” Suspect this refers to the parable of the unjust steward in the Gospel according to Luke.

² See Letter 166

³ Astronomische Nachrichten

⁴ Intellectual Observer

⁵ Robert Stirling Newall (1812 – 1889) Scottish engineer and astronomer. Thomas Cooke built a telescope for his private observatory at Ferndene, his Gateshead residence. Completed 1871. For many years, the 25 inch refracting telescope was the largest in the world, and it was gifted to the University Observatory in Cambridge after his death in 1889.

Believe me, dearest Arthur

Yours very affectionately

P.T.O.

T. W. Webb

M^r Key has seen marvels in Auvergne – especially a lunar -formed crater – a floor containing cones. Some of the cinder-cones are so fresh. -

I have missed Mr Marth's question thro' you. My obs^s of ☽ are so few, & so rough, that I have not, I regret to say, made use of the tables – which I did not know to be his. But there are many men to whom probably they w^d be of great use. I hope a book on ☽ will ere long be seriously taken in hand – not by me, tho' I may have a little finger in the great pie. I fear it w^d be to no purpose to address M^r H. further – if so, it sh^d be done with no reference to me, as I have obviously bothered him enough. But if he or anyone wishes to write to him independently, his address is

H. N. Hankey Esq

The Garden House

“freilish”[of course?]

Queen Square Place

“genug” [enough?]

Queen Anne's Gate

St James' Park. S.W.

Letter 168

Three days later

Hardwick Vic. 31 July 1874

My dearest Arthur,

I am very much obliged to you in both respects - & now I have another favour to ask, if I may only feel that I am not giving you too much trouble.

I presume you are now & then going to MacMillan's, about Nature. Would it be inconvenient to you just to ask what they paid me for work in Nature in April or May – but I believe May 1873. I have unfortunately omitted to put down the amount tho' I have a record of the fact of the receipt – I fancy ~~it~~ ^the amount^ was omitted in a great hurry at the last moment for we left home on May 5.

I hope this will not give you much trouble? If you are not going near them soon I will write myself to enquire. – I want the amount for Income tax purposes. –

I hope you we may just catch you when we are en route – but as yet I don't even know where you will find us – only it will be D.V. on the even^g. Of 17 prox^e. –

Ever dearest Arthur

Your affectionate friend

T.W.Webb

You may like to know that I have just rec^d. A letter from the Abbé Moigno¹ about a French translation, which he is about to bring out, of my Celestial Objects. – Pdfs 199, 200

¹ Moigné: See Letter 97

Letter 169

Three months later

Hardwick Vic. 26 Oct. 1874

My dearest Arthur,

As I called in Hunter St: on my arrival in London – and though I did not find your dear Parents at home, saw your Mother’s locum-tenens, with whom I had a considerable chat, I think it not unlikely that you may by this time have heard something about me. However, I ought not to leave the information to this circuitous route, but to tell you more directly of the trouble which befel [sic] your poor friends before they reached England. Our tour had been throughout not very prosperous. We accomplished some interesting things – e.g. an ascent to S. Bernard to see The Rey[?] in the salon – but on the whole my dear wife was very poorly – the neighbourhood of the lakes seemed to stifle her, & the high grounds to starve her - & we decided on cutting short the Lucerne part of our scheme & coming off straight to Paris. Whilst there – last Sunday 3 weeks, I drank some bad wine which greatly stimulated my kidneys, & not liking to come out of church afterwards in sermon-time (I never thought a sermon so long) I got into a bad condition, & had to go to a surgeon next morning, for the first time in my life, for mechanical relief. But he failed to give this, & injured me, I believe by his clumsy operation. Things getting worse, my wife made him call in other advice – D^r. Bell, of the Maison Dieu – but it was the same story. I remained in distress all day, & towards night they became alarmed & wished to bring one of the first operators in Paris, M. Lanelongue of La Charité¹ but he could not be found - & she poor thing passed a terrible night – for they had fully impressed her with the danger – while my distress was a little mitigated by heavy doses of opium. Next morning Lanelongue came, & operated with great caution, & my life was saved – but the catheter was obliged to be left in for a day or two - & they treated me severely with leeches etc. – By the Saturday I was patched up for the journey to London – on the Thursday following reached Glo’ster, & the next day our dear Home. On the Sunday I took both duties, but was rather thrown back by it - & the doctor forbid my officiating yesterday, so the people had to be content with one late service. For I could get no help for the morning. I am thank God much better, but even up to this time I am obliged to depend entirely on the catheter, having no natural relief: which however I am told will come – that is, in God’s good time. Have I not reason to be most thankful for the mercy that spared me & that postponed my illness to Paris, the centre of surgical knowledge, instead of suffering it to come on in some obscure Swiss or French town, where the blundering of a country practitioner might soon have terminated my days! – As to nursing, nothing could exceed the efficiency & tenderness of my dear wife – and I am most thankful to add that from D^r. Evans’s examination at Glo’ster it does not appear that she has suffered any injury from it. – The doctor did not tell me so distinctly as they did her, the imminent danger I was in – but I could pretty well infer their opinion- & I hope that that distant facing of the last enemy might not be without some use to me. I hardly ever thought I should not recover – but still I knew I might not - & I could see one or two things very plainly – one, the vanity & emptiness of all mere intellectual pursuits. – what were they to me then? What comfort, what blessing, could they bring me? – and another thing was, what I knew of course well enough in theory, but had to be taught personally by direct experience – the unutterable folly of putting off serious thought to such a moment. The body & its distress – is become so prominent, & force themselves so upon the attentions, that it would be vain to hope for much theory from the action of the mind. Had I left my repentance to that hour, all must have been confusion & misery – Had I then to learn faith, instead of attempting to exercise it, all must have been doubt & gloom. I do not know how I could have turned to God then, if I had left it till

¹ Odilon-Marc Lannelongue 1840-1911 member of the Academies of Medicine and Science, Prof. of Clinical Surgery

then – I know not how to express forcibly enough this great lesson which I had to learn, & which I trust will never be effaced from my mind.

How much I have been thinking of you, dear Arthur - & how strongly I feel that what I have often talked over with you has now been sealed by personal experience – ineffaceably impressed upon my mind. Even as I cannot but think it would have been upon yours, in the same circumstances. But may a merciful God spare you any similar trial – and be pleased to impress you, without the intervention of any such chastisements – with the unspeakable value of His Word, & blessedness of His Gospel. -

I hope you have been passing a pleasant time at Florence, where I presume the heat was mitigated before your arrival. We never crossed the Italian frontier, as we had thought possible – in fact never saw less, or saw it more unpleasantly. But our arrangements obliged us to go in “the season” – and I am sure we should never feel induced to repeat the experiment.

With is about magnificent work here, & such as a few years ago he would have considered impossible.

My wife sends her kind love, & would feel much obliged if you could find out for her the price of ~~an~~ ^a good oil copy of one of Fra Angelico’s angels not in a frame – merely painted on a gilt panel, of wood or even cardboard. I have seen such. You would hear about them at Philpot & Jackson the photograph & frame sellers in the Borgo d’Ognisants, near the Albergo della Pace – tho’ I don’t know that it is a particularly cheap place. But it ought to be very well painted. If you could find such a thing for 15 or 16 fr. - & still more, if you c^d. possibly bring it to England, it would be a very great favour –

Ever, dearest Arthur, your most affect. old friend T.W.Webb

[Pdfs 201, 202](#)

Letter 170**Eleven days later**

Vicarage. Hardwick. Hay 6 Nov. 1874

My dearest Arthur,

I see you have never received a letter I sent to you directed “Poste Restante, Florence” – to tell you how dangerously ill I had been at Paris at the beginning of last month, on our return from an unsatisfactory Swiss tour*. It was a case of distension of the bladder, threatening its rupture – much aggravated I believe by the unskilfulness of a surgeon – but relieved in time by one of the first operators in Paris, so that I have been able to make my way home – but journeying, & the attempt to take duty too soon I suppose, have thrown me back, & the doctor will not now allow me to leave the house since last Sunday. I am not now suffering any pain (except sometimes after an operation) but – the attack having commenced on 5 Oct. – Sunday, it was not till that day month that I could obtain any relief except by artificial means. There seems however every reason to believe that with due care my restoration may be complete. – But, how great has been the mercy of my God in all this! Had it happened to me in some obscure Swiss or French town, how different the result might have been - both to me & my dear wife also, whose sufferings, as it was, were exceedingly great – for the doctors did not hesitate to [gap left] tell her plainly, what the intimated more obscurely to me, the dangerous condition in which I lay. They were willing that she should have any additional aid from England, and she did telegraph for our friend D^f. Evans of Gloucester – but he was not well enough, & anyhow could not have come in time.

One whole night was wasted while they could not find the great operator - & that was a terrible night for her – but she never let me see it! And though she had been very poorly all through our tour, yet strength was then given to her – she proved the most efficient as well as tender of nurses - & to my great joy on our return D^f. Evans found it had been done no fresh damage to the heart. – But what a lesson I had set before me of the utter folly of postponing religion to a sick bed! As well as supposing that anything can possibly take the place of the Gospel of Christ! – So prominent was my bodily trouble, & so much mental effort was required, & as it were absorbed, in the mere act of enduring it, that to learn religious truth at such a moment would have been almost like beginning algebra or chemistry! Had I had to look to an “unknown God”, I know not what would have become of me. Had I then for the first time to attempt to exercise faith, all must have been darkness and confusion. Blessed be God for His unspeakable mercy to his most undeserving creature. He let me feel that I was on the foundation – but what if I had then to seek it for the first time!

And as to all human science & knowledge & earthly pursuits they all appeared as nothing! I hope I shall never forget the lesson – on how unspeakably good He was to me! I will love Thee, O Lord my strength! The Lord is my strong rock & my defence, my Saviour, my God, and my might in whom I will trust - ^my buckler^ the horn also of my salvation, & my refuge!

It was very kind in you to write about the MSS – But I don’t see what difference it makes! What possible consequence is it of, to the wide world or any member of it, that they should stand in your name? I can’t hear therefore of your most kind & generous proposal.

Post hurries & I am only tell you that my last surviving Uncle was buried yesterday - & that poor M^f. Drake¹ is in an Asylum! My wife’s very kind love – Always my dear Arthur your very affectionate old friend

T. W. Webb

Pdfs 203, 204

* Must have been a bad urinary infection since Webb is so repetitive!

¹ Family friend of TWW

Letter 171

Three days later

Black edged paper and printed with Vicarage, Hardwick in Gothic lettering

9 Nov. 1874

**Vicarage,
Hardwick.**

My dearest Arthur,

You have a way of being irresistible which it is a little difficult to know how to deal with. I have nothing left for it this time but to thank you most sincerely for your most kind remittance – and to remind you that I have a pendant to the Whitfield MS¹. which thus becomes your property – the franchise of some Scottish town – I could not now lay my hand upon it, but it is sure to turn up some day.

I hope it may not be very long before I can have a Commission² here to inspect my dear Fathers MSS. –

I am very sorry to hear you cannot give a better “a/c” of yourself.

I have not yet recovered entirely, but I bless the Father of mercies I am much better and can sign myself, dearest Arthur

Your affectionate old friend

“Deffro, mae dydd.”

Pdfs 205 /206

¹ See Letter 82. Could also refer to MSS of the Whitfield estate in Herefordshire

² See Letter 144

Letter 172

Five days later

Hardwick Vic. 14 Nov./74

Very many thanks for great kindness.

Going on all right but it is known to be a most tedious process of restoration, in every case. –

Very sorry for poor old Williams¹. –

If I can get straight enough to undertake the journey to London, we may presently come up by & by.

T.W.W.

[Second side]

A.C Ranyard esq.

25 Old Square.

Lincoln's Inn

London W.C

Pdfs 207/208

¹ Secretary RAS

Letter 173

Two days later

Postcard

Hardwick Vic. 16 Nov. 1874

Improving I think certainly (Deo gratias) but slowly. Weather too bad to take the little exercise permitted. With has got some magnificent work on hand. Did I tell you Dr Terby dined with us at Brussels? Such a very pleasing gentlemanly man.

T.W.W

[Second side to]

A.C Ranyard esq.

25 Old Square.

Lincoln's Inn

London W.C

Pdfs 209 /210

Letter 174

Three days later

Hardwick Vic. 19 Nov.74

Improving considerably I am thankful to say.-

Will you please look in a Directory & see if there is in London a Watchmaker named **Prost**? There is such a one at Vevey, of whom we bought a Watch – he said he had an agent in London, & referred us to him, but never gave us his name! Possibly it may be a brother or cousin of the same name.

T.W.W.

[Postcard addressed on second side] A.C Ranyard Esq.
25 Old Square.
Lincoln's Inn
London
W.C

Pdfs. 211/212

Letter 175

Four days later

Postcard

Hardwick Vic. 23 Nov. 1874.

Going on very well, Deo Gratias. I hope to be permitted to leave this house next Monday, & to reach Great Western Hotel, Paddington – where we shall take up our quarters at first, on Tuesday. Many thanks about the directory. If you see poor Williams soon, will you please remember me very kindly to him.

T.W.W

[Addressed on second side] A.C Ranyard Egre.
25 Old Square.
Lincoln's Inn
London

W.C

Pdfs 213/214

Letter 176

One week later

Postcard

H. V. 1 Dec.1874

The Doctor would not allow me to go this week, tho' he is satisfied with my progress, but we propose starting, D.V. on Monday next to Gloucester, and if Dr. E¹. there thinks it right coming on to G.W.R Hotel on Tuesday evening.

Do you know a really good shop for Swiss Watches in London. My wife thinks your mother knows. They must be first rate.

T.W.W.

[Addressed on second side] A.C. Ranyard esq.

25 Old Square.

Lincoln's Inn

London W.C

Pdfs 215/ 216

¹ Evans – their Gloucester doctor

Letter 177

Fortnight later

22 Lower Seymour St.

14 Dec. 1874

My Dearest Arthur,

I know you will be glad to hear that I have been going on well - & I suspect the idea of stone is vanishing out of Sir H.T's¹ mind. I think we shall remain over Sunday. - I had this morning a most interesting letter from good kind Berthon. He would be most thankful if his son B². c^d get the post vacant by poor Williams's death - & he thinks him quite qualified for it - & his wife a capital manager in her department. Are you pledged to anyone else? And if not would you object to canvassing some of the Council! - It w' be a great thing for the poor Berthon, & I do not believe it would be a bad thing for us. -

Yours very affectionately

T.W.Webb

Pdfs 217/218

¹ See next letter

² Meaning presumably his "son Berthon" as Rev Berthon appears to have had no sons whose names begin with B

Letter 178

Fortnight later

Hardwick Vicarage – last day of 1874!

My Dearest Arthur,

I think you will like to know how I have been going on, so I write a line – not merely to express all the very best wishes of the season from us both to you & yours, but to tell you that by God's great goodness I have been making very satisfactory progress. We had a most uncomfortable, perishing, delayed journey down – but it did not produce any ill affect & I have been mercifully provided with a good old clergyman to help me for the present – he took my duty when I was abroad ~~the~~ ^{the} ^{^last^} year ~~before~~ (very nearly the year before last, now) and is a most gentlemanly & untroublesome inmate in the house – he would have done much for me too in the parish but for the snow, which at the present lays an embargo upon all outdoor movements. I have been carefully following Sir H. Thompson's¹ treatment, and the effect appears extremely good, & would I believe be better still in more favourable weather – it has been a marvellous season, with thermom^r so comparatively high, and yet such a sensation of intense cold – corresponding to some 10^o lower. –

I hope you are continuing to receive good reports of the Transit. I wonder whether the results will be sufficiently abundant to preclude any intention of sending out expeditions next time?

Some time ago a very intelligent lady of our acquaintance sent me a letter from a literary man living in Brittany, who is very anxious to get some remunerative employment in England where he thinks the literature & antiquities of his native country would be more appreciated than just now in France, I promised to do anything I could for him. Do you happen to know of any opening for such a man – and if anything should turn up, will you kindly bear him in mind?

At this moment – 8^h. 53^m GMT – (or rather 20.53.) the thermometer stands at between 34 & 35 without the slightest indication of thaw – all the snow hanging & clustering on the twigs – a state of things I do not recollect.

Many thanks about the books – they have been all cleared away. You don't know what a kindness you did me. –

My wife sends her kind love - & as by God's mercy I begin to revive I shall sign myself
Deffro – mae Dydd!

All the comp^{ts}. of the season to your good Parents.

A nephew of mine² (brother of the Miss Wyatts whom you know) is now in town for a few weeks – having returned from Ceylon nearly blind from heat & glare. He wishes to improve himself while in town by attending some popular scientific lectures. Are there any that you could recommend?

[Pdfs 219/220](#)

¹ Presumably Sir Henry Thompson, (1820–1904) surgeon and polymath. He was a specialist in diseases of the urinary system In 1866 Thompson was appointed professor of clinical surgery at University College. Webb was in good company since Thompson treated both Leopold I of Belgium and Napoleon III.

² Probably Oswald Wyatt

Letter 179

Four days later

4 Jan 1875

My Dearest Arthur,

My Lawyer (at Hay) has just sent me in a bill for making of will which I must own was a troublesome affair. He says of it himself he is ashamed of the amount (£22.^{nearly} ~~10.6~~) & is quite ready to make any abatement I may suggest – I don't know what to do – shall I enclose his £20 & make no specific abatement - or could I fairly object to any of the enclosed which are the principal items? –

I know you'll forgive my asking you – The will was long and required much precaution & I was quite satisfied that he should take council's opinion as to a doubtful point. I hope you can decypher well. – Thank God I make excellent progress –

Y.very affect. old friend

T. W. Webb

Pdf 221

Letter 180

Two days later

Postcard

H.Vic. 6 Jan./75

Especial thanks. I can think of nothing for the tablet – a bad hand at omnia talia [all such]. I sh^d have liked extremely what you proposed – but for the objection. Surely you have plenty of men to do that. Would not Dr. Vaughan? – My dear father could. –

Our kind love

Deffro! Mae dydd!

[Addressed on second side]: A.C Ranyard, esq
25 Old Square
Lincoln's Inn
London. W.C

Pdfs 222/223

Letter 181 [*Circled 110*]

Twelve days later

Postcard

H.V. 18 Jan. 1875

At Chelt. Last week – on return found yours all right. Best thanks for all your trouble. The result exceeds expectation: & fully justifies your recommendation. I am very much better. D.O.M. gratias. My helper went this morning & I am to take solo duty next Sunday.

Deffro - Mae Dydd

[Second side addressed to]

A.C. Ranyard Esq.
25 Old Square
Lincoln's Inn
London W.C

[Pdfs 224 /225](#)

Letter 182 [*Circled 111*]

Fortnight later

Hardwick Vic. 2 Feb. 1875

My dearest Arthur,

M^r Penoyre (on whom I had the occasion to call at The Moor this morning) shewed me a book belonging to someone who wants to sell, and wishes to know its value. I know nothing of it. But it strikes me, that some day when you have 5 min: to spare, you would kindly, as it appears rather to be a case of charity, ask your very fair dealing Auctioneer if he knows anything about it, and what might be the worth of it at a sale.

It is a small 4^{to} bound in vellum and gilt, a very nice copy with many plates & apparently perfect – the title

Monumenta Paderbornensia¹
Printed at Amsterdam in 1672

It seemed I thought to be an account that we should call Memoirs of Paderborn

- a small German state under I believe an independent Sovereign Bishop.

There is no hurry about it .

My Legacy – I mean what was left to augment this living - is gone into Chancery! The testat having given to her lawyer a wrong instruction as to the parties to receive it. It was ordered to be added to the Fund already existing with the Eccl: Commission. While it is really in the hands of the Church Building Society. So much for Will making – I hope they won't charge me with the costs of my poor deceased friend's mistake.

I am most thankful to tell you I am greatly better – in fact nearly well, and very busy indeed. We unite in kind love

Your affectionate Old friend

T.W.Webb

[Pdfs 226/227](#)

¹ A historical memoir by Ferdinand von Furstenberg, 1st published 1669. Webb took the trouble to publish an article about it in Notes and Queries 1875

Letter 183 [Circled 112]

Three weeks later

Hardw. Vic. 26 Feb/75

My dearest Arthur,

The enclosed “non dimandata”¹ – which no doubt reached Firenze [Florence] too late, was sent back to me a little while ago - & it will reach its destination at last!

You are I expect “high busy” that it is an unkindness to intrude upon your thoughts on time but as the gentleman who wanted enquiry made about a curious old Book which I wrote about to you, asked me about it a few days back, I suppose the possessor begins to feel hungry for information.

I see Schönfeld² has complemented my pretty little friend S Orionis by giving her a status in his Catalogue. I have never had a chance of looking after ^her^ this season (one I had, but a person came & wanted so bad to see the Moon that I lost it) And the skies are most pertinaciously adverse. –

With has been surprising himself & everybody else with a 15 in. mirror wrought to 6 or 7ft focus! It bears 500 like a first rate achromatic He has so much, in doing it, improved his processes that he intends to re touch for friends – mine among the rest. He would I believe now find no great difficulty in attacking 24 inch. O that he had wrought instead of Grubb for Melbourne ! (or for Higgins , I dare say, tho’ I don’t know how far his mirror is a success!)

I am thankful to send so good a report of dear darling precious self as climate (which I believe has so much to do with it) will admit. - I have not recovered from every remaining symptom of great damage but if I should never be better I should have infinite ground for thankfulness. My mind fully & my body nearly as active as ever. I had one walk of fully 9 miles - & over rough ground in part; but that shook up the injured part too much – and I lost a little ground – soon however repaired. But I am encouraged to hope much from warmth when it comes. –

At present according to Shakespeare

“Marian’s nose is red & raw”³ and likely so to be ! –

My wife sends kind love - Ever your affectionate

Deffro! Mae Dydd!

[Pdfs 228/229](#)

¹ “not asked for”- “unsolicited” ?

² Eduard Schönfeld (1828 –1891), German astronomer In 1875 appointed director of the Bonn Observatory, and soon after his appointment he began his last and greatest piece of work, the extension of the survey of the heavens down to 23 degrees of south declination. In 1878 elected a Foreign Associate of the Royal Astronomical Society.

³ From Love’s Labour’s Lost

Letter 184 [*Circled 113*]

Month later

24 March 1875

My dearest Arthur,

I am very much obliged by your kind letter, and must thank you most sincerely for your thoughtful present – that is by anticipation, for it has not yet come to hand! I was thro' Hereford, too, on Monday, on my way to business in Glo'ster & back - but like a jackass I forgot it (I don't know by the way whether jackasses are forgetful – I fancy not) but perhaps I may have an opportunity of getting it before long.

I am very much pleased to hear you are so full of pleasant work, and hope it may long continue, & have God's blessing upon it, I heartily wish I could see a little more of you – but it does not seem likely unless you will come here, for we have no present idea of visiting London. Most people here have been suffering from influenza – we hope you and yours have escaped. My wife has had it badly but is recovering now. I ought to be very thankful for health so much restored – I am not quite well that is medically - but perfectly so as to all the activities & pursuits of life: & should I never be better than I am I should have reason to be more than satisfied.

Do you know anything of young Sadler¹ the son of the Rector of Honiton ? He promises to be one of the first observers of the rising generation, & a rival to Burnham – I shall send you, if for please, before long, a note of his on 61 Gem: as a communication for the Society.

My wife's kind love and I remain my dearest Arthur

Your very affectionate friend

Deffro! Mae Dydd!

Did I ever tell you that this is the motto of the Bardic Chair at Raglan Castle?

Have you ever had an opportunity of enquiring about the curious old book I asked you about?

Pdfs 230/231

¹ Herbert Sadler. See biographical notes

Letter 185

Over a week later

Hardwick Vic^{ge}. 3 Apr. 1875

My Dearest Arthur,

I send you a little communication if you think it worth the using - I have been so very long absent from the Society (not in person ^ only^ but writing) that they may think me done for – but I am still in motion – And thank God for it!

I will send your kind message to Mr Sadler (the rising Dawes and the rival Burnham) - He is worth bringing to light I am sure. Next Monday, D.V we go to M^{rs} Stackhouse Acton's¹, Acton Scott, Church Stretton

For the week -

Excuse the scrawl

Y^{rs} very affect.

T.W.Webb

[Pdfs 232/233](#)

¹ See Letter 27

Letter 186 [*Circled 115*]

Five days later

Acton Scott 8 April /75

My dearest Arthur,

It was not till yesterday when I went to the Visitation at Hereford¹ ^and back ^ from this place, that I became the fortunate possessor of the very pretty and useful present you have kindly sent me. Pray accept my best thanks for it will come into immediate use, and you may well suppose, not without constant recollection of the kindness of the giver. -

As to the "lumière cendrée"² – you have evidently got hold of "quelque chose a remarquer"[something to remark upon] - and I will be sure to bear it in mind when I have a chance – though I fear my near sightedness will be much against accuracy. –

Mr With has had a great success with my mirror, and tells me not to part with it to anybody under £25. It is now up to the latest and finest mark

And if vision is spared to me I hope I may be permitted to do something with it. Did I tell you that he has been working, for his own use, 15 inches ap: to about 6ft focus! with perfect success. Pritchard has seen it & been astonished! I suppose no other man living would undertake or could succeed with such an undertaking! What a pity he had not the Melbourne job! Though I dare say he would not have troubled with a Cassegrain. He has now an 18" on the tool. – I am most thankful to report very favourably of myself, I am as well as ever, both as to my sensations and proceedings, though a medical man would say that one of the coats of the bladder was not perfectly restored, & perhaps never may be. But should I never be any better the difference is so much more theoretically than practically ^observable^ that nothing is left for me but gratitude.

The neighbours I met at the Visitation yesterday report the Black Mountain covered deep with snow - & it has been very cold here, - much to my wife's inconvenience who is sadly rheumatic. We return on Saturday D.V. - & shall be at home for some time. I see no prospect of coming to Town. Thanks for the enquiry about the Book – I hope it did not give you much trouble - My wife sends her kind love – Yours very affectionately & greatly obliged.

Deffro! Mae Dydd

I don't see why the "lumière cendrée" experiments should not be tried on the telescopic image. If that can be done, I have no doubt of getting out a clean result one way or other.

[Pdfs 235, 236](#)

¹ A visit by a bishop or archdeacon to examine into the state of a diocese, parish, religious institution.

² Earthshine is the faint light illuminating the surface of the Moon normally in darkness and is caused through the reflection of sunlight by the Earth

Letter 187

A week later

15 Apr 1875

My Dearest Arthur,

I am “in a fix” - & feel sure you can & will help me. Here is the whole story. Poor Mrs Napleton Penoyre felt that the income of this Living was too small & therefore left a sum – I am not sure of the exact amount, whether £3000 sterling, or enough to purchase £3000 stock – to be invested for that purpose, along with the sum of, (I think) £1034 stock (representing I suppose £1000 sterling) which was the original endowment more than 20 years ago. But, being quite ignorant of business, she misdirected her Sol^r & he so drew the Will that instead of Queen Anne’s Bounty, it was left in trust to Eccles. Commissioners, in addition to the previous endowment.

This not being vested in them at all, they could not take it - and as it was not left to Queen Anne she could not receive it – so it had to be (when invested by the Ex^{ors}) thrown into Chancery for which blunder of other people, I have to pay – such being Law – but not justice. – All this I have already mentioned - but trouble you with it again – for I should be very sorry to think you had so little to do, as to carry such botheration in your head. Now comes what is fresh. – Some months ago, Sladen and Mackenzie. Sol^{rs} for the Estate sent me a paper to look at & return – which I did - & being a chevalier of the order of GVS took no copy of it & have since forgotten its tenour, but I believe it was simply to state that the Trustees had paid the Legacy into the Court of Chancery. One of the Trustees (M^r Allen of the Priory) kindly reminded me the other day that it ought to be got from there & recommended me write to Eccles. Com^{rs}; about it - but in the first place I don’t know how to address them - & in the next it strikes my ignoramtiosity that, Queen Anne being my future Trustee in the matter, her Majesty’s Bounty Board are the parties to stir the deep oblivious pool of Chancery.

Now dearest Arthur, what say you ? – I should tell you that I have no information as to the exact sum in trust, after the defalcation of getting through the Court.

The speculum was remounted on Tuesday. Very middling weather that evening & nothing very good last night – but I can plainly see the figure is splendid. It laughs at 450 on the Moon – low powers with the new silver film on that object knocks one’s eyes over & require a coloured wedge. I think it is nearly as sharp with 450 as it used to be with 212. – I could see that something is going on in the bright speck in Werner¹, but whether an eruption of a volcano or only of definition, I cannot say. Time will shew.

I now think there is a possibility (I cannot say more) of our being in Town in the course of the Spring or early Summer. You may be interested in hearing that an American Astronomical correspondent of mine, M^r Gilman² of New York, is coming to see me next week - tho’ I fear only for a very short stay, should he be going on to Town, do you know enough of any of the officials of Brit. Mus. to give him an introduction there? He much wants to find some plans (architectural) relative to Port Royal des Champs – I do not think however they are very likely to be there. He has been in England - & Wales too – formerly.

I hope this lingering winter has not pinched you or your good parents. My wife has suffered a good deal. The Black Mountains were as white as snow last Wednesday week – Yet the nightingale sang the newly mounted spectrum a song on Tuesday evening –

My wife’s kind love

Your affectionate old friend , Deffro! Mae Dydd!

Old Cockatoo sends his Comp^{ts} to you – Your kind present is very useful.

Pdfs 237, 238

¹ Werner is a prominent lunar impact crater that lies in the rugged south-central highlands of the Moon

² See Letter 75

Letter 188

Three weeks later

Hardwick Vic. 10 May 1875

My dearest Arthur,

Here comes a lot of bother for your kindness – But what am I to do? You have unfortunately shewn yourself “the willing horse”- and alas! must submit to being ridden accordingly, as the old proverbs says. –

I have no less than 3 separate favours to ask - & all at once. –

1. There is a terrible strife about a cottage & garden in my parish – involving ~~legal notice~~ the legality of notice - the validity of possession &c. - an affair which I believe any professional man would see thro’ at a glance, & settle in Oh 15m. –

But the parties are all poor - notwithstanding which – one of them – the landlady – threatens in her indignation to come from London on purpose to settle it – i.e.- quarrel with everybody or quite bodies [sic] enough at any rate to increase the row, & add to the expense abundantly – Now would you, as matter of charity to ever so many of them, be so very kind as to act as a sort of referee in the matter? i.e. if I drew up a statement of their respective grievances, & sent it to you (they having previously agreed to abide by your decision) would you (or could you correctly and conveniently? pray let me know) put your heel upon this serpent’s head, & deprive it of doing more harm than it has already?

2. I understand that a promissory note can be legally renewed by the endorsement upon it of payment of Interest – without recourse to a fresh (& in the case I contemplate) expensive stamp. If this is so who should sign the endorsement? Common sense tells me the Receiver of the Interest – but someone has told me , the Payer of the Interest = the borrower of the Capital must sign it. What is the right course?

3. Dr Terby is in trouble about not being able to make an international payment from Louvain to London, for his copies of the R.A.S. Memoirs. There must surely be some mode of arranging such matters:- would you kindly let him know?

I think there is a prospect of our being in Town for a week at the end of this month.

My wife’s kind love

Your very affectionate old friend

Deffro! Mae Dydd –

Which my good Irish friend Birmingham would change into

Deffro! Mae Nos

Up - it is night (for us telescopists)

[Pdfs 239,240](#)

Letter 189

Two days later

Postcard.

Hardwick Vic. 12 May 1875.

Many & best thanks. Doubtful whether the case may come on. – too old before I could try the prism. I hope to be in Town week after next, for the week only. – Thanks for the article, which I had seen in Eng. Mech. or Astro. Reg. – Very good indeed.

T.W.W

On second side

A C Ranyard esq
25 Old Square
Lincoln's Inn
London W.C.

[Pdfs 241/242](#)

Letter 190

Three weeks later

31 May 1875

My Dearest Arthur,

You will be glad to hear that we accomplished our journey very well on Saturday – having crammed a great deal into our 4.5 days stay in Town. Not indeed all that we wished, but that was owing to our plans being having been laid out rather too wide. Such however is the usual tenour of our life – performance short of purpose – but how much preferable to the alternative of plenty of time – because there is not enough to fill it up.

I did not get off, however, without a bite from a London cockatoo – or rather that I had been bitten without knowing it; and in consequence I am going to trouble you to – professionally – and you must permit me to remunerate you accordingly. – After two failures I succeeded in getting an interview from M^f Aston the secretary of the Bounty Board¹, & found that the delay rested with the Eccl^l Comm^{nrs} to whom I have according to his advice written this morning. But he is clearly of opinion, and authorises me to say so, that the money never ought to have been paid into Chancery at all. The purpose would have been effectually answered by a receipt to the Ex^{rs} from both the Eccl^l Comm^{rs} & the Bounty Board – who could then have subsequently arranged who should hold it, between themselves. It was wrong, especially, to pay it into Chancery without any previous notice to any of the parties concerned; and he is decidedly of opinion that expenses, which are considerable (£23 .16. 6 already, and probably as much again on getting it out) would be recoverable from Mess^{rs} Slade & Mackenzie the Sol^{rs}. In fact the estate ought to pay the £3000 clear.

And no doubt such was the intention of the Testatrix.

Now I hope I have no personal cantankerous feeling on the subject. The annual loss is trifling, and I thank God I should not be sensible of it as an inconvenience. But I am a kind of trustee for the property of the Church and for my successors – and therefore if the money so wasted would be recoverable, I believe it would be my duty, in that capacity to take steps in the affair.

The question therefore is obviously – first, can anything be done? & next, what can be done, if anything?

I should tell you that M^f Aston did not give that opinion without having first carefully examined the Will.

I succeeded in getting at Shorts' original Obs in Phil. Trans. 1740, at R.S. Library - & think to print it entire in "Nature". It is curious enough. No doubt you will think it insufficient to establish a Satellite - but sufficient, it seems to me, ^ to prove ^ that he saw something not in the Telescope. As to Dr Schorr (author of Den Venusmond)² we will send him to the terrestrial Moon to find his wits.

You understand that I have no connection with Lockyer beyond reviewing what is occasionally sent me from the Nature office. I am glad that Proctor's writing to me to know where he could find my paper on ♂[Mars](a point by the way which I entirely forgot to tell you) enabled me to contradict the impression that you mentioned to me, that that paper was intended to be exhaustive. Had it been so "write me down an Ass" in the absence of the requisite works of reference. It "was nothing more than an expanded view of Kaiser.

My wife's kind love – sorry not to have seen you. Have you tried Kissinger waters for Hay fever? Someone told me they were useful. You would find them at Best's in Henrietta St. (not Cov^l Garden but Cavendish Square – so it seems that Henry accomplished his well known feat in two places) – or at Gallais' in Mayarch St. not far from Gt. Portland St.

¹ Board of Queen Anne's Bounty See letter 17

² M.J Schorr: Den Venusmond pubd 1875 – apparently a strange book on the satellites of Venus

Ever dearest Arthur

Your very affect. old friend

T.W.Webb

Letter 191

A week later

Hardwick Vic^{ge}. 8 June 1875

My dearest Arthur,

You are a great deal too kind to me, & that is the simple truth. I have no business to take up your valuable time & thought in such a way. I can but most heartily thank you.

And now (so much for consistency!) I am going to ask you another favour & give you fresh trouble! – You will recollect having kindly advised me about having memoirs & pamphlets bound - & I am strongly disposed to do it as not a bad investment – But would you kindly tell me – not on purpose – but sometime when you may be writing, & any time will do – which of the following in your opinion would be worth the expense. And to save you a little trouble I have written the names separately, and shall ask you to send me back the same paper with those scratched off that would not be likely to pay. –

The weather is glorious, & the country most enjoyable. I wish you could get a spell in it. - But it blew half a gale yesterday, which damaged the flowers much - & last Thursday evening we were at the edge of a thunderstorm in which some damage was done. I wish you were where you could study & give some account of these phaenomena. To me they seem very incomprehensible, & in many ways.

My Venusmond goes to today or tomorrow. The subject of mirage just touched upon is very marvellous, & I could have told some strange stories had I known where to find them.

Ever my dearest Arthur

Your most affect. old friend.

T.W.Webb

Do you happen to know whether your old friend Dr Vaughan was of Cambridge or Oxon?

To be bound or not?

Intellectual Observer, perfect.

Student – perfect

Proceedings of Society of Antiquaries –

Presidents' Address, Report, &c. of d^o

Proceedings of Royal Soc. of Literature

Presidents' Address, Report, &c. of d^o

Early vols. of Reader

D^o of London Review.

And is it best to have the edges cut flush, without leather corners (as I have had done by Notes & Queries) – or is it worth while to have leather corners?

[Pdfs 244/245](#)

Letter 192**Nine days later**

17 June 1875

My dearest Arthur

I think I wrote last but “ ‘tis no odds,” as we country folks say – I have I am sorry to say – to tease you again. O dear! But the matter is extremely simple and may be disposed of by you in 3 lines - & there is no kind of hurry about it.

A woman died suddenly in my parish last spring – spinster & intestate – Her only brother (she has no other relatives) of course succeeds. Their property was a Cottage and about 3 acres of land – rent £9 or £10.

Must he take out letters of Administration for this and must he pay succession duty¹? – and must he have the personals valued? They are only ordinary cottage furniture – bed, clock, chairs, tables &c. - I should think hardly bona notabilia².

Can you tell me – anytime you happen to write – anything about a 3rd Report of the MSS Comⁿ. I have two - the last dated 1871 – which I rather think M^r Martin sent me but – I having just asked L^d Denbigh’s³ permission to publish some of his family letters which my father had copied, he tells me they are printed in a Blue Book issued last year. Will that be the 3rd Report? If so I can ack^{ge} it as such, and are there more published?

My Chancery business is in M. Tranquill:⁴ - but going on. Most gladly would I have employed your uncle as my Sol^r but as the Eccl. Com^{rs} Sol^{rs} were in communication with me, I thought it w^d be matter of etiquette to employ them. I am doing something at the MSS & shall soon D.V. be in press.

My nephew Henry Wyatt is here for a few days – a right nice fellow, with a mathematical taste – he has made such progress at 17 as to have gained a scholarship of £50 at Jesus Coll: Camb. - & his country tutor (Webb, a butcher’s son of Monmouth – sen^r Wr: & Smith’s prize man) advises him to go on for a Fellowship and take pupils . Will you kindly say some day whether you think of this is a good plan? Is there demand enough for country tutors? I don’t think he w^d like to live at Cambridge. I am neither a Cambr. man nor a mathematician, & so am very incompetent to advise – but I don’t think my namesake w^d have given such counsel without knowing what he was about.

My Wife’s kind love,

Your affect. old friend

Cockatwenty

[Pdfs 246/247](#)

¹ Succession duty" a tax placed on the gratuitous acquisition of property which passes on the death of any person, by means of a transfer from one person (called the predecessor) to another person (called the successor)." The principal act which first imposed a succession duty in England was the Succession Duty Act 1853.

² Notable goods – phrase from English ecclesiastical law

³ See Letter 127

⁴ Sea of Tranquillity on the Moon

Letter 193

Next day

Black edge

Hardwicke Vicarage, Hay 18th June /75

My dearest Arthur,

You will be sorry to see this mourning when you know it is for my wife's sister M^{rs} Wyatt (whom you have known) She died yesterday morn^g at Tunbridge Wells of congestion of lungs which must have been very rapid & totally unexpected by us. They have asked me to officiate the funeral on Tuesday at a village I scarcely know where, where her son owns a little property. So we shall go up D.V on Monday to Bedford Hotel Southampton Row, & proceed to lodgings when & where we can get them - & if I can get my duty taken, remain in town till tomorrow (Saturday) fortnight. Here is a fresh tie to this world snapped - & a very tender one. She was a charming specimen of a quiet & unassuming but most valuable Christian.

Most valuable from her excellent judgement - but this was combined with perhaps the most perfect sympathy I have ever met with. I ~~knew~~ never knew anyone more willing to put themselves in the place of others in all suffering or trouble or difficulty - much afflicted in her own family & health, but bearing everything with exemplary fortitude & cheerfulness. We shall hope to see something of you during your [sic] stay.

My wife's kind love. It is a sore trial to her -

Your very affect. friend.

T.W.Webb

Letter 194

Three days later

Postcard

London 21 June 1875

Leave for funeral at ~~a little~~ 8.15. from Bedford Hotel tomorrow morning – back about 6.15 – uncertain whether tea there or at Lady Wyatt's. Only all Wednesday in Town. To Brit. Mus. if possible 9 ^Wednesday^ & stay there some hours – you w^d find me there in Reading Room or at Bedford Hotel (Southampton row) at ^Wednesday^ night. If you can call at Bedford Hotel Tuesday even^s or Wed^s morning early, I could leave some message if you don't find me. Many thanks We go to Tunbridge Wells Thursday morning. –

T.W.Webb

On reverse side
Postcard addressed to
A.C.Ranyard Esq.
25 Old Square
Lincoln's Inn

[Pdfs 250251](#)

Letter 195

Four weeks later

Black edge

Hardwick Vic. Hay 17 July 1875

My Dearest Arthur,

In routing old boxes of papers (with a Commissioner from the Record Office in distant view) I came across a book of which I knew nothing – thin puritan 4to [quarto] vellum bound – first side much mouse - nibbled.

The principal part of the Title is
Apologia Dictorum Aristotelis de Calido Fanato. Adversus Galenum. Casari Cremonini Centeatis
[?] in Scola Patavina Phylosophi Prima Sedis. –

Venice 1726 - 84 pp – to which is subjoined De Ordine ac Methodo in Scientia servandis,
by I. Camillus of Genoa. Venice 1561 Aldus [?] pp 29 –

A beautiful copy all but the damaged vellum cover.

Now, can you conveniently do me the favour of finding out (if you don't know already,) whether this book is of any value – And if it is, do you think I could find a purchaser (for I don't want it) and if not – may I give it to your Library? For when I am gone it will be sold for 2d or 1d – and possibly it might be worth more to you than that. –

If there's anything you feel justified in telling me about poor Buckingham's affairs I should very much like to know. Poor fellow, he has been many times very kind to me.

What has become of Marth?¹

Do you happen to know of anyone who has Froude's English in Ireland² (3 Vols. Pub^d.2 or 3 yr^s ago) I want an extract as to the result he gives as most reliable, for the number of English Protestants murdered by the R.C rebels in that dreadful massacre in 1641.

Froude is not reliable where he is biased by his politics – of which I could give you satisfactory proof – but in that particular instance of the number massacred it looks as if he had taken much pains and acted impartially. –

I hope very shortly to be in press.

My wife's kind love

Your very affect. old friend.

Deffro! mae Dydd

The following was on the back page:

5.25

5.26 6.15 6.56 Nicholson Spilsbury

6.6

[Pdfs 252/253](#)

¹ See Biographical notes

² See Letter 160

Letter 196

Four days later

Hardwick Vic. 21 July 1875

My dearest Arthur,

I am very much obliged by all the trouble you have taken for me, & I must add a little more – but only, please, when you are quite at leisure for it – for I am in no hurry, for weeks to come. –

I have looked but little into Froude's English in Ireland – but a dip or two that I have taken convince me that it is a party affair strongly marked, to my certain knowledge, by the suppression of truth. Nevertheless, he seems to have had access to the best information about the terrible massacre of the English by the Irish in 1641, and to have taken pains to form a fair estimate of the number of the victims. And that is just what I want to know – how many English perished in the atrocious affair. Some put them down at 200,000! but I think he reduces the amount. I don't want his comparisons on data – nothing but the figures of his final result, which you can send me some day on a Post Card.

Pray excuse this nasty scrap & believe me always

Your very affectionate old friend

T.W.Webb

Letter 197

Six days later

Black edged

Cheltenham, 27 July 1875

My dearest Arthur,

We are here on business for 2 or 3 days, & I have a little leisure to write to you. But it is alas! –“sicut meus est mos”[my own wont – or habit] to give you trouble!

The first thing is –

When you are quite at leisure – but not before – it will wait this month – will you kindly look at Rushworth’s Historical Collections¹ – as you have done for me before (so I know it is in your Library) & let me know on what day, according to him, King Charles set up his Standard at Nottingham (authorities differ about it) & what number of soldiers were present on the occasion?
–

If D^r Terby should feel a wish to look at my old observations of Mars – (I am going to ask him) is there any mode of sending over the Vol: (which is of some weight, being in heavy half-binding) along with any parcel transmitted from the Society – or through the same agency?

3. I am going, D.V. to give (i.e. to sell) a course of Lectures on very elementary Optics at the Ladies Coll: here with a view to the London Univ: Exam: & it w^d be well next May: & it w^d be well if I could know what book they prefer. Could you, without inconvenience, & at your perfect leisure, if that time ever comes, find this out for me? (The Lady Principal shewed me today some of the problems set for exam: on former occasions - & one of them I thought queer enough – In the case of a “rotating mirror” shew that the motion of the image is double that of the mirrors. Rotating how, I should like to know! For of course if it rotated round there would be no such motion at all! Thus it sometimes happens that a philosopher lays himself open to the censure of a goose – or if you will to the bite of – a Cockatoo!)

If you happen to come across poor Marth, whose address I don’t know, will you please thank him heartily from me for his kindness in sending me 2 Nos. of Nachrichten containing his computations for observers of Sats. of τ of which I am sorry to say I am not likely to make use, the planet being very low with me, & I having no accurate time.

I think I know what to be at in the Optics Lectures, pretty well, for I have seen a recent syllabus – but what I rather want is the ~~mod~~ phraseology of the book they use there – e.g.- I suspect they use the term Normal where I have been used to speak of Perpendicular, or Radius &c. &c. –

By the way, is every perpendicular, in line or plane, straight or curved, correctly termed a Normal?

There’s plenty for you at once, I’m sure dear Arthur – so I shall leave off – but not leave off being Your very affectionate old friend

Deffro! mae Dydd

[Pdfs 257/258](#)

Letter 198

Fortnight later

Black edge

¹ Letter 128

H.V. 11 Aug /75

My dearest Arthur,

I was very much obliged by the extracts, and trust they caused you no great inconvenience.

I have got a couple of Law Questions to ask you, if you will be so very kind as to tell me

-
1. Is there any place in Town where the passing of Fines & cutting off of Entails is recorded & enrolled, so as to be got at in the same way that Wills are got at in the Court of Probate?
 2. When money is paid into Chancery to meet possible claims upon an estate from parties whose existence is uncertain, What is the term of years after which it will revert to the Estate again? And what do the fishermen of the Mare Tranquillitatis¹ do with the Interest in the mean time?

Should you be likely to pass thro' Belgium will you please give me timely notice – as you w^d probably make for Brussels (don't break your head there as I did last time) and c^d leave a book for D^r Terby there if he w^d care to have it.

Your very affectionate
Deffro! Mae Dydd!

Pdfs 258/259

¹ Sea of Tranquility on the Moon

Letter 199

Twelve days later

Black edged

Hardwick Vicarage 23 Aug. 1875

My dearest Arthur

Best thanks for your kind letter, I am sorry to say I have not done with giving you trouble (your great kindness brings it upon yourself) – but for both our sakes I'll consult briefly – Ergo. –

1. Unexpectedly – we have had an invitation to the British Ass¹ – i.e to a friend's house at Hanbury near Bristol, whence, peut-être, [perhaps] I may attend some Thursday & Friday doings (having to come back Saturday) Now is there any hope of the great pleasure de vous rencontrer la? [of meeting you there] – If so please give me your Bristol address – as it may save time.
2. Can you kindly tell me of anyone else I might like to meet, or who may do me the honour of liking to meet me? Will Tupman² be there? Or Lord Lindsay?³ Or the Editor of Athenaeum? (whose name I forgot Is it Mae Coll? It might be worth while to hunt up if there.
3. I forwarded the letter you so kindly enclosed to me, to your friend in Cheltenham (about the Class book used for Optics at Lond. Univ^{ly}) but I have had no reply – doubtless he is off holiday making. But I was so stupid as to make no note of his name - & to forget it! Will you kindly mention it to me again, as if he is at Bristol I might find him out.
4. If you come, I will bring my MS book of Observations to send to Dr Terby by you: if you sh^d go to Belgium - & if not to forward by some express Parcel company. And I think & hope that's all .-

My wife sends her kind love & is sorry she troubled you about the Prom[issary?] Note – it was at her brother's request – I had asked you the same question before & been quite satisfied with your kind reply, but he it seems was uneasy about it – as he would willingly have renewed the note if necessary.

We came back on Sat^y even^g from a very delightful “outing” in Wales. When will you get yours – you must want it. Don't you consider the Report of the Science Comⁿ unfavourable to the views of your friends? I don't understand the diplomacy of these matters sufficiently to know much about ~~them~~ it – so much the better perhaps for me. As a member of the British Ass I would claim a portion of one of his long ears – but then that could imply a facility of hearing news which I don't possess – No. I have got it now. I am beyond a doubt one of the Bristles of his Tail – as well as

Your very affectionate old friend
T.W.Webb

N.B. if you are so kind as to reply by return, I shall get it before starting on Wednesday. –
[Pdfs 260/261](#)

Letter 200

Two months later

Black edge

¹ British association for the Advancement of Science

² Letter 129

³ Letter 124

1 Rodney Terrace, Cheltenham, 20 Oct. 1875

My Dearest Arthur

Having shaken into its place a Lecture (No 3) for the young lady opticians¹ tomorrow morning, I will see if I can find room before going to bed to thank you for your very kind letter, and for your prompt reply to my queries, which I hope were no great interruption or trouble to you – I am very sorry that with so capital an opportunity, you had not weather for Newale's [sic] big gun². I should have been greatly interested in your report. He has invited me there twice, I believe – but you know how impracticable are such ideas for me. I am much gratified to hear that your good Parents were pleased with Aberystwyth. – As to our own movements we have never been far from home –but yet have had a fair share of change though never for more than the inside of a week – for Sunday help is unattainable. We had a run into N. Wales – the first for many long years - & were very much delighted & we have been several times to this place, and once to Elmhurst (Lady E. Harding's)³ & for 2 days to Larden Hall in Shropshire – an old house in a beautiful country within sight of the black basalt & most interesting earth-work (believed to be religious) of Clee hill – which however I had no means of getting near– but we drove to a very beautiful house in the neighbourhood, & whom should we find as the occupants but the wife & family of Mr Benson the Southwark magistrate, so celebrated of late – Indeed, as I think I have heard you say, the world is very small after all. And the Hereford publisher has “declined business” & been unable to set about my book (my father's) on the Civil war, & I have turned it over to Longman, & he is going to set about it as soon as ever a critical friend has settled some points for me – and I fancied I found a great change in one of Σ 's [Struve's] pairs, & wrote about it to Baron Dembowski⁴, who sent me a most obliging reply, & found it was a case of “mistaken identity” - & what I have got told of it seems he does not know, & I am sure I don't - & I hope it may turn out new but if it does it will be no great wonder, for Aquila, where it is, swarms with pairs & groups of stars . And my 9 1/3in mirror turns out very fine – and so does not Grubb's great grubby speculum at Edin-burgh & I went from Lady E H's to see a very fine 12 ¼ With-Browning, formerly Crossley's & saw readily 5 sat^s of Saturn, tho' so low, & in strong moonlight. And Longman & his people came & lunched at Hardwick, of all places, en route from Wales to London – and so there's a long story & not worth the telling, & a great deal of rubbish to waste your time. And what has vexed me, poor Bird & Birmingham have both been very seriously ill – the former I fear with some chronic ailment, connected possibly with his residence half underground & among the dead, in a rapidly filling cemetery. – And it made me very sad to read the disastrous story of poor Hankey's fire⁵ – I had made his acquaintance on telescopic matters, & been over his half finished house, & seen where his Obs^{ty} was to be – he did not then I believe contemplate two separate ones - & he had just then purchased Darby's 9 ½ in Slater, which was good, & I fear may have been the one destroyed - The Telegraph speaks of a reflector having suffered, but as the achromatic was just about being erected when I was there, & there was no reflector then purchased, I suppose the paper may have been in error. And I have had a “deputation” preaching for me, who knew “R.A.P” at college, & how he squandered away a great deal of money, &c.&c.. (a small world again) – Tomorrow we run over to Gloucester – I partly

¹ The girls at Cheltenham Ladies' College

² Robert Stirling Newall (1812 – 1889) Scottish engineer and astronomer. Thomas Cooke built a telescope for his private observatory at Ferndene, his Gateshead residence. Completed 1871. For many years, the 25 inch refracting telescope was the largest in the world, and it was gifted to the University Observatory in Cambridge after his death in 1889.

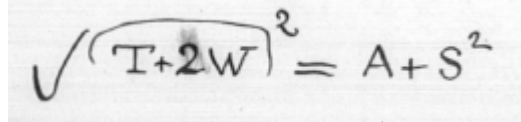
³ Relation of Thomas's mother

⁴ See Letter 14

⁵ See Letter 166

as Chamber Counsel in some Telescopic matter - & on Saturday home, to return here D.V. on Monday, to carry on the Lectures – which thus become the reasons of supporting the war. Und wann werden sie ~~gegen~~ ^ nach^ Italien gehen? [And when do you go to Italy??] Is that not now getting late? And will you tell me if there is any hope of my obtaining – on the next vacancy, the situation of Secretary to the Botheration Society? And will you canvass for me? I could hold it perfectly well with my old appointments of Inspector General of Telescopes to His Serene Highness The Man in the Moon – this office you are aware is not salaried - & the grant of territory up there has not been confirmed. It is in the Lunar Court of Chancery.

My wife's kind love


$$\sqrt{(T+2W)^2} = A+S^2$$

You did not give me the name of Crookes's¹ spinning Jenny

Pdfs 262/263

¹ Sir William Crookes 1832-1919, scientist and inventor. Webb is probably jokingly referring to his radiometer which he devised in 1875

Letter 201

A week later

Cheltenham, 1 Rodney Terrace 27 Oct./ 1875

My dearest Arthur,

Thanks for your kind letter. I have heard this morning from With and am very sorry to tell you that he has lost his drawing of Coggia – it is a pity, indeed.

I have long been “conspicuous by my absence” from M. N. But what’s a poor fellow to do that has nothing to send? I am in debt too to the Eng: Mech: for being on free list – so if any queer thing comes across me, I must remember them – at least sometimes - & sometimes means a great deal when you hardly see anything.

Do you think there is any possibility of re-opening a question of Succession Duty¹? I am told I ought not to have paid what I did for the land left me at Hardwick – as I might at any time resign the living and then the land goes from m: and succession duty would be claimed again. I have been hunting up Fleming² – at present in vain – but hope to catch him this evening – without any fear of his being a resemblance of the Welshman’s horse.

When a man of general pursuits gets especially attached to two of them, of very different characters, would you not say that his brain had undergone polarization?

I had to be showman the other night here for a little achromatic - 2¾ in. I believe. I think 70 or 80 ladies had their peep at D & h [Saturn] Very pretty & very sharp (I mean the sight! not disparaging the Girls!) but such miserable child’s play compared with the glorious spectacles that pass through the field of my reflector – now valued more than ever from the comparison. But indeed, since its retouching by With, it is a splendid tool.

My wife's kind love –

Your very affect. friend

Deffro! Mae Dydd!

Pdfs 264 & 265

¹ Succession duty" a tax placed on the gratuitous acquisition of property which passes on the death of any person, by means of a transfer from one person (called the predecessor) to another person (called the successor)." The principal act which first imposed a succession duty in England was the Succession Duty Act 1853.

² Perhaps a friend or relation of Ranyard?

Letter 202

A week later

Hardw. Vic. 3 Nov. /75

My dearest Arthur

Our lecturing absence is at an end for the present, & we are at home again. But as Tennyson says – “always rain.”

I have seen A. Fleming, & was very much pleased with him. There is I think a family resemblance to yourself. I hope he may be doing good service, & he seems very comfortable. He gave me quite the impression of knowing what he is about: & his boys I should think would like him very much.

I don't myself think I have much ground to claim about succession duty¹, tho' it is undoubtedly a hardship, & in Equity (??) a worry. I mean it is not right that I should pay for life interest when the land is expressly not bequeathed to me for life, but only for my incumbency, ~~And~~ a very different matter. And if, in computing a life-interest, it is done, as we know, from the doctrine of probabilities, the chance of my quitting this post in old age ought to be considered just as much as any other chance, but that has not been done, & I suppose it w'd be difficult to do it, & Government Officials are the last people to give themselves needless trouble. (What a barbarian, by the way, I once met in Somerset Ho. about some exec^r business. I fancy some of Sir S. Baker's black friends w'd have been polished gentlemen besides him.) Nevertheless I am very much obliged by your kindness in the matter. And as usual am going to trespass upon it again! (botheration, says A.C.R.!!)

Will you please tell me what might be the probable expense of Chancery proceedings to rectify a scheme for School management which issued from that Court many years ago – so that the Clergy of the parishes concerned should be ex-officio trustees of the Charity, as in justice they ought to be, but at present are not (owing I believe to a local quarrel at the date of the promulgation of the Scheme.) I have no reason to think that a petition to that effect would be opposed.

And will you please tell me – by transition as sudden as the passage through O – whether a certain transformation of an equation has occurred – in consequence of which Huggins
= W. Huggins 2

Such a rumour has reached me by a very circuitous over-land route - & I want to know the truth of it, that I may not in congratulation, by making a Bull [a bull point?], reveal my A.S.S's ears. I am very sorry to say that poor, dear, good, worthy Bird (of Birm^m) is in miserable health – so thin & weak & sick. I was shocked to see him when I called upon him some time ago. But he says his doctor does not give him up, & his intellect is clear & strong as ever.

Longman will soon have my MSS in print. Deo Gratias. My wife's kind love,

Ever your affect. old friend

T.W. Webb

I have taken the liberty of referring a newspaper agent to you for my solvency – you will understand if he sh'd enquire.

Pdfs 266 & 267

¹ See previous letter

Letter 203

A week later

H. V. Hay 10 Nov /75

My dearest Arthur

Nothing can be more friendly than your move in my behalf. I am sorry you cannot do it, for I am sure you w'd do it better than myself. You have a fluent pen & (what I have not) direct access to the fountain of information. However, I might try it. Where I should fail w'd be in not seeing the original Astr. Nachr.

Comptes Rendus¹ & Viertel &c – you know the rest of that long name - & these things I sh'd have to get at from the very brief notices in "Nature". The which doth not satisfy me very well. –

However, I could tell better if I were to see a No. of the Journal as done by Proctor - & if Dr. Henry Lansen (which his name may be for all that an outsider might make out of his autograph – but I know it, for I have written formerly in P.S.R.) – happens to write to me. I'll ask him to let me see one.

As to Mr. Knobel² – I have several times been in very friendly correspondence with him & he seems to me a very intelligent man. But I wish I c'd give him the information he wants. I believe all the Cats. of Red & Orange stars (except H's in his Cape Obs. & Outlines, all of which I presume were included by Schjellerup³) are in Astr. Nachr. I never heard of any other quarter where they could be looked for. He will not (I need not suggest) omit Birmingham's most important corrections & additions (including some of mine) to Schjellerup's very scissors-and-pasty Cat.

As to Var^s [Variables] of course you have in the Library (or is it in the M.N.?) what Knott & Baxendell⁴ did about them? I think they proposed a Var.* [Variable star] Association, but I don't know whether it came to anything. Stray notices of Var^s are often to be seen in Eng. Mech. But I suppose it is only Cats. that Mr Knobel wants. Knott could tell him more about this, or Baxendell. I thought I had started a new Var. in Aquila not long ago, & wrote to Baron Dembowski⁵ about it, as it was in one of Σ 's [Struve⁶] pairs – but my starlight proved moonshine.

With best thanks dearest Arthur,

Your affectionate friend

T.W. Webb

My kind regards, please, to Mr Knobel.

Pdfs 268 & 269

¹ Comptes rendus, is a French scientific journal which has been published since 1835. It is the proceedings of the French Academy of Sciences.

² Edward Ball Knobel (1841–1930), chemist and astronomer. MN ODNB

³ See Letter 81

⁴ Joseph Baxendell 1815-1887 MN ODNB

⁵ See Letter 14

⁶ See Letter 154

Letter 204

Two weeks later

Troy House, Monmouth 25 Nov. 1875

My dearest Arthur

Your especially kind letter ought to have been acknowledged long ago. But I have been in a Cyclone of lectures – calls – dinners – shopping – and all manner, & have neglected – perforce – letters of business crying for replies even more than yours – I began one last night, late, at Chelt^m, & had to finish it this even^g since coming here. Well – after this very uninteresting prelude – come my hearty thanks for your continued kindness in thinking of me. I should be very sorry to stand in poor Marth's¹ way, even to a farthing - & pray let him have a very full trial - & not give unless he & Gladstone are both of a mind that he cannot do it. If ever it comes to that – which I shall truly regret – why – I will come to the fore. But certainly Dr.G. does not pay munificently – I suppose the success of the venture is not enough to warrant it. However, much depends on the no. of pages allowed, & something on the size of type. Our parlour maid, who manages the forwarding of letters, has a general order not to send on packages or book parcels, & consequently I shall not see the copy you have so kindly sent me till Saturday. I wrote to With some little time ago (before receiving yours) & I think urged him to be ready for the 2nd Friday in Dec. – which I supposed w'd be the ordinary meeting - & “I guess” Council meets same day – so I suppose he will be in time. But I hope to see him in transit thro' Hereford on Saturday. -

Many thanks about the Legacy question.

I may be able to send you, for next meeting – if it is 2nd Friday in Dec. – a scrap of a notice of my little friend S Orionis who has come out of her hiding place & flaunted her red petticoat – but is now withdrawing again. I don't know where Schönfeld² got his data for a period – Ward (of Belfast) thinks it wrong.

I called on Fleming, & our host, a most kind old lady Miss Commeline [?], asked him to dinner, & we were all very much pleased with him. I should hope he would “make his mark”. There is something about him equally intelligent & agreeable. He desired to be kindly remembered to you when I sh'd next write.

My wife sends her kind love, and wishes me to ask whether you happen to recollect a very kind offer that you once made her, of the loan of one of your Microscopes? She did not at that time wish to avail herself of it – but she has become interested in the subject of late – and if you still have the same ^number of ^instruments - and it should be as convenient to yourself as it then was, should you feel any objection to lending it to her? It should be taken the greatest care of.

♃ [Saturn]& ♂ [Mars] have been very beautiful: but of course neither telescopically good. I suppose separate vols. of Phil. Trans. are not procurable – at any rate except by accident - & then, not the one you want, or I should like to see what Stokes³ has to say about Fluorescence – il y a quelque chose là, je pense, qui n'est pas bien comprise. [There is something there, I think, that has not been well understood?]

Ever, dearest Arthur,.

Your affect. old friend

T.W. Webb

We return to H.V. tomorrow

[Pdfs 270/271](#)

¹ See Biographical notes

² See Letter 112

³ See Letter 39

Letter 205

` Seven weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage

11 Jan. 1876

My dearest Arthur

Here is something according to promise, which you can tear off, & tear it up too, if so minded, for, now I have done it, it seems a very rubbishing affair, & if you like to smother it, the Society will have little loss, & I, assuredly, no mortification. I thought beforehand it would have looked better than I find it does. However, if you happen to be very “hard up” on Friday, for a paper, & absolutely want to stop a corner, this may do.

I had a mind to have tacked a “rider” to it – worth a good deal more than “the bill” itself, about the executive character of Coggia, so interestingly remarked upon by yourself. For I see plain indications of a similar structure in my drawings of 1861 which RAS did me the honour to engrave. But on second thoughts I postponed the idea, for I have not yet seen the Newall-With drawings, & it was best not to attempt the comparison previously, lest I sh^d get into the wrong box unawares.

We have had a fine question here by day of which see my account in next “Nature”. I have found 2 corresponding obs^s. of Hay & Hereford – neither of any use – except that a move 20 miles E. produced no such parallax as would be roughly noticeable. -

Will you please ascertain for me at your leisure whether Marth has taken to the Argonaut or not – ~~& whether~~ for I would on no account stand in his way - & if he has declined it will you please tell me whether I had best write to Dr. Gladstone (whose address I don't know) or would you mention the matter, so that he should write to me?

Another thing I am anxious about. With has now brought his work to great perfection (much greater than you have seen). My retouched 9.38 mirror w^d I know easily bear 1000 on star-discs - & is sharp with 450 on Moon. The Northumberland telescope¹ at Cambridge is below the mark of the day (at least I know it was considered “nothing particular” years ago). If the authorities there like to go ahead, they cannot do better than give With a job. He would readily undertake 2 perhaps 3 ft. – Alvan Clark has expressed an opinion (which has been published) that larger achromatics are not likely to succeed - & the largest sizes now are enormously expensive – much more than specula of corresponding light & power. And entre nous (but I don't know why it need be entre nous) Grubb, great as he is with OGs is not the man for larger specula. His spheres are very fine – his paraboloids are “naught” Chacun à son metier.[Each to his own trade] And it seems a great pity that With's extraordinary talent & great experience – now improved to a high point – should be idle & ultimately pass unused out of this world.

My wife's kind love

Your very affectionate old friend T.W. Webb

Pray give, in silence, my love to RAS & the hope that they will live in peace this year!

Pdfs 272 & 273

¹ See Letter 20

Letter 206

A week later

Hardwick Vic. 18 Jan 76

My dearest Arthur

Many, many thanks for such a kind remembrance of me. It so happens that I have the book – from the Author – but I shall none the less value your friendly loving thought of me - & I will try to think of a few on whom your generosity would be well bestowed.

Parish matters are pressing. I was in the saddle ¼ before 8 this morning, & out most of the time since.

A matter has set me thinking, as to which I should greatly value your kind opinion. When the late M^{rs} Napleton Penoyre died she was good enough to leave me 2 fields here for the term of my Incumbency - & so completely are they left that I have had to pay a heavy Succession duty¹. I thought in my unlegal mind that this would enable me (not of course to cut timber – I was not quite such a ninny) but to keep off others while in possession – nevertheless the Trustees have been marking some trees which I shall be very sorry to lose. The estate is in Trust – the whole of it. Can you (at least I am sure you can, but will you) kindly tell me whether I can object to this act of the Trustees?

In great haste

Yr. very loving & obliged

T.W. Webb

Pdfs 274 & 275

¹ See Letter 192

Letter 207

Two days later

Hardwick Vic. 20 Jan. 76

My dearest Arthur

Best thanks for your kind advice which would be best I doubt not under other circumstances. But I from acting upon it w^d not quite do for me, because the 2 Trustees who are close at hand (Mr Penoyre, the intruder, at the Moor¹, & Mr H Allen at The Priory) would both wish to stop my mouth, the former, because my wife & I join with the neighbourhood in not calling on his unpresentable wife, the latter because he has a taste for finding fault with everybody's doings in general & mine in particular. That there was no kind feeling in the matter is obvious, because though it is quite true that 2 out of the 3 trees marked in the meadow opposite the house contain some dead branches, yet per contra they shelter my house & garden from the wind, & are so completely connected with this house that even supposing they have the right to cut, it would have been only matter of neighbourly courtesy to mention their intention, & hope it would not inconvenience me. And therefore I should feel especially obliged if you will look over the Will. Unluckily we have just parted with it – ~~three weeks~~ ^a fortnight^ ago ! as it had been back to us for perusal – but I will write today to ask the parties to send it to you - & you will oblige me by considering yourself professionally engaged & receiving the customary “honorarium”. I cannot think, with all your busy life, of troubling you so much for nothing - & it would be everyway more satisfactory to me - & I should then cite it (if in my favour) as regular Counsel's opinion that I had obtained.

I see I did not say all I meant, on the 1st page. It was, that should I assume, according to your advice, that there had been a mistake, I sh^d receive a reply, that they had been well advised before they did it - & that w^d either stop my mouth, or drive me to seek an opinion in opposition, not to what their agent had done, but to what they asserted to justify it - & that I need not say would make me look more “cantankerous” & less neighbourly – which I particularly wish to avoid. It is disagreeable enough without it. I rather think Mr Allen has so entirely left the matter to the Timber Valuer that he is not responsible for the incivility - & I do not wish to think him so. But Penoyre must know all about it.

Now for a more pleasant subject. We are quite disengaged here till 4 Feb – when our house will be filling with nieces &c. My wife sends her kind love & hopes you will come – as soon as you can. We have not seen you for an age & threequarters & I sh^d be so glad of some tremendous talks. No one to speak to here except about timber, game, balls, paupers – &c.&c. – et hoc omne. You will quite refresh us. And I am getting up a list for Sider. Chrom. according to your kind wish.

Our School Children (under Gov^t.) are now to be taught Scientific Grammar. One of them being asked about the number of Genders, answered that there were Three Ganders – I believe so too - & who was the Goose! – not, the poor child! I can tell you too about the connection of cups & saucers with astronomy - & who live in Turkey &c.. Won't we have some fun! Especially if, when you are Secretary of Legation at Constantinople you'll get me the Chaplaincy there, with command of the Observatory & great Plössl Dyaltes.

Ever my dearest Arthur, your affectionate old “Deffro ! Mae Dydd!”

¹ See Letter 156

On a separate sheet

Reopened to say I recollect distinctly a power in the Will given to the Trustees to enter on Tenants' grounds for felling timber without trespass – but of course I don't know whether I am considered in law a mere tenant, tho' I have paid succession duty. Nor do I know whether, if so, the power to enter the land implies power to cut timber. There are other farmer-tenants on parts of the Estate, besides Penoyre who has a life int^t & myself with an incumbent int^t.

Pdfs 276 & 277

Letter 208

Fortnight later

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay {printed}

3 Feb 1876

My dearest Arthur

My very best thanks are due for your most kind letter. I have in consequence written to Mr Penoyre, as the Trustee in possession, quoting your opinion as that of a Chancery Barrister, but not mentioning your name. I have carefully avoided cantankerousness, & been very civil indeed, & put all the mistake on Apperley the land agent, who marked the Trees. Whether we shall have a fight I don't know. I can't believe it, with your very clear & decided opinion – but till the affair is ended, perhaps you will do me the favour to detain the Will in your careful custody. I have no confidence in the kindly feelings of the parties, though we are all as “civil as bricks”. Penoyre is offended with me because my wife does not call upon his – Allen is apt to be cross with everyone in general, & does not fancy me in particular - & he is the High Sheriff, too – the 3rd trustee, who I have no doubt would take my part, lives far away. You shall be sure to hear how the matter fares. The Trees are not numbered yet, & if it is attempted I shall take the liberty of requesting the trespassers to take a very peaceable departure.

I forget whether I ever told you the nasty state of the neighbourhood – which you will see more clearly now you have read the Will. There is not the slightest doubt that Mr Penoyre got the property by deceit – he always led everybody, & especially the poor Testatrix, to believe him a bachelor - & actually in that character officiated as “best man” at two weddings. On the day of the funeral he declares himself a married man of 8 years standing - & when he brings down his wife she is so intensely vulgar¹ that, knowing as we well did the punctiliousness & almost prudery of the Testatrix, we are perfectly confident that had she known it, she would never have made him her heir, to the exclusion of her cousin on the father's side the Rev. W. T. Raymond, who had always been looked upon, & had looked upon himself, as the future possessor. ~~Between~~ Penoyre himself admitted to my wife that he had never mentioned to his cousin the Testatrix the fact of his marriage, because “she had a foot that could kick”. So between these two things, the dishonour of the trick & the lowness of the alliance so very few people call there, that it would not do for my wife, tho' I go there occasionally on business.

The other Trustee, Mr Haigh Allen, began by excusing him – but finding his wife unpresentable to his own wife & daughters, he has backed about, & leads the opposition – a nice state of things for themselves & all near neighbours, ourselves included. Our policy is to be as quiet & as civil as possible - & I did not think it was deviating from it, to keep off what seemed to me, & proves to be, an obvious trespass. I did not think it very neighbourly of Penoyre not to ask, whether the trees were a shelter that I could not afford to part with – (as one of them is). As to Allen he probably knows nothing about it, as he leaves all the business – the “ornamental” part of it included – to a common land-agent.

When quite convenient – but please don't write on purpose, I want to know whether a mistake I made the other day will have any injurious effect. I added a Codicil to the will of a poor person, & got her, with much difficulty & worry, to sign it – she was actually going to leave out the last syllable of her name! With all this botheration I quite forgot to make her declare it as her Codicil though all care was taken in other respects, with the attestation. Is this of any importance? The will affects a Cottage & bit of ground, & leaves the household stuff to be divided – which portion only the Codicil revokes & gives all the personal effects to one. It was very stupid in me: but very probably I don't mend with age.

My wife's kind love – she is very sorry you could not come to see us – she would very much like to see you again. Your very affectionate & grateful old friend

¹ Apparently the lady had been an actress!

Deffro! Mae Dydd!
281

Pdfs 278 to

Letter 209

A week later

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay R.S.O({printed}

11 Feb 1876

My dearest Arthur

A bushel & ½ of thanks for all you have kindly done & thought & worked out for me – now for a bit of business – on a busy day. If quite convenient, I think the following parties will be especially obliged by the reception of the Sidereal Chromatics¹ –

Isaac W. Ward ² , Esq.	Linen Hall, Belfast
H. Sadler, Esq.	Honiton Rectory
G. With, Esq	Blue Coat School, Hereford
W.S. Franks Esq ³	1 High Street, Leicester
Rev T.T. Smith ⁴	Thruyton Rectory, Hereford

And if you will permit me, I have no doubt I can send you as many more another day. The above I know will use the book.

You did not tell me whether the Codicil would be invalidated by the omission of the declaration.

The Astron. Regist. people sent me a proof of their report of my little paper. There were mistakes enough in it to lead me to cancel it & write them another - & get with curiously stupid pertinacity they have imported into the new affair a special blunder culled out of the old one (about the stars being barely perceptible by the end of the year). I chiefly minded it because – (as so many other observers may be still looking at it – & I have no doubt it is still visible with a 3 in. O.G.) – it was a little reflection either on my very beautiful speculum, or my poor old eye, which need not be condemned before it is gone - & it stands well as yet. So I have asked Mr Jackson to insert a correction in next No. of Register.

Do you happen to know how my friend Rev^d T. T. Smith – such a clever fellow, in some respects reminding me of Berthon – can get a copy of H's Gen. Cat. Of Neb^{ae}?

And can you tell me whether With's memoranda & drawings will appear in Mon: Notices? They are not stated to have been read, or taken as read, at the meeting.

I won't forget, when M^r Newall's come out, to make the comparison I alluded to, for you, but I won't publish unless you wish it. I mean, if you ~~think~~ prefer keeping your own suggestion (as to eccentric or elliptic structure) as it now is, without reference to former appearances, which you or others might have seen in my published drawings, I will by all means leave it so.

{please turn over}

¹ This was a reprint of part of Admiral Smyth's Bedford Catalogue dealing with the colours of stars

² Isaac W. Ward: (1834-1916) Born in Belfast. He was among the foremost observers of the day, despite the fact that his sole observing instrument was a 4.3-inch refractor.. Webb in his "Celestial Objects for Common Telescopes" gives many instances of his marvellous acuity of vision, in that he was able to observe faint planetary satellites and split double stars with smaller apertures than anyone else. Webb refers to Ward no less than 43 times in his book, mostly in relation to his prowess in resolving double stars. See also Letter 142

³ See biographical notes

⁴ Thomas T. Smith Rector of Thruyton near Hereford

I have asked you lots of questions but they will all wait. Mrs Webb's kind love, your very affectionate old friend Deffro! Mae Dydd!

I am rejoiced to find that With, who has just resigned Blue Coat School, & got an appointment the title of which I don't know in connection with the Heref. Industrial Aid Soc, has abandoned his resolution of giving up optical work, & has ordered a 2 ft.disc, which he is sure he can manage. Do get him a customer if such an one comes in your way.

[Pdfs 282 to 283](#)

Letter 210**Six days later***Note above address*

After post-

And subsequently forgotten to be posted yesterday so sent off 17th
 The question about my timber has stirred up more & the happy result is the saving of large quantities of ornamental trees on the Estate which had been marked by Mr Penoyre's myrmidons¹

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay {printed}

15 Feb 1876

My dearest Arthur

For various reasons a reply to your very kind letter ought not to have been deferred – but various other reasons urged delay - & the various other reasons carried it against the various reasons, & remained masters of the field. But their reign having expired I must no longer keep you waiting for my best thanks for all your kindness, & sincere apologies for all the trouble I have given you – and above all, most unwittingly, re Astron. Reg. I had no idea that you were personally concerned in that matter! I have some recollection that you once told me you occasionally wrote articles for them (as well as for Eng. Mech.) but as to anything like official supervision or correction I had not the least suspicion of it, & was utterly astonished at your statement. I said what I did, because I knew you felt some interest in the Reg, & did something for it, & because you had kindly had my paper read at the meeting, & because as Sec^y you would naturally wish the report of it to be correct. But as to involving you in any kind of responsibility - & especially of a pecuniary kind I had not the slightest conception of it - & regret it extremely, for there was no reason whatever – when I had secured the correction of the mistake – to trouble you about it, in any way. I don't quite see from your letter whether you will be at any loss about it – but that I cannot hear of - & therefore if such should be the case, I must beg & depend upon you to let me know.

Many thanks about the Chromatics – I must first write to make enquiries, as I am almost afraid you may have in one instance given it to a man who may have had it, but I am not sure.

Mr Sadler's address is merely H. Sadler, Esq, Honiton Rectory – but you may post it, as rather plainer for P.O. people, Rectory, Honiton. He is now I think at Queen's Coll. Cambridge – but I sh^d fancy the book w^d be of no great use to him there. He has been picking up such a lot of minute points near S Orionis.

Thanks for the Circular, which seems very appropriate. I don't know whether I had anything to do with the placing of Dr Terby's name on the Committee – if I had, pray accept my especial thanks for that.

I will write to let Mr Smith know of your very kind offer.

Very miserable astronomical weather – nevertheless I have been out a few times, & picked up what I believe to be a new Ruby star in Taurus, of a fair depth of hue, but not like Hind's. What a beauty that is! Nothing to be compared to it! - Some day you shall perhaps get a good Red Star Cat. but we are far off it I fear at present. There is every appearance of a primary red colour (Hind's the type) which is diluted 3 ways – by white, yellow & blue – causing the pale reds, the orange reds, & the lilac reds. What the spectroscope would say I don't know – but though superior in its own line, it is not a good discriminator of uncompounded colour.

¹ myrmidons: Unscrupulously faithful attendants or hirelings OED 1649

Sometime when you may be visiting – but please not on purpose – will you tell me if there is any truth in the reported discovery of a spectroscopic Monster – a substance which reverses the spectrum & turns it inside out, so as to bring the two reds together in the middle? If so – a pretty cockatoo for the wavelength people to handle. There are a good many unexplained points in those regions - & some of them queer ones – but this w^d be greatest of all.

Ever dearest Arthur,

your very affect. Friend

Deffro! Mae Dydd!

I saw such a splendid 12 in. mirror at Mr With's the other day! 100 in: would not hurt it the least.[?]

I forgot whether I asked you to send the Chromatics to With. He w^d like them much.

Pdfs 284 to 285

Letter 211

Fortnight later

Postcard

Hardwick Vicarage, 2 Mar 1876

If all be well, I think we are coming to Town for a week on 13th instant, & shall hope to see something of you. The Belfast observer¹ was especially grateful, & desired me to render you all manner of thanks. One fine night – Tuesday – gave me the pleasure of knowing that I could still pick up some very minute points. If I should want it could you kindly take in a package of books at Chambers for a few days? It would not be a week. T.W.W.

On other side

Post Card {half penny stamp}

A. C. Ranyard, Esq

25 Old Square

Lincoln's Inn

London WC

[Pdfs 286 & 287](#)

¹ Reference to Isaac Ward. See Letter 209

Letter 212

Next day

3 Mar 1876

My dearest Arthur

You will think me interminably troublesome - & it looks very like it. But the fact is that the author of all evil, in whose existence, notwithstanding Mr Jenkins, I most firmly believe, has been stirring up the embers of a horrid strife in a part of my parish – about which I planned a reference to yourself for arbitration some time ago - & which I hoped had been quite extinguished. But the poor misguided people are all at it again – I believe most unreasonably & illegally – but your word (anonymously given of course) would I hope go very far, if not all the way – towards quenching the strife – though the spite that is at the root of it is beyond the reach of us all. I have stated the case – not as precisely & technically as I ought – for there have been 3 ladies in the room all the while – but I think clearly enough for the purpose – over page - & if you will kindly send it back to me, with yes or no at the bottom of it, the people, whom I have told that I am getting the opinion of a great lawyer - & I think I said, in London – will be satisfied – or if they are not, I must leave them to their own devices.

Landlord & tenant are alike queer. I have been told that the 1st ondit, a rogue – the 2nd a violent man. I have been told that the 1st has told the 2nd to take off the lock, which I dare say was put on without his knowledge. But I have to do with the wife of No. 2 - & to read to her or rather give her, your reply - & therefore I have been obliged to assume her statement of the case. - I have not had opportunity of speaking about it to No. 1, & if I had, I should have as little confidence in this one as the other, so I can only – with any hope of prevailing, “tell the tale as ‘twas told to me”.

I have only said “many years ago” – but the cottages were very old when I remember them 19 years ago. I fancy they were built nearly a century ago on the waste. All the other neighbours too used the well, & I believe do so still – one woman only is locked out, out of private spite – but I have kept all this out of the statement which I have to give her. I fear I have to deal with the father of lies in the affair. - Same time, will you please let me know if there is any objection to publishing the names & object of the Jupiter Committee in an astronomical précis which I have to write (& that soon for the Pop. Sci. Review.

Your very affectionate Tormentor

T. W. Webb

Many years ago, two tenements were built, each with a garden of its own. In one of the gardens is a Well, the water from which was drawn and used by the occupants of both tenements. The tenement to which the garden containing the well is attached has of late years been purchased by a person who is said to suppose that he has thereby acquired a right over the water, and over the path leading through the garden to the well, and his tenant in the cottage has in consequence put a Lock on the garden gate through which the path to the well lies.

Has either Landlord or Tenant any right to lock this gate, or obstruct the path in any way ? or do anything to prevent the occupants of the other house from using the well?

Letter 213**Month later**

The Cottage, Bredwardine,

30 Mar. 76

My dearest Arthur,

We are here for a couple of nights - & I a little more leisurely to write - & have besides me a letter this morning which I want to write to you about.

There is a certain Mr. Isaac William Ward of Belfast, with whom I have been for a considerable time in correspondence. (His address is, Linen Hall, Belfast, whence I conclude he manages some mercantile concern there). He has a capital 4.3 in. O.G. by Wray, & a very fine eye - (he I think & Sadler are the men to "keep the bridge" like Horatio against the incursions of the Yankees with that spirited fellow Burnham at their head.) Some little time ago he gave me such proof of having (what do you think?) - glimpsed Titania & Oberon !! that - pace Sir F.W.H. & Adm¹ Smyth, I could not help believing him - & stimulated by this, & Dr. Copeland's¹ opinion that I to see those satellites myself, after picking a triplet of Sir John's out of a gorse-bush of nebulousity, I attacked Uranus without much hope in my old insensitive eye, last Friday night, being - for a wonder of wonders - fine. And, sure enough I suspected a minute point nf [symbol = north following] the fine blue disc! It was the most evanescent thing alive - but still the suspicion would return - & always in the same place, & with 2 eyepieces. Next morning I got at Marth's² Ephemeris, and sure enough I had been "within blundering distance" of Titania or Oberon - but I believe it was the former. Little did I ever imagine or suspect that I should be permitted to see one of those objects with an instrument of my own - & I could not but feel very grateful for it. It shows too that my old & somewhat dull eye is not yet past work. Now, in consequence of all this, I wrote to Ward to ask if I sh^d make a communication of this for your next Meeting, & I have this morning received his consent, so, if you think well of it, such is my intention. I will try (of course I shall!) to catch my evanescent dream-like Titania again - but here comes (to say nothing of volumes of cloud) old Luna poking her horns at me & saying "I'll hinder you, old master, at any rate till after that there meeting."

Ward observes that it is now much better placed than in 1830 - which I suppose was the date of H's³ dictum about the Sat. - or of Sm's⁴ failure.

Red star gathering goes on - but nothing conspicuous or very lovely.

Another very distinct & distant matter. My host of the 2 last nights, the Rev Sir G. Cornewall⁵, Bar^t (you may recollect once having brought accidentally a little book to Hardwick, which a former owner had begged to be restored to that family, & this your kindness it was) - well, the said Sir G.C. is the representative I find of the Cotton family, one of whom gave a most valuable collection of MSS to the nation. The nation in return purchased for the family some landed property, part of which is still held by Sir G.C. - & a Trusteeship of the British Museum (to which the MSS were transferred) was also to be held in the family. Now do you think such a claim, long in abeyance, if ever acted upon, could be revived? & if so, who w^d be the parties to attack upon the subject?

Have you any idea of continentalizing this year? My wife is strongly recommended to Homburg in June, having taken the Italian lakes en route. Would there be any hope of our

¹ See Letter 129

² See Biographical notes

³ Herschel

⁴ Admiral Smyth

⁵ Sir George Henry Cornewall - a clerical baronet, b. 1834. Lived at Moccas Court (about six miles from Hardwick) Rector of Moccas from 1868 but kept a curate.

meeting? At any rate I trust we may not be disappointed as we were the other day of a sight of you in Town – be the same more or less!

I have missed today's post after all – mais n'importe beaucoup! [but it does not matter much]

I have over & over again forgotten to return you the enclosed. He is a very clever fellow.

I am aware that the meeting is next Wed^s week – to avoid Good Friday – I am going to Cheltenham for a couple of nights (which will probably be fine ones!) on Monday, & will try when there to put a paper into some kind of shape if other matters will let me.

With my wife's kind love, ever dearest Arthur,
your very affectionate friend
T. W. Webb

Pdfs 291 & 292

Letter 214

Fortnight later

Good Friday night, 1876

My dearest Arthur,

After a day spent for the most part in meditating upon the awful & unsearchable mysteries of our redemption, I will send you a few lines on the marvels of Creation – the work of the same great Hand – which, though they are profoundly silent as to man's restoration, speak loudly of his Creator's Eternal Power and Godhead. I have had no time as yet to reply to your very kind letter, taken up at Hay on a business journey to Hereford yesterday – nor have either of us as yet opened the little book – but we join in truly cordial thanks & look forward to much pleasure from its perusal in quieter days. I have seldom had a sharper pressure, & an exceptional death-rate – 8 people in about 10 weeks – the ordinary number for about 2 years - & yet no epidemic. I only hope the survivors may take warning.

About Coggia etc. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Your are especially kind about my publishing my own observation – but the fact is it has been long published – for it related to the big Comet of 1861, and was engraved in Monthly Notices - & I w^d tell you in which, but I believe it w^d give you less trouble to find the Vol. than it would me – as mine are in disorder: so you'll allow me to be selfish about it, & refer to my original drawing. This shows most unequivocally the nucleus out of the vertex (if such is the right name) of the parabola, & removed to some distance along one of its branches – the very phenomenon that is so striking in Coggia's, only in two ~~parabolas~~ intersecting parabolas instead of one as in 1861 – not that symptoms of intersection were entirely absent in that earlier case. Had I time to write a little paper for next meeting, which is very unlikely (& so you would say if you could see how next week is laid out!) it would have been merely to point out that the peculiarities in Coggia had been already to a certain extent anticipated in 1861 & shewn in the drawings which (or a part of which) the Soc^y had done me the honour to engrave. - Two courses are open. Either you (if you can satisfy yourself that I am right) can call attention to the corresponding structures – or the thing can stand over till the Nov^r meeting, when if in this world, I can do it for myself, with an apology for absence. You shall settle which. The sole value of the affair is, pointing out that an extra-axial structure if I may coin such a word (you will give me a better) having been detected in 2 large comets, may possibly be found to be typical, & detected in many others, if known how to be looked for.

You refer to a little note in Cel.Obj. on a tendency to division as if it had been in “the Donati” but you will see it was 2 years later.

Thank you very much about Ingall¹. I might have said in my little Uranus paper that my silver film was not in first rate order, the fail being that a colony of spiders had established themselves round the edges of the mirror – which has been (at least its film) a good deal the worse for them. But there is the beauty of these specula – their figure can't be injured - & somehow or other, as a man in Lerebours'² shop told me long ago, a great deal of damage of damage to the film produces hardly any appreciable deterioration in the seeing.

I hope you'll be sure to call at the Bedford Monday evening or Tuesday morning (24 & 25). If there is a parcel for Dr Terby I can take it as far as Bruxelles, & he will probably come there to meet me. My wife's kind love,

from your affect. old friend

T.W. Webb

Pdfs 293 & 294

¹ See next letter

² Lerebours of Paris produced early daguerreotypes

Letter 215

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay, R.S.O {printed}

10 April 1876

My dearest Arthur,

I send you my Titania – if you think her worth having (& if you in your kindness should, very likely other people may not – but) there she is, anyhow, & on Ward’s information, her husband too.¹ -

If weather & circumstances would serve, I would have at those little folks again – for I feel quite satisfied myself, & Key does not question it (he believes he has seen 4). Lowe² also saw 2 sat^s with Dawes’ 8¼ in. now at Rugby. But no doubt many will be incredulous - & I shall have little chance to vindicate myself for this day fortnight, D.V. we leave this place for Town en route for the Continent: we shall be at the Bedford Hotel, Southampton Row, for that night & next morning – not going to Dover till Tuesday afternoon, & I do hope we may catch a glimpse of you (steadier than mine of Titania!) either evening or morning. I shall have 4 ladies to escort this time. Would that you could transfer a little of your linguistic ability into me!

Thank you for Denning’s³ letter, & your opinion of it.

Thank you again - & more, for the Brit. Mus. Trustee opinion which I have communicated to the party concerned. - And thanks for your kind intention also about your dear Mother’s poems. I had no idea of her having excelled in that line. - And now I have another favour to ask you (“most troublesome man” says ACR). I have had an old ally named Herbert Ingall (1 Champion Grove, Denmark Hill) – a successful dialyte constructor, & a persevering sharp-eyed observer. He used to delight in attending our meetings, introduced by Knott or Birt, but he doubts whether the latter comes now, & he has never been to a Burlington House Meeting, & is quite shy about it, & asks if I can help him. I have taken the liberty of telling him that if he will go half an hour before the meeting & send his name to you, you will kindly get him in (I don’t think, entre nous, that he could afford to become a Fellow.)⁴ - One thing more. I was very much pleased with your paper in Astron: Reg: - you can manage such things capitally. And another thing more. I wonder none of your very big big-wigs at that meeting thought of referring to Phil. Trans. 1831 for Sir J. South on ♂ [Mars]. Ditto 1833 – Noble occultations. - - I see in Marth’s note on Astron: Register Report a mention of South, but not a distinct reference. - I have cut out & regummed a bit of Ward’s table – he had reversed it in one place – Multum in parvo – good luck to you & the Meeting.

Your affect. old friend, T.W. Webb

Pdfs 295 & 296

¹ See Letter 209

² Edward Joseph Lowe 1825-1900 MNRAS

³ See Letter 131 William Frederick Denning 1848 –1931, British astronomer. Devoted a great deal of time to searching for comets, and discovered several Also studied meteors and novae. Won the Gold Medal of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1898.

⁴ Also see Letter 22. In the 1881 census he was listed as a merchant’s clerk and his d.o.b was 1847

Letter 216

Two months later

Glion sur Montreux, Canton de Vaud 5 June 1876
(remind me to tell you about American Nine Pins)

Enfin-nous voila plus proche de notre chère patrie [At last-we get nearer to our dear country ?] – and we hope, D.V. to reach London 15th sometime A.M. by train from Dover – where we intend to sleep - & on 16th we trust to get to old Hardwick. We hope to see you somehow on that Thursday – we shall be at the Bedford as usual. – I think Southampton Row is little out of your way from home to chambers – will you do us the favour to call at the Bedford & say we intend to sleep there 15th - & shall want 1 bedroom on ground floor or 1st floor – with small sitting room & another double-bedded room 2nd floor – we should come in by one of the early Dover trains. - Hope you are quite well & your good parents. We are beginning to prosper – our earlier days having been damaged by bad weather & the illness of one of the young ladies. We leave tomorrow for Freiborg - & shall then be going on daily (except Sunday) on our way. But we intend to stay Sunday at Hotel du Géant, Coblenz, should there be occasion to write – but I shall take no news for good news.

Satellite of Uranus

Carte-correspondence

Adresse Indirizzo
Arthur C. Ranyard, Esq.
25 Old Square, Lincoln's Inn
London W.C.
England

[Pdfs 297 & 298](#)

Letter 217

Fortnight later

19 June 1876

My dearest Arthur

I dare say you thought you should not be long without the accustomed botheration from the old quarter - & you see the thought was quite correct. I have two or three things to tease you with.

The first – my regret at finding here a proof, kindly sent me, at your request I believe, by Prof. Cayley¹, of the note about the Uranus sat^s. It was not very wonderful that Mary (the parlour maid) did not see the importance of sending it after me – but it was never done – When you have an opportunity, will you kindly make my apology to Prof. Cayley for such an apparent want of courtesy & respect – as well as for any inconvenience from the want of the original copy, in final correction.

Next – will you kindly tell me – when convenient - there is no hurry – whether you know who does the Astronom¹ Column in “Nature” I have an idea that it is Hind – if so will you kindly send me his address – or at any rate the address of the doer, if you know it. He has mentioned a curious fact about the passage of the Comet of 1811 over a star (see Nature apl?? 13) which I never knew of, & sh^d wish to know more about.

Encore une autre chose - I have some prospect of being in town for a day or so about July 10, i.e. during the week beginning with that day. I have heard say that there is a certain very marvellous assemblage - of Cockatoos, and “sundry ill-shaped fishes”, as I believe Shakespeare has it – at S. Kensington – in the shape of astronomical instruments – and I have further heard that A.C.R. Esq. knows a great deal about them. Now I happen to be engaged as jackal under the Popular Sci. Rev. for astronomical information - & ‘tis’ not always easy to get matter to make up articles – you great bigwigs of the RAS & other Viertelj [quarterlies] &c - keeping such silence & reserve. Does your honner [sic] think that an hour’s puzzling of my poor brains in said Museum w^d help to stuff an article? - N.B. I have seen Galileo’s relics - & with real reverence & admiration – at Florence – (& his forefinger too, which I wish they had left at rest – I suppose they have not sent that here? But as to other things, is there curiously enough to pay my cabs there & back? - and that on a very busy day?

My wife’s kind love
Yours (in the Observatory I hope tonight)
ever affect^y
T.W. Webb

Pdfs 299 & 300

¹ Arthur Cayley 1821-1895, mathematician. His best-known contribution to mathematics was invariant theory. Became fellow of the RAS in 1857. He specialized in mathematical astronomy and carried out research in lunar studies.

Letter 218

Six days later

Hardwick Vicarage, 25 June, 1876

My dearest Arthur

Thanks for your kind letter. One just rec^d this morning tells me we may hope to be passing thro' town en route for Wimbledon on Monday July 10, & that we may be in London the whole of the Friday following (& get back here on the Saturday). Hereby hangs a tail – the old tail of “Neighbour, neighbour”. I'm come to Torment you – Do you happen to know, whether the Underground Railway affords any chance of getting from Paddington Station to Waterloo Stⁿ. – i.e. whether arriving nominally at Paddington at 2.45 (really, I suppose 3.0) we could catch, by means of the underground “drain”, as I have heard it called, the train leaving Waterloo for Wimbledon at either 3.20 (not very likely), 4.7 or 4.30? -

And will you do me the favour to take in for me at “chambers” – till I can get it – the B.Ass? Report, about the destination of which I am to write to the Secretary.

And I want to know whether I am right in supposing that Lord Lindsay intends to honour me with a copy of the Dorpat Catalogue¹ – and whether in your opinion I ought to write to thank him for the intention; or wait till I get it? – And will you kindly make interest for Dr Terby to have a copy – if you can.

I enclose a bit of a Catalogue for the sale of the marked articles, if you think it worth looking after.

Thanks many for the offer of the Kensⁿ Cat. which I should be glad to borrow – where I can get it, I don't yet know (i.e. where we shall get quarters in Town on Thursday night) but I'll drop a card to let you know before then.

Birmingham's last new Ruby mentioned in Astr. Reg. is a very fine one, & shews how defective are previous lists in omitting such a beauty.

With goes on capially – his last 12¼ inch “is beyond his most sanguine hope”. He has plenty of business now - & is thinking of 2 ft. apertures “such as the world has not yet known”. And which he says & believes he will do – No-one seems yet to have noticed his specula at Kensington.

My wife's kind love
your very affectionate
T.W.W.

Pdfs 301 & 302

¹ Catalogue of double stars produced at the Dorpat observatory by Struve.

Letter 219**Three days later***postcard*

Cheltenham, 28 June 1876, And therefore did not get yours till this morning, but will telegr. to W. to ask him to telegr. back you, shortest focus he undertakes. The shortest I have heard of was (if I am correct) 15 in. to less than 6 ft.- He is now fully up to 24 in. of first quality. - My 9.38in. splits ξ Urs. Maj: distance - black division = +- little photographed substitute for worth trying - may turn out very much changed angle on one of Σ 's [symbol for Struve] stars in Cyg [nus]. but must try again, & with the little apparatus if I can. - With's driving motion I believe so position easily measured.



thus I believe they are about 1'' central 0.75 of disc of B. - I have had a most curious pos: microm: sent from N. Zeal^d - well useful for ordinary purposes. Thought I got a

Address on second side
 A. C. Ranyard Esq
 25 Old Square
 Lincoln's Inn
 London W.C.

Pdfs 303 & 304

Letter 220**Week later**

Hardwick Vicarage, 6 July 1876 10.47 pm

My dearest Arthur,

I am filling up a chink of time tonight to say that our expected letter which will determine all our plans for next week &c. did not arrive this morning – but I fully imagine all will be straight & I can give final news before this goes tomorrow but I can now tell you at once how matters stand with us. We propose, D.V. reaching the Bedford Hotel next Tuesday afternoon – spending Wed^y in town, where we have lots to do – going down by invitation to Wimbledon Park House on Thursday afternoon – to our dear nieces at Chislehurst on Sat^y – staying there till Monday or Tuesday, going back to the Bedford & getting home on Wed^y or Thursday as business may be got through. In the which intervals we hope we may see something of you, & have some of our pleasant chats together. Meanwhile – as usual – I am going to tease you with one or two questions which I earnestly hope will not give you much trouble & which you need not answer – if you care to answer them at all – till you can do so “by word of mouth”.

- 1) There was a certain Act of Philip and Mary requiring the Mustering of the Trained Bands, and imposing a fine for absence from such musters? Can you give me the date of the year?
- 2) Do you happen to know any of the Charity Commissioners – or their Secretary – or how I might get an introduction to any of them?
- 3) Do any of your German friends know where are the original observations on which Mädler founded his description of the Moon? and would there be any chance of getting anybody to refer to anything there? It ought to be so – but that unfortunate little word “ought”, which has certainly been scratched out of the English Dictionary for some years, may possibly have fared no better in the German.

So, having upset my troublesomeness over the paper tonight, I am disposed to go to bed & see which letters come tomorrow, only I’ll tell you while I think of it, that I am waiting in vain for an opening in the clouds, night after night, if only as big as a blue silk handkerchief, to look after one of Σ 's [symbol = Struve] pairs in Cygnus. I had it sometime – noted very roughly its quadrant – looked for it subsequently in a list, & found Σ 's quadrant not the same with my own. Ten to one I am wrong – nevertheless I want to see - & especially now I have got the little New Zealand posit. Micr^r to try. Did I tell you about it? It is a very pretty thought, anyhow.

7 July - 11.45 P.M.

Here is the letter still! I quite forgot to send it off by today’s post – several letters having come in for an answer – But among them came one to tell me that my duty can be taken next Sunday week – ergo, the previously recited preamble of intended proceedings will stand.

And this shall go at least by Post of July 8 and conveie the hartie comendacions [sic]of him who ever will bee

Your right affectionate ffrend
Deffro! Mae Dydd

Pdfs 305 & 306

Letter 221

Four weeks later

Hardwick Vic. 5 Aug 1876

My dearest Arthur,

It will be simply an act of good-nature if you don't say Webb never writes unless he has something to bother me about. I can only reply that it is too true – only, per contra, I have so little time just now that I can hardly write mere letters of friendship or affection.

The fact is, please – as you were once so kind as to offer me the Cat. of the Loan Coll. at Kensington - & I was so stupid as never to claim it – to ask the favour of your sending it to me. If it is in sections, I only want to see the portion about the ancient optical instruments – astrolabes, quadrants, telescopes, &c.. – And if you can conveniently do me that favour, I should be glad if it might be soon.

Next I want to tell you that I am very much pleased with your article in Athenaeum – which I return. It seems not only very intelligent, but exhaustive: - a great merit of such a paper. I wonder by the way whether our old friend Baker ever had one of Hall's telescopes in his hands? One curious fact – to which no attention, as far as I know, has been paid, is, that with so large a proportional aperture, the glasses must have been worth very little unless Hall had devised some means for correcting spherical as well as chrom: abererrⁿ.

Another thing I wished to ask is, Why it is assumed that the undulations of light are in a plane at right angles to the line of sight? Perhaps however I should not have v&ς [??] enough to comprehend this – and supposing this to be accounted for, whether there is any mutual necessary ^ relation between the plane of these undulations & the direction normal to it, ~~through~~ along which they are transmitted.

As to the failures of reflectors in photography, I have little doubt that it may be easily accounted for by the non-reflection by silver of the blue light - & perhaps an examination of the quality of the light transmitted by silver (no difficult matter) would prove the point. With could do this well, & I will let him know about it.*

I have picked up another ruby star in Cyg: but only about 9.7 mag.

*An equal quantity, & possibly the same quality, of blue light is “outstanding” in achromatics – which must therefore as you know have a special non-astronomical correction to make them work well photographically.

ever dearest Arthur

your's very affectionately

T. W. Webb

Letter 222

Ten days later

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay,

15 Aug 1876

My dearest Arthur,

I am afraid that living in a scramble of the 1st magnitude, I have omitted to thank you for the very kind present of the Catalogue – which I had not at all expected - & for which I cannot let you mulch yourself in stamps. It ~~or I am~~ has quite answered my purpose but is, I see, very unequally got up – I don't know whether the philosopher intended is still living but if so, he w^d be rather puzzled to recognize himself as G. von Pillarceau [?] (see No. 1873.) He'll want, according to the old rhyme of the nursery “a little dog at home”, that will know him.

I wonder whether it w^d be possible to get leave from the Leyden authorities to try those curious Objectives & eyepieces (No. 1837.) Huggins I sh^d think w^d be pleased with the job, & the results w^d be interesting – on terrestrial objects it could be managed – especially at such a place as Greenwich – without the expense of tubes & other apparatus.

I sh^{ld} so much like to talk over that light question with you. I don't understand aberration (not of lenses but of light) & similar things on the supposition of transverse undulations.

But then you know I am

A Goose

[Pdfs 309, 310](#)

Letter 223

A day later

Hardwick Vicarage, 16 Aug. 1876

My dearest Arthur,

After hearing from me yesterday you will be surprised at another missive today - & I must tell you at once what it is about.

I have recently seen an announcement of a meeting of French “savans” to be held just about this time at Clermont Ferrand¹ – a place which I visited with great pleasure many years ago. I had been previously, and still am, very much interested in the question of the antiquity of those volcanoes & have had nearly all that has been written on the subject – especially Scrope’s book² which you so kindly gave me. But nowhere have I seen any allusion to a curious little note which I have found in Guattard’s Memoirs³, in the Memoires de l’Academie 1752, where he refers, though at second hand, to the public register (of Clermont as it seems) as throwing some light upon the matter. It is very ~~possible~~ ^{probable}, or rather ~~probable~~ ^{almost certain}, that a closer examination might prove the idea to have originated in a mistake – and it is unfortunately but too likely that such public documents might have disappeared at the Revolution. Still it appears to me just worth an enquiry – and no time could be more suitable than the present, when so many of the most learned & accomplished Frenchmen will be assembled upon the spot. If I had the honour of being acquainted with anyone of them personally, I would have written to him – or if I even knew the name of the President or Secretary I might have taken the liberty of addressing him – but I am unfortunately ignorant of everything beyond the fact that there is to be such a gathering at Clermont, & I think the date was the 18th instant. – Most probably you know some of them – or may know some Englishman who may intend to join them – and if so I should feel very much obliged if you would kindly forward the enclosed note which I have copied, with a view of drawing attention to the subject. Should it be found that the enquiry has been already made, I hope the remoteness of my situation may plead my excuse. I am quite aware of the extreme geological improbability of any such idea – which very possibly may have originated in the conflagration of some forest?: still it seems a pity to ignore it altogether, when there is so especially favourable an opportunity for investigation.

I have spent considerable time in the British Museum with the works of Sidonius Apollinaris, Aleimus Avitus, Beyerluick, & others⁴ - & left hardly a stone unturned – with a resulting impression rather against the idea of any actual eruption in the time of Sidonius, though very violent earthquakes seem fully attested.

I regret giving you this trouble, but I know of no one so likely to give effect to my wish.

Believe me, yours very affectionately

T. W. Webb

Pdfs 311 & 312

¹ Auvergne, France

² George Julius Poulett Scrope, 1797–1876, geologist and political economist. Particularly interested in the extinct volcanoes of central France—particularly in Auvergne. 1827 Published *Geology of Central France*, based on his fieldwork there, explicitly to display some of the detailed evidence for his ‘theory of the earth’.

³ The existence of a group of old volcanoes in central France had been ascertained by Guattard in 1752 through observations begun at Mont é limar

⁴ Cannot trace all these early authors – it does show Webb’s thoroughness and wide curiosity!

Letter 224

Three weeks later

Hardwick Vic.

9 Sept. 1876

My dearest Arthur,

I was going to have written to you this very morning if your kind missive had not come in. – I hope you have not thought me a very Turk (our heads here are boiling over with the war)¹ for taking no notice of your very reasonable request - & I meant to have told you how it happened. I fully intended to have carried out your exp^{ts} – au pied de la lettre – but many evenings were cloudy, & many moonlight, others, clear enough, we were obliged to dine late for convenience or company (we have been receiving visitors one after another) – just at the time for trying - & conscience obliges me to add that two or three times it was forgotten – so that it has never been attempted at all – for which pray accept the expression of very sincere regret.

I am very glad to hear that you are getting on so jolly at the Meeting & are so comfortably quartered, & the emersion from the Eclipse will I am sure be a deliverance.

I have been hunting up some Red Stars for Birmingham's New Cat: to be printed in Mem. R. Irish Acad. He is such a good-natured amusing fellow - & indefatigable with the telescope as in all manner of ~~country~~ ^rural^ employments & pursuits – the typical scientific squire.

If you come across Cel. Obj. anywhere (for your approval of which pray accept my kind thanks) please correct a blunder on p.250 – pointed out to me by Metford the great rifle-maker² – last line – 42 Herculis – where XV^{hr}. should have been XVI^{hr}.

When you return to Town and at your perfect convenience, could you kindly enquire for me whether the Society of Female Artists³ is still in existence, & what may be the Secretary's address?

Our united kind love (I have not yet told you that I have not read the Address or Speech, but shall be sure to see them in Times or Nature.

Ever my dearest Arthur

Yours most affectionately

Deffro! Mae Dydd!

Pdfs 313 & 314

¹ Serbo-Turkish war and Bulgarian atrocities which developed into the Russo-Turkish War 1876-78 concluding in the Treaty of Berlin.

² W.E. Metford 1824-1899 Civil engineer then gun-maker. The Metford rifle was a great advance. Also interested in astronomy, but he did not find it possible to employ very constantly the 4 1/3 in. equatorial telescope, which he had mounted for the purpose. He contributed to the Astronomical Register of May, 1876, a description of a method of illuminating the time and declination circles, watch face, micrometer wires, and finder of the telescope by means of Geissler tubes - an original method, if not a new one at that time. An interesting chap and yet another who corresponded with Webb.

³ Founded as the Society of Female Artists, this unique group held an annual exhibition in London of the work of women artists from 1857. At the first exhibition, 149 women showed 358 works, some hiding their true identities for fear of social recrimination. Now called The Society of Women Artists

Letter 225

One month later

Postcard

Hardwick Vic.

11 Oct. 1876

Mr Martin has not sent me (I believe it is he who has been so kind) the last vol. of MSS Commission Report,¹ alias Blue Book. Mr Horwood is coming here very soon – probably Monday 15th - & could bring it if quite convenient.

Returned last Sat. from a cruise among relations &c. & now likely to be at home for some time. We wish you w^d kindly say when of any use to ask you to come here.

T.W.W.

Post Card – half penny stamp

A. C. Ranyard Esq:

25 Old Square

Lincoln's Inn

London W.C.

[Pdfs 315 & 316](#)

¹ See Letter 148

Letter 226

A week later

postcard

H. Vic. 18 Oct. 76

Many thanks for the book, brought by Mr. H. - Could you without much trouble find out for me the date of the fight at Powyck near Worcester¹, as given by Rushworth? It should be Sept 23, 1642 – but I believe Rushworth² gives either 22nd or 24th. Just a line on a post card if not inconvenient.

T.W.W.

Post Card – half penny stamp
A. C. Ranyard Esq:
25 Old Square
Lincoln's Inn
London W.C.

[Pdfs 317 & 318](#)

¹ Skirmish during the English Civil War

² See Letter 128

Letter 227

Three weeks later

postcard

Hardwick Vic.

10 Nov. /76

I know of no particulars but ~~believe~~ ^feel sure^ there must be a Dome & probably Clock (Sider: Clock I know there was – about Driving I am not sure).

I don't know the Ex^{ts} address but a friend of mine does, & I will enclose to him, & ask him to communicate with you direct to save time. Many thanks about Artists.

T.W.W.

Post Card – half penny stamp

A. C. Ranyard Esq:

25 Old Square

Lincoln's Inn

London W.C.

[Pdfs 319 & 320](#)

Letter 228

Three days later

postcard

Hardwick Vicarage, 13 Nov. /76

The Telescope has been snapped up. But I am not sure than another may not shortly be thrown into the market. Shall I keep an eye upon it for your friend? - I am to be the fortunate possessor of the Dorpat Cat:¹ reduced & most valuably annotated by Mr Bird. Not only may a 12¼ in. reflector be coming forward, but an unusually perfect 5 in. ~~Merz~~ ^Munich achrom:^ separating as is said γ^2 Andr. If so Airy's computation wants revising – or I suppose one factor wants verlessierung (the arbitrary one). T.W. Webb

Post Card – half penny stamp
A. C. Ranyard Esq:
25 Old Square
Lincoln's Inn
London W.C.

[Pdfs 321 & 322](#)

¹ See Letter 218

Letter 229

Three days later

Letter from Henrietta Webb but concluded by Thomas

Vicarage, Hardwick. Hay R.S.O (printed)
Nov: 16 / 76

My dear Arthur

I thank you much for y^r friendly letter, & I assure you we shall look forward with much pleasure to seeing you in our Cheltenham lodgings & I hope we shall also see more of your cousin Mrs. Fleming

We have just had a friend staying with us who is a cousin of y^r friend Mr. Crawshay. She says he had his money from the iron works & I conclude he is a nephew of the wonderfully rich Mr. Crawshay whose cousin married my cousin Mr Greenfield & her father was the Iron Sir Joseph Bailey made a Baronet by the Tory Government & the former owner of Glanusk Park – All that party roll in riches. With kindest regards & love from my husband. I remain, yours sincerely H M Webb

{TWW then adds:}

This was written & closed yesterday, after Post. This morning (Thursday) comes a letter from Rev. H.E. Lowe, Wilmcote, Stratford-on-Avon, Mr Berthon's friend, which I forward at once. I told you that the OG has been known to split γ^2 Andr. to an unastronomical eye.

What he says about the Browning 12¼ means this – that sh^d your friend prefer that reflector, he (Mr Lowe) might purchase the Brothers Achromatic. But I sh^d counsel him not to make the transfer. Not that I quite like that reflector as it is, though very good, but retouched by With, & remounted in cell (where I think is something wrong) it ought to beat the Munich O.G. “into fits”. With has now 6½” specula having 800 & 1000 on stars! - Mr Lowe's reflector was nearly equal to W Gledhill's¹ 9½ Cooke O.G. – but W. could do still finer work now.

[Pdfs 323 & 324](#)

¹ Probably Joseph Gledhill 1837-1906 Astronomical observer at observatory in Halifax. MNRAS

Letter 230

Five weeks later

Hardwick Vic. 21 Dec. 1876

My dearest Arthur,

I have heard of something today, which I am anxious to put, professionally mind, into your hands, but must be brief about it. (I did not mean a Pun!)

We are still in a worry, all the neighbourhood, about the projected Railway ¹- & not hopeless as to its being yet checked, or at least postponed. You recollect the Will of Mrs Napleton Penoyre which you examined once for me – she died Feb (21 I think) 1874, & the Will was proved in that year.

The whole landed Property – at any rate the whole of the Moor & Hardwick Estates, is vested in 3 Trustees – one of whom, the present Mr T.I. Stallard Penoyre, formerly Brown, is now tenant for life.-

The property will be greatly damaged by the passage of the Railway through it – and it is to be opposed – or at any rate full compensation demanded. But a legal opinion (a Sol^{r's}) has been given to the effect that the Trustees have no power, as such, to act in the matter. I confess this has astonished me ! and I am anxious to know - as are other parties – whether it is or can be so? It seems to me most strange that a trust – which will not suffer even ornamental timber to be touched, should not extend to the preservation of the soil. One farmer alone has said (tho' it may be an exaggeration) that the such would be damnified by £100 per ann.

If you can only give your opinion upon a Sol^{r's} Case, one shall be prepared for you. Post is soon expected.

Every good & kind wish from
your very affectionate Old friend
Thomas William Webb

The Sol^r who gave the opinion is, I have reason to believe, no great authority.

[Pdfs 325/326](#)

¹ This was the proposed extension of the Golden Valley railway to Hay on Wye. Webb had been keen on railways as a young man. Was his concern pressure from the Moor estate or possibly because the line of the railway would have been visible from the Vicarage?

Letter 231

Six weeks later

Hardwick V. 3. Feb - 77

My dearest Arthur,

Just a line on a busy day (I have no others) to say that from something I have heard I think I was mistaken in supposing that you had voluntarily withdrawn from the Secretaryship. Had I the slightest idea that such was not the case I sh^d most certainly have returned the voting paper with one or other of the new names scratched out, & yours substituted. I have now destroyed the paper. But if not too late send me another by return, with an intimation whose name you least like as your coadjutor, & Out it shall go in favour of your own. I so much wish I had written on receipt of it, to ask your own wishes on the subject – pray forgive me -but when I saw your name no longer there, I somehow fancied it was a voluntary retirement. -

At your convenience – will you kindly try to put me in communication with the ruling spirit of the Colonial & Continental Church Society¹ I think your dear Mother could arrange this for me? It is in connection with the English Church at Grindelwald– a communication of some importance wh^h I have tried to make thro' another channel but fear it has been “burked?” or “sat upon”. That won't do.

Your very loving friend
T. W. Webb

Pdfs 327 & 328

¹ A missionary society which started life under other names in Newfoundland and W. Australia. Worked under this name from 1861 after mergers and its work eventually spread over most of the British Empire and English churches in Europe.

Letter 232

Over two weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage

20 Feb. 1877

My dearest Arthur,

We hope to be going to Cheltenham for a short time next Monday, & I write to remind you of your promise, and ask which day you will come to see us? We hope to be there for 3 weeks at least – I having to return here on Saturdays & getting back on Mondays. But that would allow you 4 clear days with us – of which we shall be right glad – only write soon & say which they will be.

I have half a doz. things to ask – but can only go on till Post. – so then

1. Have you still a copy quite spare of the Sidereal Chromatics? If so would you please let it go to H. Savile W. Evans, Esq: Wimbleton Park House.
2. Do you think Lord Lindsay would give him a copy of Σ ? [symbol = Struve] I think he would prize it.
3. If there are other spare presentation copies not in demand I sh^d be glad to beg from him – now & then. Old Williams¹ told me there were people who regularly snapped them up & never used them at all.

Here is Post.

So Glad you are in Office

Yours very affectionately

T. W. Webb

[Pdfs 329 & 330](#)

¹ Secretary RAS

Letter 233

Fortnight later

7 Rodney Terrace, Cheltenham

6 March /77

My dearest Arthur,

How exceedingly kind of you – to make us that most acceptable present – now doubly invaluable to me. I certainly had looked at it with somewhat longing eyes as you might have observed – but had not the slightest suspicion that I should become possessed of it in such a way. – Thank you a hundred times.

I am very glad my wife persuaded you not to think of having it bound, if it were only because I have some other things, of about the same size, which I was thinking of having bound, & they will go well together.

I found all straight at home – but had heavy work before I could get back – which I managed however by an earlier train than I was expected by – Meg's assurance & rampagiousness were worth seeing¹.

Now I see – or fancy – that there would be no great difficulty in getting a science grant, & the more regret that I could not prevail on With to let me try to canvass for him – which I offered soon after the circular reached me – but he declined from the most honourable motive – thoroughly loving the path of research which he would thus have been unable to follow – but fearing that it would take too much of the time which he considers he has pledged to a company² who set him to quarrel with their workmen & invent new manures – the former however I am very glad to find he has declined – as there are plenty of people to depute it to.

But he has again got into a wrong groove – tho' he has escaped much that was a constant blister to his feelings.

We thoroughly enjoyed your little visit here, too short as it was - & are looking forward to another meeting before – With our kindest regards

Your very affectionate old Friend

T. W. Webb

[Pdfs 331 & 332](#)

¹ Their dog?

² Society for Aid to the Industrious Poor in Hereford. G.H. With had become their chemist.

Letter 234

Fortnight later

7 Rodney Terrace, Cheltenham^m

22 Mar. 77

My dearest Arthur,

There seems to have been mistakes of various kinds all hindering the course of your cousin's true love from running smooth. Imprimis there are no divided circles here - & if you were to employ Calver¹ I think I sh^d not pay for dividing, but make divisions on paper, stick on with varnish, & varnish well after. 2. The stand here for £10 carefully exam^d is bosh & maffish (for your purpose). 3. It was the Metal spec. & stand that Mr Ruck meant to sell for £10 - not the With & tube without stand, as I supposed. - Mr Ruck however proposes to let me know within a fortnight the lowest he w^d take for that (i.e 2 fine spec. & eyepieces (one I find high power) good tube, & bad finder). It will I suspect be more than £10 but nothing ruinous. - 4. I may have condemned the stand of the old metal £10 worth, too hastily, as it was as much stuffed up with lumber atop of it as my brains & throat have lately been with influenza. So in common fairness I have offered him if he will have it put into inspectionable order, to inspect it on Sat^y morn^g before I go - you know I always love a job of the Kind. And I will report to you the beginning of next week. Ruck & I were the two civillest of Israelites each as hard on the other as he c^d be, and in the sweetest courtesy. -

N.B. This article yclept Comfield, alias Col. Jones, alias Cyclops, alias Mr 10 pounds, has only an altazth [imuth]_stand. But I think it is cheap enough if it will answer your cousin's purpose. The metal is unquestionably a capital alloy, hard & white. We leave for Hardwick middle day Sat^y - last lecture of funny little course to little Girls tomorrow. - [at the College]

I must go to stick up Διαγραμματα [diagrammata] πολλά καε ποικίλα [?] und some of them sehr hässlich [very ugly] I fear. - I have been making models with empty champagne bottles. But did not I see Prof. Faraday - the honourable & honoured, cut a model of a Crystal out of

A Piece of
Potato.

Your very affectionate
Inspector of Telescopes to His
Serene Highness
The Man in the Moon

[Pdfs 333 & 334](#)

¹ See biographical notes

Letter 235

Four days later

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay R.S.O (printed) 26 March 1877

My dearest Arthur,

On Saturday morn^g I met Mr Ruck in the street who told me that if he was not back in time his son w^d shew me all about the Tel: (i.e vous comprenez Comfield, alias Col. Jones – metal mirrors £10 as ‘tis). Well I went - & anything more stupid than the showman I don’t hope to meet again. Nor were specula put in, or anything, I had to hunt them up – & do what I could propria manu [by one’s own hand] – but then there were no eyepieces &c. &c. – I called again in haste – old Ruck declared he only meant to show the stand – there were no eyepieces etc.. etc. So the official report is this. –

Large mirror (8 in) capital metal, ill polished (and more likely rubbed since) said to be of fine figure by Col. Jones – but Col. Jones is dead

Flat, porous & bad

Eyepieces / Finder – May be gone to the Moon for all that appears

Tube & Stand not bad (for Altaz.) but out of condition

You would therefore be debited this kind of thing

As it is, only cleaned & the tube painted	10. 0. 0
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New Flat	1. 0. 0
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2 Eyepieces	2.10.0
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Finder	1. 0. 0
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Putting stand in nice working order, which I don’t think

Ruck can do – at least	10.0
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Carriage of stand & tube per lugg[?]

(it being supposed your cousin could take up specula)	<u>10.0</u>
---	-------------

	15.10.0
--	---------

(The only thing that is deductible here is the Flat, which is good enough for practice & might serve a beginner for a long time.)

Now, please recollect all this for mirrors which I have had no opportunity to try - & for altaz: motion. I cannot honestly advise it. Nevertheless Ruck is to let me know what he will sell the With 6” without stand for, & then you can compare. But there is no hurry. I’ll venture to say the Jones will stay a long time where it is – not unlikely years – if you don’t take pity upon it. And you can enquire what Calver’s Equat: mounting, sans divided circles – will cost. And you will have I dare say to allow for another Eyepiece for the With – for Ruck’s a/c was of the fly-away order. First he said there were 2 low power apo. perhaps 40 & 120 (I believe he said) but since he told me one was a very deep one. And if so you w^d want a medium power.

N.B. It may be recollected that With’s will want a new film from time to time – say every 2 years – but I quite believe the Jones to be of that excellent hard white alloy that does not tarnish. Nevertheless its polish is so poor - & the metal so much less reflective – that I don’t believe it w^d have more light than the 6” With.

Thro’ your great kindness I have brought the [?] to book about the Rail^y. It is now said by the Sol^{rs} that the amount will certainly not exceed my ultimatum of £100 & may be much less. They proposed apportioning by acreage. I declined this, because damage to a resident from rail going thro’ ornamental grounds & close by a mansion ought to be rated higher than mere severance of a

Farm. But they have taken no notice of my objection, which when pay-day comes they will learn of again. Nothing seems to have been done yet in Committee. All is mud & dirt here.

My wife's kind love
Your very affectionate old friend
T.W. Webb

Don't get a Horne & Thornethwaite – dear at any price

All my communications with Sadler had me to think him a very nice fellow.

Many thanks for yours rec^d since I wrote this. I am very sorry for the poor young fellow. But I think it w^d be still well to keep the Israelite price for the 6" With. You might hear of some purchaser or I might.

Pdfs 335 & 336

Letter 236

About a week later

Hardwick Vicarage

Easter Eve 1877

My dearest Arthur,

I was very sorry to hear of your cousin's disappointment in your previous letter – with respect to the subsequent proposal I don't think much w^d be gained by an achromatic, because, if nicely counterpoised, there need be no labour in either cases. The real difficulty is the exertion in removing either speculum or OG ~~in & out~~ out of & in doors, as I presume a telescope-house is out of the question, & that too would involve labour overhanded, the worst possible. All I can suggest is that some kind of out-of-doors stand should be employed, & a waterproof cloth thrown over it when not in use, with an effectual contrivance of strings or buckles to keep it from being blown away. I think with this nattily arranged either spec: or OG might be permanently left in tube – only it might be needful for a servant to remove & replace the cloth. The reflector is best suited for covering up, because it can be made to work nearer the ground. Steps may be sometimes required to get at the eyepiece, but if short focus, they may be very light & the position always much better for an invalid than the achrom. – unless a diag.e.p. is used. But of course the reflector tube must be capable of rotation in a cradle.

I am very sorry to hear about Proctor – but still more about Lockyer – that is indeed a very miserable prospect for his family as well as himself. I have seen pitiable cases, & think it one of the saddest of calamities. He has had his infirmities (who has not?) & they happen, I suppose, to be such as have come a good deal before the notice of his fellow-creatures? – but after all he has done much good work, & will leave a name.

But what does that signify?

Very little I think while we live – ~~much~~ our happiness really depends on far different considerations. And what can it matter to us in a few years time?

I don't question there is something noble in ambition – as there is something the reverse in mere vegetation. Only there are things so much more noble – so much more really grand, & worthy of an immortal spirit.

The heathen might well

“seek the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth”¹

(That is supposing there had then been any cannon's mouth to seek it in!) But for the Christian – can anything be equal to the

“Well done – at last”?

May you & I both hear that, dearest Arthur!

So with our united very kind love I remain

Your very affectionate old friend

T. W. Webb

Pdfs 337 & 338

¹ Shakespeare: As You Like it.

Letter 237**About a week later**

S Thomas's Parsonage, Monmouth

7 April 1877

Old Cockatoo being on the wing just now – on his return from Glo'ster (where he had spent a business day) to this here place last night found his good friend's letter to which he replies by first post.

I had on Easter Day a call from E.N.Green¹ the astro-artist L^d Lindsay knows who – who is going to take a noble mirror to Madeira to observe [symbol?] of \odot –[Mars] And he says wonders are done, as to improved steadiness, by turning reflector tubes into lattice work – I have long had some such vague idea, & he says he has converted With in toto. I have to go to Heref^d visitation next Wed^y. & shall learn what With says - & if he dittos Green, I shall cut up my tube with holes, & strongly recommend you to keep [?] or your cousin or any friend, waiting to hear the result – for I quite believe that if unsteadiness c^d be done away, the silvered mirror would be the ~~reflector~~-telescope of the future.

We are not likely to be in town during this month, tho' I think we ought to go before – [sketch of a "puffer" train going towards mountains with "Rigi" written at the top]



our very loving Professor of Botheration in the New University of Ass-ford

[Pdfs 339 & 340](#)

¹ Nathaniel Everett Green 1823–1899 English amateur astronomer and artist. A landscape painter who exhibited at the Royal Academy in London. One of the founder members of the BAA in 1890, was President 1896–98, and for some years directed its Saturn Section. ObitMNRAS

Letter 238

Three days later

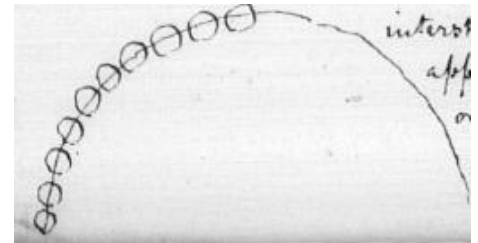
Hardwick Vicarage, Hay R.S.O

10 April 1877

My dearest Arthur,

I have not seen – or have quite forgotten – what Proctor may have written about the ovoid markings on ²[Jupiter] It must be admitted that at first sight they are extremely like ellipsoidal masses floating in an atmosphere – but I believe that it is a mere illusion. You know how incompetent I am to take up the question mathematically but I think it would be easy to shew graphically the impossibility: for if we had actual masses to deal with like this –

it is obvious that the interstices would disappear from their overlapping, at a very short distance from the centre of the disc either way – while as far as even I have seen or drawn the perspective has been that of superficial markings – or at any rate of interstices between masses not projecting out materially between them. They still continue visible near enough to the limbs to be explained only on some such supposition, and admitting, what certainly ~~seems to~~ ^{may} exist, some decrease of distinctness from an imperfect transparency of the atmosphere above them. But even as to this I am not very confident. I trace the belts much closer to the limb than has often been described – in fact to the limb itself – in great contrast to the fig^s of B. & M.¹ – and as to meridional or oblique markings, though they undoubtedly grow feeble or disappear, I am not sure that they do so more than the extreme foreshortening of the globe requires (a condition, I suspect, not always sufficiently borne in mind.) in short, I have no evidence from any seeing of my own, of any remarkable depth, or at any rate visible extension, of atmosphere around the planet, in proportion to its enormous area. The strongest proof of its existence seems to me to lie in the extraordinary mutability of the markings on the surface. As to the recent obs. of a satellite within the limb, if from the assigned cause it ought surely to be much more frequently seen.



Dr Huggins very kindly sent me a notice of Winnecke's Comet ² – But no weather or prospect of it.

Always your affectionate

Deffro! Mae Dydd!

[Pdfs 341 & 342](#)

¹ Beer and Mädler

² Jean Louis Pons (Marseille) originally discovered the comet on June 12, 1819, it was later rediscovered by Friedrich August Theodor Winnecke (Bonn) on March 9, 1858. It approaches the earth at intervals of five years and eight months

Letter 239

Three months later

postcard

17 July 1877 – Hôtel du Glacier du Rhône

By Brussels, Coblenz, Heidelberg, Ulm (grand service at Cathedral), Fredricksha, Coire, Splugen, Chiaucuma, Lago di Como, Lugano, Bellinzona, S^t Gotthard; (furious rain,) Hospenthal – here – back today to Hospenthal – thence to Axenstein – then Pilatus or der Mond or I don't quite know where.

All going on well, thank GOD – my wife much better notwithstanding some cold-catching &c. which is much easier got rid of than in England. Old Bohren¹ with us – travelling very easy – few people out – bad season for your hotel people, & a good deal of clouds & rain – nothing as to RAS except that I met a kind Englishman who has bought a beautiful Villa (Guisseppina) on the Lago di Como who has an achromatic & had seen ♃ [Jupiter]satellites the night before. ♀ [Mars]splendid to naked eye, but I fear he will be troppo basso at dear old Hardwick –col piu profondo rispetto, [with our profoundest respects] di V.S. &c. &c. T.W.W.

Carte-correspondence – post marked Glacier du Rhone – 17th July '77

Monsr. A. C. Ranyard
25 Old Square, Lincoln's Inn
London
England

[Pdfs 343 & 344](#)

¹ Christian Bohren, their Swiss guide.

Letter 240

Fortnight later

postcard

Hôtel Rigi Scheideck, Lac des IV Cantons, Suisse
30 July 1877

Here at last, & quiet at last, where we were so happy with you 11 years ago, my wife says – but I could not have believed it was so long - & so time hurries away. It is much altered & the solitary grandeur of the place interfered with by a railway literally under one's nose – but it is much improved in convenience since the day – I have not forgotten it – when in all your fatigue you so kindly & generously insisted on carrying up my bag in addition to your own knapsack from Gersäu.

We have made acquaintance with some very pleasant Neufchatel people here – now I am sorry to say all departed, a M. & Mad. Humbert, a banker there - & a Dr Pettavel & his wife & her sister. I thought you had friends in Neufchatel – but they had not heard of you. Mr Cox the Editor of the Expositor is here, & the Emperor of Brazil was here this morning, such a noble-looking man. We hope to be in Town environ le 22 Aout & shall be so pleased to see you again. I am thankful to say my wife is much better.
Your very affect. T.W.W.

Carte-correspondence – post marked Rigi-Scheideck – 30th July '77

A. C. Ranyard
25 Old Square, Lincoln's Inn
London

[Pdfs 345 & 346](#)

Letter 241

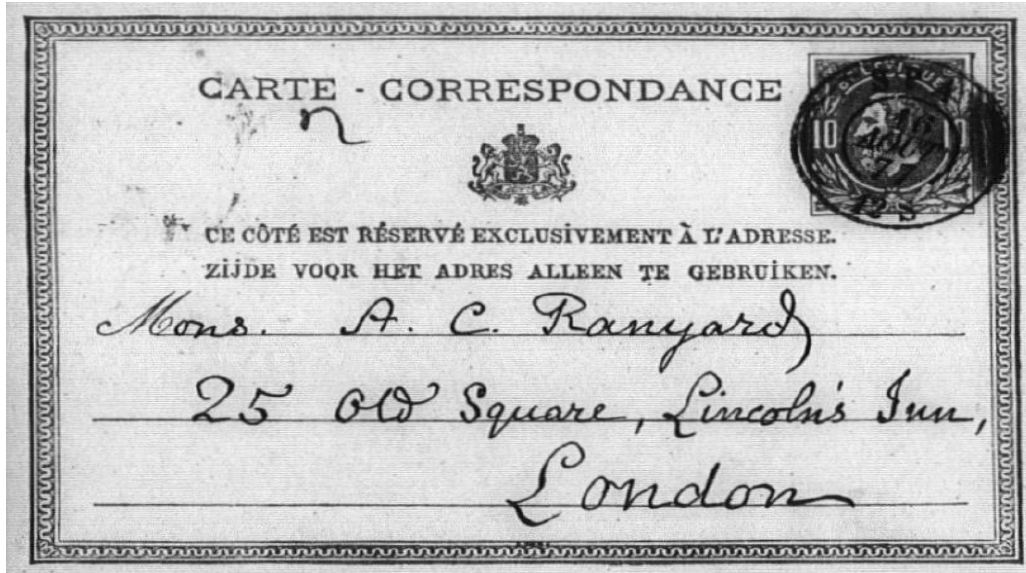
Fortnight later

postcard

16 Aug 1877 Spa, Belgique

Here till Saturday – to Brussels for Sunday – Monday to Chiselhurst – Wednesday night, D.V. at Mr Wyatt's 77 Great Russell St – to go down Friday or Saturday for Sunday's duty. If in town – as we hope – do let us see as much as we can of you. Mr Wyatt is on the Continent.

T. W. Webb



Pdfs 347 & 348

Letter 242

A week later

G.R.S¹. 25 Aug 77

My dearest Arthur

I was so vexed last night at finding, when I left my somewhat long-staying relatives – that you had gone – As my wife had been to see you, I felt confident that her powers of persuasion would have kept you to a cup of tea & a pleasant chat – for you, dear A. are never in the way – which is more than can be said for everybody. However there is no other remedy than what a few lines before our starting may supply.

Mars still “prods” me with the end of his fiery spear – I can’t get over it. What if those little slaves of his should be part of the great Asteroid or rather Planetoid family who have lost their wide presence by coming within his reach?

On looking at my report in Times – which the Webb’s sent for to look at – I see it is diversely blundered – but the fault was partly my own from inexperience in telegraphy (excepting “chamber à deux lits au premier Samedi” &c. &c.) which led me to send compressed sentences, the meaning of which would depend on stops that the interpreter might insert wrongly. I never thought about this – but if I had I should hardly have thought a sensible transcriber would have made me describe the solar light as “long”! Would it be worthwhile, please tell me at leisure, to send an account of obs. to Astr. Register – with just an allusion to their having been in part incorrectly published at the time? – I could, in that, give some comparative estimate of light of ☽ & ♄, [Saturn] which was in Times useless; from condensation to ill-working-out - a new word Germanicé

We are fully building on your coming to a very pleasant visit – when we shall have I hope many a pleasant talk - & if my science can be rubbed up – now rapidly oxidising – (but which wonders when there is Oxygen in ☉ [Sun] you are the man to do it.

By the way, Murray says confidently a triple Iris is visible in the fall of a river near Meyringen. Que veut-il? [What do you think?] I saw the double the other day at the Devil’s Bridge & I dare say it might be picked out in many other places – but triple??? I saw the summit of a rainbow under the level of the eye at the Furka² – pretty & singular, & I just sketched it.

Do you care for doctrine of Chances? It was a funny one that placed us in 3 consecutive hotels abroad in No. 1, 2, 3 – the 3rd time it certainly made me stare!

If you should by any possibility meet with anyone who would lend me the concluding part of Rushworth³ (1648 to end inclusive) I would take every care of it. I c^d not quite finish it in Museo Britan yesterday and my dreaded enemy the Sixth battalion of the Clock routed me.

My wife’s kindest love with mine
Ever your affect. old friend T. W. Webb

Pdfs 349 & 350

¹ Great Russell Street

² Furka Pass, a high mountain pass in the Swiss Alps.

³ See Letter 128

Letter 243

A month later

Hardwick Vicarage, 24 Sept. / 77

My dearest Arthur,

It is indeed truly kind of you to bear in mind your old friend's insulation, & to help him by such interesting news. You will not be surprised to find that I have failed with those wonderful little objects – I had 3 great obstacles – bad weather, an old silver film, & an aged eye. ^ to say nothing of ☽ of late. But our friend Key has done well with his superb 18 in. With – seeing one sat: with concave lens without hiding Mars! You will probably hear from Sadler of his success with Common's Great reflector (who on earth is Common? No common man at least in one respect.) – Also Mimas!¹~~With~~ This is Calver. With has lately made Key's mirror give a cleaner image of ϵ Bootis than Huggins's 15 in OG!

Many thanks for the intimation about Lord L. – I should like to tell you how matters stand with me. I have made no special study of double stars, i.e. I have never measured a pair in my life! but I have from time to time come across pairs or groups which I have reason to suppose are not in Σ . [Struve] (since Lord L. kindly gave me his book I can pretty well tell for myself – before, I used to refer to poor dear Bird occasionally.) I have no doubt a good many unrecorded pairs exist, more especially as I believe Σ did not specially examine anything below 9 m^g. – and it would be no unworthy task if any one were to undertake to supplement Σ 's great work. – Should Lord Lindsay, with that or any other view, like to have any that I have thus accidentally come across, they would be all most entirely at his service, if he would care to take the trouble of finding them – but I fear this might often be so great that he would not think it worth his while. – my stand being very imperfectly constructed for giving places - & my own attention to that point having been often less than I should have given had I supposed that these mere casual finds were ever likely to be made any use of. They would indeed be greatly honoured if Lord Lindsay thought them worthy of his notice – but I am afraid he would soon find that “le jeu ne vaudrait pas la chandelle.”[the game is not worth the candle] – I might sometimes be wide by 1 m or 2 m in RA & 10' in Dec!! – But if he should after this fair warning think he could utilise any of my little doings, it w^d. certainly be the strongest inducement to me to take more pains in identification (or what a funny friend of mine calls “differentinsitiation”!) for the time to come.

We are often talking & thinking about your promised visit – which will be a treat indeed. Please give us as early notice about it as you can. I am thankful to say my wife is decidedly better, though much stiffened by rheumatism. We have got the Spa waters over – not through an agent – which seem decidedly advantageous. – My wife's kind love.

Ever your affectionate old friend

T W Webb

Old Cockatoo has departed – but we have got another that won't talk – only “squeals tremendously” as our kitchen folks say. But he is most absurd in antics & very amiable, - bites nobody – and calls himself “Chick”!

[Pdfs 351/352](#)

¹ A moon of Saturn

Letter 244

Fortnight later

Hardwick Vicarage, 9 Oct. 1877

My dearest Arthur,

Best thanks – for poor Rutter & myself – for your very kind and equally clear explanation – which will be of the greatest service to him. I would have said, I hope your next Client may bring you a more lucrative return – but alas! in the mean time a labourer’s wife comes to me in much perturbation about an affair – in which your kind counsel will be equally valuable – so, as long as the question is, as I think, not a troublesome one, I am going again to trespass on your good nature – there is a good old English proverb preserved in Geo. Herbert’s “Temple”¹ - & you may well think I am always acting upon it

“Much will have more!”

The business is simply this. A woman living somewhere at Dalston – the widow of a Cab Proprietor, was stupid enough to marry a Cab Driver – having previously made a Will in favour of her relations – one of whom – a married Niece (and great fidget) is my parishioner. She dies – half-a-year ago – after much disagreement with said Cab Driver Husband No. 2, - it is supposed, because she w^d. not let him finger said property. However, dead she is - & her niece is getting anxious, because nothing has been heard about the Will - & she seems to have some rustic apprehension that thro’ said Cabman’s influence something wrong has been, is, or may yet be, done. So she comes to me, with a request that I would write to a certain Lawyer (M^r Tho^s. Watson 13 Finsbury Place (it looks so but may be meant for Finsbury) South City, London.) who, she believes, made the Will – and fancies he may be Ex’or. ~~But I tell~~ She has actually had search made (rustics are not always so gauche as they are supposed) in Hereford & Doctors’ Commons – but no such Will has been proved.

I tell her she need not fidget – there is time enough. But still I don’t like to refuse to write, according to her wish, to said Lawyer Watson, to know what has become of her share in the property – which by the way is believed to be in Houses, in or near London. So I venture to trouble you once more with the enquiry, whether, all things considered, it is best to write to said Lawyer to enquire, or to let things alone for the present. Please don’t inconvenience yourself with the reply – for tho’ I undertook to get advice as to this, from a friend, I only engaged to have it before a fortnight - & next week we are going from home.

The Will has evidently not been proved yet but I believe the law is less stringent about this than formerly - & anyhow we need not be in a hurry to assume wrong-doing.

Anxiety on the other hand is pardonable in the case of a poor labourer’s wife.

Thanks for Marth’s address. I am so glad to find you are getting on nicely. I am much of the day sunk in Civil War – clear evenings try to improve Cel: Obj:

My wife’s kind love –

Your very affectionate, grateful & troublesome friend

Deffro! Mae Dydd!

(which Birmingham the ready-witted tells me ought to be “Awake, it is night” (not day!) for an astronomer.

Pdfs 353/354

¹ George Herbert 1593–1633 poet and Anglican priest. His work *A Priest to the Temple* or *The Country Parson* offered practical advice to clergy.

Letter 245

Ten days later

Hardwick Vicarage, 19 Oct. 1877 (after post)

My dearest Arthur,

You gave me no idea how long you ~~may have been~~ ^ intended to^ stay in the North -so I address this to the old quarters, where perhaps it will find you.

I know we shall have your ready & affectionate sympathy in the sad affliction which has been permitted to befall [sic] my wife's family – You recollect no doubt the 3rd & tallest of our Wyatt nieces, Bella – and how 15 months ago she married a clergyman old enough to be her Grandfather – our regret at the time was the almost certain prospect that in a few years she would be either a widow or a nurse. How blind we are! It never seemed a possibility that she would be a mother - & die from her first confinement. Yet such has been the unsearchable will of God. All went quite right at the birth of a fine boy, & for a week afterwards when, something occurring to require medical aid, the doctor gave her (it is believed) an overpowering dose of laudanum? – which produced raving delirium of a most violent & distressing character. Another practitioner was called in who recovered the mischief, and though extremely weak she was going on well, & everybody was rejoicing in the prospect when she suddenly sank last Wednesday week, & I had to follow her last Tuesday to her final resting place. It has been a terrible stroke to her parents (she was but 23) and the poor widower looks 15 years older. And we have felt it very much – tho' from her having lived so far away near Matlock since her marriage we had seen very little of her. Strange as it may seem, it was altogether a love-match & their short time together was very happily spent. She was of a very practical & domestic turn, & likely to have done much good in the situation to which, as we might have supposed, she had been appointed by Providence. But we know not what shall be on the morrow! – And there is surely a lesson in it for us all; - that when He cometh we may open to Him immediately.

I must now turn to some other matters & tell you that I have had great comfort & assistance from my cousin (1st cousin's son) M^r James Eyre?, whose mother (such a dear sweet creature!) died while we were abroad - & he has come here on a long visit & the Bishop has very kindly licensed him as Lay Reader among the poor, by whom he is much beloved, as he lived in the neighbourhood & was very kind to the people formerly. This has been of great use to me, in enabling me to proceed more uninterruptedly with my dear Father's book, which is making at last some progress. But a day or two ago I received intelligence – which I had been getting rather apprehensive about – that a new edition of Celest: Obj: would soon be wanted. – Nothing could well be more inopportune. I wrote to Longman to say I could do nothing to it till the other – for which so many persons have been waiting so long – was finished. To this he gives a very reluctant assent, being evidently impressed with the danger of competition. I own – conceited as I fear it must appear – that I am less afraid of it than he – not that a better book might not be produced (!!!!) but simply because it has got (I thank God only for it) a kind of standing which would not be likely to encourage a dangerous competitor. I only say this to such an intimate friend - & I doubt now whether I ought to have said as much as that.

Well – I shall want much help if it is to be, as I hope, an improved Edition - & I am resolved it shall not be reprinted unless it is – and I shall feel so very much obliged by any criticisms & suggestions of your's for which I shall look forward with especial interest, when you give us the great pleasure of your promised visit.

My wife sends her kind love & I am always my dearest Arthur

Your affectionate old friend,
T.W. Webb

Mars “maffish” – something has happened in the lunar [?] (the old single Glo’ster Cheese) but I must look further.

Envelope reopened to say your very kind letter has come in since it was gummed up, & I am very sorry for the stupid delay – caused partly by visitors in house - & 2 parties with Magic Lantern! requiring a good deal of attention – (in one direction, & by the Law of Exchanges, involving an equal amount of inattention in another! a poor apology for all the trouble I have given you.

I am thankful to say that I am very well – with hardly a trace of my old trouble. My wife too, much better lately. Has been painting some very clever Mag. Lant. slides.

I have sent the Argonaut a Cockatoo. Will they ever bring back a Golden Fleece? or get Fleeced of their gold?

[Pdfs 355 & 356 and 357 & 358](#)

Letter 246

Over two weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage, 6 Nov. 1877
(forgotten to be posted that day)

My dearest Arthur,

I have a very great favour to ask of you – your opinion as to the following matter.

My worthy old parishioners & Churchwarden John Rutter had several children – the eldest son, a few weeks ago was very sadly killed by a fall from his horse – never recovering the power of speech - & having made no Will.

His father I presume is heir at law.

There are debts owing to, and by, him, but of no great amount.

Can his father receive & pay without letters of Administration? My impression is that he could do so as among friends – but could not ~~require~~ ^{enforce} payment or give a receipt. Must he take out such letters?

Then, if his poor son's debts exceed his assets – which is at present uncertain, is his Father liable for such excess?

He had a watch & some rings which have disappeared – but I suppose without some stronger suspicion than the fact that he was lodging in a not very respectable public house, & was supposed to be engaged to a girl there, it would be vain to make any strict enquiry.

It has been a very afflicting case – for he was a wild careless fellow, & his friends are most of them serious & rightminded people. It threw quite a damp over the whole neighbourhood - & added another to the many calamities & distresses, private as well as public, which have marked the present year.

“The book” is making some progress, though slow: & I hope may be out next May. D. V. I have most valuable parish help from my good cousin M^r Eyre who has been here for some time, & this has made a great difference in my favour. My wife's kind love & I am always dearest Arthur

Your very affectionate old friend
T. W. Webb

Will you please give me Marth's address? He sent me some Nachrichten which I have been unable to thank him for.

[Pdfs 359 & 360](#)

Letter 247

Fortnight later

Hardwick Vicarage,

20 Nov. 77.

My dearest Arthur,

I should think you would soon come to wish, in the words of the old madrigal
“My heart had never known ye”
so incessant is my botheration – But to make short work – for time is short today (And when not so?) –

My very worthy & deserving Nephew Thomas Henry Wyatt, at whose house you saw us in Torrington St. is a candidate for the Clerkship of the Skinner’s Company. I venture to enclose you a list that I have received in the hope that possibly you might be able to speak a word for him to any of said Skinners whom you may know – I will only add that you may do with perfect safety – he is my Ex^r or for 2 reasons – his perfect integrity, and his equally admirable business habits. You have many a time laid me under great obligation – but this will be a very special addition.

No more today.

My wife’s kind love

From very affect. old friend

T.W. Webb

Pdfs 361 & 362

Letter 248

Three days later

Hardwick Vic: 23 Nov. 77

My dearest Arthur,

Very great thanks and more trouble ! – and that too of a foolish nature – for I might just as well have asked you last time & got both answers together – mais – mais - &

However the matter is this – I had a letter a short time back from D^r Terby – who seems to have been up to his eyes in work – in which he enquires about l'un de mes correspondents les plus actifs i.e. Burton (I had nearly left this out!) he has been sending him some of his letters & brochures for a year or two & has had no reply, - “Son silence se fait craindre qu’il est encore gravement malade.” [His silence makes me dread that he is again gravely ill]

I have not yet answered the D^r on my own behalf – tho’ I have 7 very bad drawings to send him – and when I do so I should like to let him know about Burton. I have heard nothing from him since he was on top of the Great Pyramid – or Cleopatra’s needle – or La Pointe des Ecrins – or the Cockatoo’s Crest – or wherever it might be, but I think you told me he was slaving away at something. But now will you please give me some news that I can send to D^r Terby - & I hope it may be some compensation for some of the worst drawings you, or he, ever saw?

Do you happen to have heard anything about a German gentleman named Meier (not Meyer nor Mayer) living in Camberwell?¹ I think he is partner in some house (of the same name) in the City – but what kind of business I don’t know. Could I get his address either in the City or at Camberwell?

This, please, altogether at leisure & convenience – quand a l’autre affaire, celle de M. Burton, vous me feriez un grand plaisir si vous auriez la bonté de m’envoyer des nouvelles sans beaucoup de retardement. [as for? the other affair, that of M. Burton, you will give me great pleasure if you have the kindness to send me some news without much delay]

My wife’s kind love – looking out for you
Tout a vous
Cockatoo

[Pdfs 363 & 364](#)

¹ There was certainly a D.A.Meier, a merchant living in a prosperous way in The Grove, Camberwell at that time

Letter 249

Over two weeks later

Black edged

Hardwick Vic: 11 Dec. 1877

My dearest Arthur,

What a horrid tease I am. Here again – wanting to know Four Things! I really could not plague you thus if you were not one of the best-natured friends in the world – and would not accept all this bother as a Compliment to your kindness! Well – seriatim¹.-

Question 1. – Do you happen to know anything of the modern Education Act? My Tenant – a very respectable Farmer, has 3 dear little girls, of 10, 7 & 5 years, & he had much rather - & has sufficient reason for it – send them to a School of the old motherly fashion, not recognised by Government on account of the incompetency of the Teacher to instruct (in Spherical Trigonometry, the Art of Navigation, Wig-manufacture and the Maori language. No matter that she can teach them to read & write & work & do their duty to God and man.) Now – is the Father anyway punishable if he continues to send them to that School mistress? The “Attendance Officers” who will be doing very good work with a bad lot, will perhaps report this case to the Magistrate – on the Board – on some Geheimraths² or other. Will they, or can they, interfere?

2. Something unexpected has turned up about the case as to which you so kindly set me right, by telling me that a woman’s second marriage would invalidate her Will. Well and good – but “this here’s a purty go!” It seems likely to turn out that said Marriage was no marriage at all – said drunken ill-conditioned nasty fellow being the poor duped women’s Half brother’s illegitimate son (uterine half-brother). This I fancy is void. I have no table of degrees at hand – but on the strength of it a London lawyer, as he says, has been here getting the poor people to sign, as others of the family have done, or are said by him to have done, an undertaking that he shall be paid if he recovers the property by that will devised to them – if not, to have nothing. I wonder whether all this is bona fide. Will you do me the favour to see whether the Law List contains such an individual as M^r Tho^t Watson, 13 Finsbury Place South.

3. Can you put me in communication with any sensible judicious person who has the conversion of the Jews at heart? I know of a very interesting case, & have been asked to recommend a suitable book – but I neither sufficiently know the Jewish mind, nor the books that by the Divine Blessing might be useful.

4. (This is a specially important affair so I shall put it over page -) What day and hour are we to send for our dear friend at Hay Stat?

I have been looking a little at the riches of the Galaxy. It is simply amazing, e.g. about the Swan’s Tail & head of Cepheus – and I see a great number of unrecorded pairs, evidently pairs from equality of magnitude – unrecorded – I don’t suppose Σ [symbol for Struve] was willing to attack the Galaxy.

I thought I might have picked up a Comet the other night, but

Ever your affectionate

Deffro! Mae Dydd!

Pdfs 365 & 366

¹ In series – a scholar’s term used to show that there is a series.

² A high official of the old German princely courts. Presumably Webb being sarcastic.

Letter 250

Three weeks later

Hardwick V. – 4 Jan 1878

My dearest Arthur

Just a few lines to thank you most especially for both your kind gifts – which are I assure you fully appreciated.

We have missed you very much.

The funeral & the mourners – who did not go early, took up pretty well all the rest of that day.

You have not told us about your cold on your lip – How naughty – when you know how much we wished to hear.

I find I bungled my question about Gavelkind¹ – which you were so kind as to answer so fully as far as my enquiry went. But I have since come across the letter of the person who asked me, and I find he wants to know When was the date of the Act limiting or defining Gavelkind in the way you describe? I fancy in the present Century.

I also forgot to ask you which I promised M^r Raymond months back to make enquiry about. He tells me in some parts of the country where he has lived – I fancy S. Shropshire, demand is regularly made for a tax called Hundred Silver, or Silver Tax. Do you happen to know anything about it? The only notice I c^d find (you know I am quite out of the way of such things) was a curt reference to Hundred Silver in Rees' Cyclop: - but no explanation of it.

If you can conveniently bear these little matters in mind – anytime in the next 2 months – I shall be especially obliged.

No improvement in weather since you left us – or prospect of it that I can see.

My wife very busy making drawing of Brampton Bryan Castle to be cut in wood for the book.²

No big I piece [= eyepiece] from Berthon yet – I remember I stopped short in one of my dreadful long yarns before I told you he kindly offered to make me one, on the failure of Horne & Thornthwaite to do anything at all like what I wanted.

With, Hereford, is all the address he needs & I am sorry you did not find him - & sorry I did not suggest it. We thought of you afterwards as there.

If you can manage to write to His Serene Highness The Man in the Moon, about a 12 inch mirror I should be inclined to attend – especially as I have for years held the office of his Inspector of Telescopes. By the way do you know who is the Woman in the Moon? I fancy Birt can tell you.

Our united best love

Yours very affect^y.

T.W. Webb

If you ever are kept waiting 0^h..10^m..0^s in our Library, ask Westley if we have Jamieson's Celestial Atlas³ –If he or any other “jolly good fellow” w^d re-edit that, improved, he w^d do a capital thing. I meant to shew it you – And forget. -

Pdfs 367 & 368

¹ The name of a land-tenure existing chiefly in Kent and Wales..

It was originally a tenure by ‘gavel’, i.e. by the payment of rent or fixed services other than military. After the Conquest, the Kentish form of socage was distinguished by certain customs elsewhere generally disused Of these the most conspicuous was the custom by which a tenant's land at his death was divided equally among his sons.

² For the Memorials of the Civil War. See letter 138fn1 Brampton Bryan was (and is) the home of the Harley family. It was famous in the English Civil War in that Lady Harley withstood a Royalist siege – her husband being for Parliament.

³ Alexander Jamieson: Star Atlas London 1822

Letter 251

Fortnight later

Hardwick Vic. – 16 Jan. 1878.

My dearest Arthur

I had not time to reverse [‘send back to’ OED now rare] your slip by return (rec^d yesterday as M^f Esdaile’s bearing same date 12th) – but send it today. Birmingham will be glad to see it – for he has been rather ignored (owing doubtless to his preference of an Irish Cat) & it has I think disappointed him.

I am extremely obliged to you for your most kind mention of the Microm^f to Mr Esdaile, from whom I have had a most liberal offer in consequence. It is all your doing. I have proposed to send it over for inspection as fairest on both sides.

Catalogue received quite safe – did not mew at all & I suppose slept all the way from Town.

Letters called for.

Yours very affectionately

T.W. Webb

[Pdfs 369 & 370](#)

Letter 252

Three days later

Hardwick Vic. – 19 Jan. 1878

My dearest Arthur

I dare say you may have heard something of the progress of the negotiation so very kindly inaugurated by yourself between M^r Esdaile and myself, re micrometer. He made me a most liberal offer of £6 on what I might think it worth. I told him Sims had said £3 or £4, but I thought that rather low, because the 3 eyepieces must be worth some 36s (or say 30s) and that leaves very little for the rest. But I offered to send it “on sale or return”, and he might get an opinion about it, & I would take his price. This morning I hear that he accepts my proposal – which I think fair for both sides – and he tells me to send it to you - & that he will be in Town on Monday – so I hope you will get it in time, as I start it from Hay today. If the Rail is slower than Post, surely you ought to have it on Tuesday. – Just after my last letter to him came one to me from Ward¹ telling me that thro’ Dr Copeland² he is going to have a duplicate Browning micrometer from Lord Lindsay for about £4 – with 3 eyepieces, new, excepting requiring fresh cross-wires. Very possibly you may know the instrument & it may help in settling the price.

I have taken the liberty of enclosing a letter to Mr Esdaile in this, as he may probably get it sooner than at his house, if he leaves early for Town.

Horrid weather since you were here.

I forgot to tell M^r E. that the 3 eyepieces must be fitted each into its own place (the lowest into the micrometer itself – or the box will not shut down. I closed his letter without putting in the Key – so I send it by you – stuck down here out of stamping instrument’s way.

faint mark of key

Ever yours very affec^{tly}
Deffro! Mae Dydd!

2nd Thoughts – Envelope being weak, have taken key out, to pack in Box.

[Pdfs 371 & 372](#)

¹ See Letter 209

² See Letter 129

Letter 253

Six weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage, 4 March '78

My dearest Arthur

We were so very sorry to miss you - & to have seen so little of you – we had promised ourselves much pleasant talk ~~when~~ with you when we left this place – but things seemed against it all through – first my stupidly thinking I had written to you about our whereabouts when I had not - & then our own uncertainty in being put off from our dinner at M^r Wyatt's from one day to another - & then your bad cold which we so much regret – however we hope it is all gone off now - & also that your dear Mother is better, for she seemed to me very poorly when I saw her.

I was sorry to hear of your misconduct in sitting up so late – or rather so early. Do let a very old friend beg you to get out of that habit as soon as possible – you do not know what brain-mischief you may be laying the preparation for. It is most material, especially at your age – do without food or drink or fire on even as much exercise as you wish – but please don't abuse sleep in that way – I believe you would hurt yourself less by sitting up the whole night now & then than by a regular practice of being so late.

I wanted to have talked to you about several things - & especially about Birm^s Cat. – you wished to tell me something & I wished to hear it, & I w^d have shown you something Birm^m wrote to me. He thinks the ex-President is annoyed at him somehow, but he cannot conceive how – as he did all he could to keep clear of anything vexatious – but he finds that in his own metaphor the Cat. must have scratched him somehow – he cannot imagine in what way. The ex-P. Told him he had misunderstood & mis-represented Arrest & Vogel¹ – he (Mr B.) sent me d'A. (he had not Vogel at hand) for me to compare, & I am bound to say in all fairness that B's translation seems to me quite right in every respect. I regret all this very much - & especially that H. wrote to B. to say he had not time to go into details (of comparison) when really the Cat. contained both the German & the translation perfectly accessible. Of course this is strictly private.

So poor dear Secchi is gone!

Next Thursday DV we go to 7 Rodney Terrace, Cheltenham for a month.

Here is post.

Ever V. affect

T. W. Webb

My wife's best love

[Pdfs 373 & 374](#)

¹ Heinrich Louis d'Arrest 1822 –1875, German astronomer, born in Berlin.

Hermann Carl Vogel 1841 –1907 German astronomer. Born in Leipzig, Kingdom of Saxony. Vogel pioneered the use of the spectroscope in astronomy.

Letter 254

Five days later

7 Rodney Terrace, Cheltenham – 9 March '78

My dearest Arthur

Many thanks for your kind letter. You may be most especially at ease as to what you mention, as far as I am concerned – for I never heard anything of it or about it. You have not made any reference to my enquiry as to D^r H's offence at the Red Cats' Master – but perhaps it may be pri-vate & I never wish to pri. – Horrid! you will say. Can it be the air of Cheltenham?

Well at any rate it seems to agree well with my wife who sends her best love & would like myself be delighted if you could run down & take a little holiday with us here. I congratulate you with all my heart on seeing a little light through your horrid bore of a job. I am toiling in mine daily – but making greater progress than I could at Hardwick - & have 4 lectures to give here “to untrained minds” on Sun, Moon & Stars.

- The College is now a splendid building.[The Ladies' College]

Will you – at your leisure, be pleased to enquire at 24 Old Buildings – in your Lincoln's Inn – which was the quarter of Thurloe, Cromwell's Secretary, & find out whether there is not a very curious tradition connected with it - & if so please make as particular a memorandum of it as you can, for me. - This of course not till after all your bother is happily at an end.

I was in company this afternoon with an elderly Chancery Barrister named Craig, who was getting his £2000per ann. & might by this time ^have^ become Vice Chanc – but a terrible deafness intervened, & literally “put him out of Court”. He has distinguished himself by his writings & seemed a pleasant sociable man, tho' compelled to use a flexible tube to hear anything.

I have to go to Hereford this day week – till Monday – to preach in the Cathedral – like many others of the country Clergy by turns. Nothing of ecclesiastical controversy, you may be sure. In the interim I am to be upon the Dean's bread & salt. A pleasant man I believe he is. And I am to have £3. 3. 0 for the undertaking. I had no chance of telling you in London that as my printer & myself cannot be ready by May, publication is fixed D.V. for October.

We earnestly hope your dear Mother is better notwithstanding cold winds – please tell her so with our kindest regards.

My wife's best love

Your very affectionate friend

Deffro – mae Dydd

[Pdfs 375 & 376](#)

Letter 255

Two months later

Hardwick Vicarage, 13 May 1878

My dearest Arthur

I suppose this may find you at home after your success in the North – for which I am very cordially glad. Here I should have been ready to do what little I could – ~~but there~~ according to the instructions kindly sent me – but there was not one clear moment – & the whole afternoon was blotted with heavy clouds & rain – in fact I fear our nice observing weather is at an end! There were one or two very fine nights last month – & one especially such as I had not seen I don't know when – & on such a night & at no other time I see the fine quality of my mirror – splitting with abundant ease A & B of ζ Cancri at about $0''\text{.}8$ or $0''\text{.}85$ & dividing Bird's pair Ω 175 which cannot exceed $0''\text{.}6$ is probably closer. I hope M^r Esdaile has been able to go on right well. It has struck me that if he is still annoyed by that great plague of damp, he might get more valuable aid from M^r Common who must have had considerable experience by this time. I never heard of his being annoyed in this way.

We have at last, I am thankful to say, been able to make all our arrangements for going over the water & propose D.V. to leave this place on Monday 27 inst. – We may probably sleep at Gloucester that night, & reach town next day, & leave again on Wed^y. evening for our niece's at Chiselhurst. It will be a short stay, but during that time we hope to see as much as possible of you – for life – especially our life – is fast hastening away.

Have you any idea of going to the American eclipse?

M^r Jenner of British Museum, to whom I entrusted my dear Father's MSS to catalogue with a view to sale, tells me that things have been going so badly of late in consequence no doubt of the depression of trade & the possibility of war, that he counsels my waiting for another season.

Unless you should hear to the contrary I think we shall turn up at Mr Burr's Boarding House in Queen Square, where you found us once before. I think I must be in Brit. Mus. for several hours, for which it is very convenient.

Calver has very kindly sent me a present of a very beautiful Kellner¹, which supplies the place of the lowest of my eyepieces which work with the mirror. With had lent me one, but I think mine the best. I had made up an intermediate one for myself with paper tubes – not to be sneezed at, I assure you.

Thank GOD – I say it very deliberately – I am on the point of finishing the first sketch of my continuation of my dear Father's book. There will be various additions etc, but nothing is comparable, as to burden, with the conducting of the main stream & its designed end. It won't be popular – but never mind. I am old enough to stand a little kicking by this time: & not to fret myself even if I should not be thought worth the trouble of kicking.

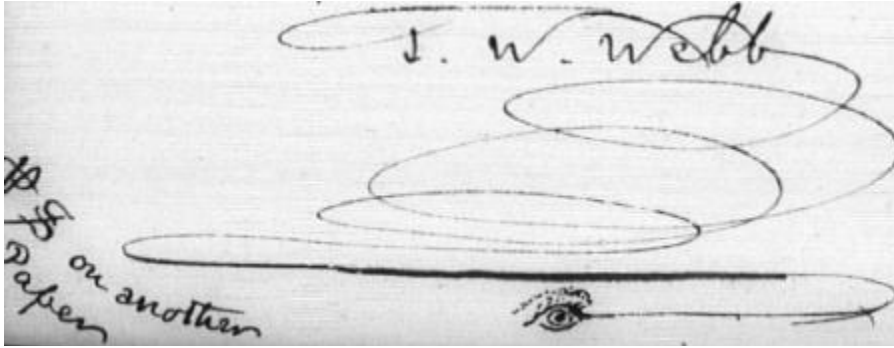
Did you happen to meet – in a dark night & on a winding stair – the queer tradition in your immediate neighbourhood about Thurloe's lodgings²? I want much to know something about it. That O.C.[Oliver Cromwell] was an inexplicable man.

My wife is just getting better of a horrid cold, attended with very severe, as well as unusual symptoms. I have not seen her suffer so acutely for a long time. She sends best love & will be truly glad to see you again.

Your very affectionate old friend

¹ Carl Kellner designed this first modern achromatic eyepiece in 1849

² See Letter 133



P.S.

A good many years ago when M^r Franks of Leicester asked me what useful work he c^d do with a 5 in. OG I suggested to him to examine the colour of all the stars visible to naked eye – as it never had been done - & was in fact an important element in our idea of any star, to say nothing of the detection of changes of colour. He has acted on my suggestion, & completed & sent to me this morning a Cat. of 3890 stars between N pole & 25°S.D. – comprising both Colour & Mag. I have barely opened it, but it looks well done - & from some knowledge of the man I should say is well done.

Now, can we utilise it in anyway? I have no doubt if I asked him he would communicate it to the RAS – or rather I sh^d say I think I long ago offered to do so, if he would undertake the task. But I think it is too good to be put away on a shelf & never looked at – per contra, I don't think, as far as I can see, that we should do ourselves or anyone else any harm by its publication in some form. Just let me know, some time during next 10 days, whether I shall bring it up for your inspection. I may be glad to use it for Cel. Obj. (after coming home, please GOD.)

Pdfs 377 & 378 380, 379 [Somewhat misfiled]

Letter 256

Five days later

H.V 18 May 78.

My dearest Arthur,

I cannot tell you how much obliged I am. –Were I better acquainted with the business I c^d give a more decided answer. – but my Clergy Directory giving the value a little under £300 makes it very questionable – with nearly 4 times the population too. – However sh^d it not be necessary to decide it before we see you we can talk it over then.

I am much pressed for time as you may guess – Your loving & grateful

T.W.Webb

Pdf 381

Letter 257**Month later**

This letter is very torn around the edges. Hence the number of queries

Lucernerhof, Lucerne 17 June 1878

My dearest Arthur

In all the hubble-bubble of our recent life I cannot feel sure whether I promised to write to you or no – but at any rate I will take the safer side – for I am certain you will not be unwilling to hear we slept that Wed^y night at Chiselhurst, Thursday at Dover - & next morning had we happened to look carefully down channel as soon as we embarked we should probably have had a distant view of that fearful accident to the German ship¹ – for the news came by telegraph before we were off - & then – though it was rather treated as a hoax, we could plainly see the two remaining vessels in the distance. We were not however sure of the fact till on Sunday morning it was referred to at Spa in an admirable sermon by the Suffragan Bishop of Guildford? [page torn] with whom we had travelled without knowing him. We had a quiet passage in the D[page torn] Calais – the new twin-boat² which considering she had broken an engine moved very well – but slow & I sh^d doubt whether she will ever equal a single vessel. I fancy there must be increased friction in the narrow channel between the two & possibly a bad distribution of weight. We could get no through tickets at Dover for Ghent except by Ostend, & so had to change our course for Brussels[sic]. – Next day to Spa, where we remained 10 days for the waters, which I believe have done my wife much good, in a queer way of their own, producing very uncertain & sometimes trying results at the time, but with a good subsequent effect - & then we came via Cologne (where we did not stop) to Coblenz (where we did) and so by Heidelberg & Freiberg in Breisgau, to this place on Saturday. We have had a good deal of rubbishing kind of weather but our English letters tell us it has been still worse in our quarters - wet with wind? [page badly torn]

Christian Bohren³ here this evening with whom we shall take counsel as to future proceedings.[sic] No good crossing a pass in such weather as Saturday or yesterday. This morning looks much more settled. Fresh snow fell on Pilatus⁴ Saturday night. We have thought often of you, & how we walked about together & you rowed me out on the Lake. I think you came of age during that very pleasant tour. Mad. Kaufmann's Pension where you joined us is now the "dependence" of that great nasty Hôtel National – which has quite spoilt the charming view from the Cloisters round the Cathedral - & there are various vulgarities & cockneyisms perpetrated here – a Skating Rink &c. – but still it is beautiful Lucerne after all. This house, where, owing to Bohren we are on easy terms, was only opened on Saturday – but the city is rapidly filling, 42 came into the Swan (once I think your quarters) yesterday - & our Church was well filled.- I believe you did not wish further? [blot] reference to the matters recently under discussion – so I say nothing about it – but should you ever feel otherwise, I mean as to talking it over, I c^d tell you various things. I hope you (i.e. RAS) will have no difficulty in filling it up in your minds. Astronomical news of course I have seen none, & don't expect any (I had by the way a letter forwarded to me from what's' his name that lives you ought to know where, being I think you said some distant connection of one of your connections – confirming very pleasantly my

¹ The collision off Folkestone between 2 German ironclads of the German Navy.

² This was probably the London, Chatham & Dover's Castalia which had 2 half-ship hulls with a four feet gap between them bridged by a strong platform In the gap were two paddle wheels one behind the other and four engine rooms. Reckoned to be more stable it lost in speed and could barely make 10 knots The Smell of the Continent Mullen and Munsen Macmillan 2009

³ Their Swiss guide

⁴ Pilatus Mountain near Lucerne

impression that that piece of antiquity the retina of my right eye, is not yet past work. If you happen to see Sadler or [? page torn] pray remember me most kindly to them. And make my most dutiful and reverential respects to the whole Society, in the hope that they will manage to live in peace – and then they will send you out officially – with a silver pen & 7 stars stuck in your Cap, to represent them [?] at the Eclipse (there is some seriousness behind this [?bottom line crumpled] be in some way accredited as such. And no man is more fitted than my dear old friend to be our representative. -I brought out the plaguey old Index of “the book” (not Cel. Obj.) to find me work on rainy days, & I get through a good stroke of it at Spa, notwithstanding having to take long walks with an intelligent young lady from Shropshire – a Miss Hope-Edwards, who seems to have taken a great fancy for my wife – and – how small the world is, - there, in our hotel was the very man, previously unknown to us, who had done a most kind turn for my brother-in-law at Troy, by helping to get one of his sons into an excellent appointment in China – and on the rail coming to this place we travelled with connections of a M^r Dunmill [?]who was unhappily drowned in crossing a plank here some years ago and whose grave Miss Fanny Dew who travelled with us in '72 was charged by the widow with a mission to find out & see after

– We are getting quite used to such surprises now.

When you have a little leisure –{? &c [what looks like thee shorthand signs]) will you please find room in your brain for a lump of my stupidity to resolve (if it can find an axis of rotation). Before leaving England I saw a report of a lecture of someone’s – I think Huggins – concerning the immense pressure towards the centre of the Earth & its consequences. Think I to myself – how’s that? I must ask my worthy friend ACR who has a marvellous power of dissipating my intellectual fogs (if they are dissipable at all). But when I saw my friend we had “other fish to fry” – and the centre of the earth continued to perform its old office of keeping my feet under my head. But now how’s this? It seems to me that if I, T.W.W. had got to the centre of the earth I should be equally attracted to the mass around me in every possible direction – consequently I should weigh 0 & exert no pressure. Ergo – there must be some portion of the globe, the relative position of which[?page torn] may of course be analytically [page torn] where weight [?] neither be on the surface – as of course gravity increases beneath it – not yet at the centre, where gravity must compensate itself – but there must be a shell somewhere of greatest weight & pressure – and I somehow fancy – but only from analogical notions – that it might not so vehemently exceed that on the surface as to melt us all up – or set everything à la Vesuvius. But that is another affair - & certainly none of mine. -Has anybody made anything out of Klein’s new crater?¹ I would certainly have had a shot at it if at home – and if the weather were such that anybody could get a shot at anything. - However it seems to have cleared up today here – we have had a nice steam to Kussnacht² & back - & since heard the Great Organ – which is very great - & eaten our dinners - & are preparing for an excursion to Goldau tomorrow - & on Wednesday for a start for Coire, Dissentis &c on our own to those sweet Italian Lakes - where I wish I had as much of the language as you. Our dear old guide Bohren came to us this evening – such a charming old man – quite a friend – to take us over into Bella Italia. - We hope to be in Town D.V. sometime between July 10 & 17, but I fear we shall miss you there - & that is always a great miss – the place does not seem so right when you are not there.

I think & hope we shall do some painting – tho’ not much as yet. - Our old friend Mad. Kaufmann has now got a very small pension up at the top of the hill above the town – we are not likely to help to fill it. - I won’t ask you to write – partly because I know how full your hands must be, especially before helping to disturb the fish in the Atlantic - & partly because I can’t tell for certain where you could direct to us – though I think anything posted [?] to us in the next 10 days at Hotel des Iles Borromé, Pisa [?] Lago Maggiore, Italy, would be likely to reach us – but don’t trouble yourself, much as we love to hear. My wife’s very kind love, always dearest Arthur, your affectionate friend. Pdfs 382 & 383

¹ A lunar impact crater near Hyginus discovered by Dr Klein.

² Town at the N.end of Lake Lucerne

Letter 258

Three months later

To Mrs Ranyard

23 September 1878

Vicarage, [printed]
Hardwick

My dear Mrs Ranyard

In the uncertainty whether dear Arthur may have as yet rejoined you, I have taken the liberty of enclosing a letter for him to your care. If he should have returned – or may be coming back in a few days' time – he will I have no doubt reply to it himself – if it should be yet some time before you are expecting the joy of his return, will you kindly send me one line on a post-card to say so – as the business (which is not my own) cannot very well wait beyond a few days. - His name has come before me occasionally in papers which I have seen from America and I infer that he has been very successful in his object – only most earnestly hoping that his views – whatever they may be – may not have received confirmation among his new associates. But I have no idea whether what is called “advanced thought” has got as much hold of men of science in America as it unhappily has here¹. I have more than once told him that science will not do to die upon – And I am sure the dreadful visitations of the last few months – such as I never remember before – ought to produce some effect on the mind of the nation.

I hope none of the “Bible party” lost with the steamer were your own.

My wife – who was greatly benefited by our little journey, is now very rheumatic from the damp. She hopes with me that you may have escaped everything of this kind & that Mr Ranyard is quite well. With our united kind love & regards & very good wish believe me

Yours very sincerely

T W Webb

[Pdfs 384 & 385](#)

¹ Webb never referred directly to the controversy about evolution etc. but this is probably what he is getting at. His letters to Ranyard about books the latter was reading probably also dealt with this subject.

Letter 259

H. V. 23 Sept 1878

My dearest Arthur

I have been long waiting in the hope of hearing something from you or of you or about you – and often have we been thinking of you & of your many adventures. But whether you may have yet reached Old England or not, I have no idea. Or if so, what may be your present “whereabouts” – so I have adopted the plan of enclosing this to your dear Mother - & hope it may find you returned – and not too much hurried to attend to its contents – namely –
[The above paragraph is crossed out]

I this morning rec^d a letter (first for a long time) from dear old Berthon – complaining - & as it seems to me very justly – of the wrong done to him at the Paris Exhibition, where Horne & Thornthwaite shewed a very fine Reflector of his construction, which was greatly admired and they have carried off the medal. - It was made after Berthon’s drawings & done by his own man handed over to them – but they never even put his name on it with their own – which was very conspicuous and have “burked” the fact that the invention was his – tho’ this was one of the first grounds for a prize, & he had been assured on all hands that he w^d have one for the invention. This was certainly disgraceful enough – but not out of keeping with what one hears of those people. But there is more than this in it. To justify themselves, while they admit that it was their opinion that the invention was his, - they say that L^d Lindsay said to them as nearly as they can recollect – “I do not think M^f B. c^d hold his patent for a moment as I have a Stand on precisely their plan made many years ago” – and they suppose that Lord L. thus influenced his colleagues of the Jury.

Now M^f B. naturally wishes to know whether, if this be so, it may not be that Lord L. has got hold of one of the 25 M^f B. has made for various people during the last 13 or 14 years. If so he feels that if Lord L. has unintentionally misled the Jury – he ought to make some reparation.-

So he – naturally enough – supposing me to be a friend of Lord L, has asked me to write to him about it. But I feel I must decline – because I really know so very little of Lord L. whom I never saw but once, I think – or possibly twice, and then in your company & have never corresponded with him – so that it would seem hardly suitable in me. But sh^d you be returned - & should you feel no objection, you, who know Lord L so well c^d probably make out without apparent interference whether such a thing was ever said at all (for my part I have not as much confidence in H&T as would buy a Vulcan). & whether, supposing he did say so, the turntable stand he spoke of was his own invention – or whether he might have picked up one which happened to be made by Berthon or copied from him.

Whatever Lord L. may or may not have said , it is clear that poor B. has been shamefully done out of the credit due to him - & you are I am sure the man to wish to see him righted. The medal is gone – but his credit need not go too.

No time for more now. Our united best love & every good wish –
Your very affect. (“fig bear” – can you make out that? *

Deffro! Mae Dydd

* It is no humbug – a fair puzzle)

Letter 260

Nearly four months later

Hardwick Vic. 8 Jan 1879

My dearest Arthur

Hope you have had my card of sincere thanks.

One exploded line to say –

Franks of Leicester wants to be nominated next Friday. Few more likely to do well for RAS. Has got personal knowledge man in Leicester ^ (Brewin)^, Wants me to second, & get him a third. I would gladly but he's a day too late. So I have written to him to write to Westley & get a nominⁿ paper full speed – & send it back full speed to Burlington House – addressed to yourself – care of Westley – who, if you are going to the meeting, & the letter reaches London in time, will deliver it to you on your arrival. Should you get it according to this scheme, will you oblige me by seconding the nomination, & asking some other Fellow kindly to third it, & then it will be just in time. Please come at end of month to meet Lord Aberdare's Nephew who has a great craze for * * *. [presumably stars] Your loving Deffro, mae Dydd !

Pdf 388

Letter 261

Over nine weeks later

3 Rodney Terrace, Cheltenham

19 March 79

My dearest Arthur,

We were so glad to hear from such a dear old friend – even on so sad a subject¹ – and we join in the earnest hope that your heavy bereavement may be in some degree alleviated – and that we may have the great pleasure of seeing you somewhere before long. You know you can never be a stranger with us, anywhere. We are not, I hope, among the forgotten of old days.

Now just see how this leads me on to a piece of unmitigated selfishness. I am lecturing here in Optics – and though I protested beforehand against undertaking matters of formulae &c. find myself (owing to hurry & some want of explicitness, perhaps – but I don't know that I am right there – on the part of those who corresponded with me about it) find myself – to pick up after the parenthesis – in a fix. I have lost my way in a wood of Algebra. Has my dear old friend the time – as I know he has the will – to give me a little light? If so I shall be so much obliged. And I don't think it will give you much trouble – it is so exceedingly simple a matter. When I was young I went far enough, I think, to solve a quadratic – now I am afraid of a simple equation. In fact, not having attended to such matters for 20 or 30 years! I have nearly forgot all about them. And my only doubt is this – I can very easily print out my puzzle – but I am not sure that I shall understand the explanation. If you are so very kind as to take this trouble for me, you will have to treat me as an excessively stupid boy, that wants every step made clear.

What bothers me is the excessively simple optical formula:

$$1/v + 1/u = 1/f$$

How does this differ in its result from $v + u = f$?

Given f , and v , or u , how am I to find (numerically) the unknown u or v ?

Simple, excessively, as I know it is, I cannot make it out.

In a case I have set for myself I have $u = 4.5$, $f = 3$

Then to find v I have:

$$1/v = 1/3 - 1/4.5 \text{ and there I stick}$$

I have got value for what I think you call Reciprocal of v ; and ----

Won't it to do to turn all upside down

& say: $v/1 = 3/1 - 4.5/1$ and that is $v = 3 - 4.5 = -1.5$

But I see from common sense & a diagram that is wrong. But why? Of course my process is wrong. But where?

There's an Algebraist for you (a FRAS!)

Nor can I conceive (tho' it is less material to my purpose, & if you are pressed for time pray don't give it a thought) how:

$$\frac{r-u}{2} = \frac{u-v}{u} \text{ is worked up } ^ \text{ (or down!) } ^ \text{ into}$$

$$\text{my enemy } \frac{1}{v} + \frac{1}{u} = \frac{2}{v} \text{ (or } \frac{1}{f} \text{ as above.)}$$

¹ Ranyard's mother, Ellen, died 11 February 1879 and his father, Benjamin, died 10 March 1879. Presumably (and hopefully) the Webbs had expressed proper condolences before this letter

I am not in the least puzzled about the common principles of optics (course of incident & reflected light, index of refraction, critical angle &c.) but I don't comprehend the formula, & therefore of course break down in the application.

Now do forgive such a bother & I fear such an unreasonable one – and say, what is quite true that your old friend was such a donkey – but it is just as well to find a man out. My wife's kind love & was thinking of writing to say how welcome you would be anywhere.

Your affectionate old friend

T. W. Webb

Pdfs 389 & 390

Letter 262

Five days later

3 Rodney Terrace, Cheltenham

24 March 79

My dearest Arthur

How exceedingly kind of you to take all that trouble to make it all perfectly clear – in which you have quite succeeded, tho' I still find the evil of word of familiarity with the act of working out - & it may be long before I shall come across the matter again.

We rejoice to know that you feel less the need of rest – but are sorry for its result – very sorry – in removing to a greater distance our prospect of a happy visit. Must it really be so? If it must, remember you must pay us with compound interest before long.

I got last night a letter from poor Franks who – unless there is something behind unknown to me – seems to have been very shamefully used at B.[urlington] House. It must have been either mistake or malice. The latter I know no reason for – the former I could understand, having noticed how carelessly balloting may be done, & probably often is, in the midst of exciting talk. If a single ball, or even two, would exclude, it may have happened in this way.

There must be either mistake, spite, or something wrong about the man which I have no idea about.

He wrote to me a few days ago, enclosing your most kind, appropriate & soothing letter, which I returned to him with strong advice to leave the matter entirely to your guidance, & encouragement to persevere.

He answers me sorely enough, & I may say I don't wonder – and this letter I should like you to see, & write today for leave to forward it to you – for I have a great dislike of the too-common practice of sending letters about for inspection without permission. I believe in law they are the receiver's property but still it might not be everything that you, for instance, might write to me, that you might wish me to show elsewhere.

Isn't it a quarrelsome world? and such animosity about such trifles – and my duty is to give it no encouragement.

It is an amazing business about the Bedf^d Cat. - I had no time to read up the M.N. for about 4 nos. & so do not know the rights of the question. You can tell me all about it – and when at leisure I sh^d dearly like to hear – but I rather wish Sadler had shewn a different spirit in the E. Mechanic. I cannot think how it is that I never hear from him now, nor has he ever sent my wife the hamper of plants he promised her, though she has written to remind him.

My wife's kind love – she hopes with me that you will always look upon Hardwick as a second home, and come whenever you please – only write to let us know, lest we might be going from home.

With best thanks

Your affectionate & obliged old friend

T. W. Webb

You know I dare say how nicely De La Rue has behaved about With's reflector at Oxford

Letter 263**A day later**

3 Rodney Terrace, Cheltenham 25 March 79

My dearest Arthur

On my return yesterday from Hardwick where I went for my duty I found a card from Franks allowing me to forward his letter. I am sure you will be sorry for him (tho' all he says about binding is mere mistake as I have told him – books being frequently inaccessible for that reason, as I have found to my annoyance in former days). - I am sure I have seen people balloting carelessly, & can easily conceive blunders made by blundering people. I certainly seem to recollect a funny story of some very great gun being accidentally black-balled at some election for ~~something~~ some Society – causing great astonishment & an ignoring of the vote as an obvious mistake!

I shall be very pleased if it can be shewn that there was probability enough of accidents to encourage Franks to stand again. If anything of the kind could be made out w^d it be amiss, if a notice were stuck up that Fellows are requested to be very careful in balloting, as unintentional mistakes are supposed to have been made?

Will you kindly tell me, at your leisure, what is thought “in the best-informed circles” as to the dependableness of Flammarion’s Catalogue¹ of doubles? It would be especially useful for my new Edition, if to be trusted – but I have heard serious doubts expressed. The man, I happen to know, is a “queer fish” personally, & full of spirits & mediums & very great comicalities. Query, is his work honest & reliable? I would give sixpence to know. - I have the Cat but have not had leisure to look much at it, nor have I other Cats to test it by.

Tho' I think I c^d soon get up what little I know of Algebra, I must confess a preference for the old Geometry – probably because I went carefully (under my dear Father) through Euclid first. - It seems to me that I do not understand the meaning of many Algebr: processes, tho' I have no doubt as to their correctness - & the consequence is an unpleasant impression of a half (or quarter) conception of the subject. With Geometry I do see the meaning of each step, ergo, I take nothing on trust. All this must be exceedingly stupid to you. - My wife’s kind love. We are here until about Friday week.

Your affect. Old Friend

T. W. Webb

Pdfs 393 & 394

¹ Nicolas Camille Flammarion 1842-1925, French astronomer and author. He was a prolific author of more than fifty titles, including popular science works about astronomy.

Letter 264

Nearly two weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay 5 April /79

My dearest Arthur

There is at Gloucester at the present time a 10ft Newtonian Reflector of Sir W. Herschel's (9-inch aperture ~~I think~~) that was made for the then King of Prussia, and should have cost £400 – but something or other – war I believe – impeded the arrangement, and it was purchased by an old Major who lived near Glo'ster. It passed through other hands afterwards, and is now for sale. I do not know what would be expected for it, but I think not much – and I am impressed with the idea, though not confident, that it was (not repolished on a tool – but) brightened up a little once, with a leather & some rouge. It has the original awkward Herschel altazimuth mounting – and is altogether not an instrument I should care for – but enquiries are being made after a purchase, and it has been supposed that RAS might like to have it – in fact had it never been tampered with, it would have been a not ineligious memorial of the great astronomer ~~had the figure been perfectly intact~~ – but (excuse my writing in such a way – people talking in the room) especially since Miss Herschel's Telescope has been so miserably ill-treated.¹ But I thought at any rate I would carry out the wish of the man in charge of it, & mention it to you. Possibly, if not recommendable to our Society, it might yet be thought worth the notice of some Philo-Herschelian among your friends. - Would there be any chance of the Kensington people² buying it? It would no doubt do exceedingly well for practice with young observers. Or would any of the Herschels care to know about it?

I dare say you have kindly borne me in mind as to the dependableness of M. Flammarion's Catalogue, & I shall hear when quite convenient.

We came back last night from the Cheltenham sojourn (here's the post & I can only add my wife's kind love & our united earnest wish to see you.

Your affectionate old friend

X + Y - Z

Pdfs 395/396

¹ Webb is most likely referring to the 1876 Report on the Instruments belonging to the Society made to the RAS Council by R. J. Lecky. MNRAS xxxvi.4. In this it was reported that many of the instruments which had been housed in Someset House, the earlier home of the Society, had been in damp basement rooms and some had become very dilapidated. Amongst other he cited the "Herschelian" or Newtonian 7-foot telescope, saying that the mirrors were much tarnished and disfigured. This was most probably Caroline Herschel's 7ft focal length made for her by her brother. It was presented to the RAS in 1840 by Sir John Herschel and was most likely a copy of the instrument with which Uranus was discovered by William Herschel. Cf Calvert: Quarterly Journal RAS 1970. The telescope is now in the Science museum.

² Presumably the South Kensington Museum, later to be split up into the various subject areas.

Letter 265

Five days later

From H.M. Webb

Hardwick Vicarage

Hay R.S.O.

April 10 1879

My dear Arthur

I have put away as a remembrance the interesting card you sent my husband, & I cannot help writing a few lines to you because you are very dear to us both & I feel for& with you so much in your sorrow though I have not liked to intrude my own feelings¹.

Your dear Mother was always so kind to us & I felt it a privilege to think of her as a friend, but when I think of her sweet gentle life of love, no words express what passes in my mind better than the following

“Not dead, not absent, not even gone,
But present still
and waiting for the coming hour
of God’s sweet will.

Lord of the living and the dead
our Saviour dear
We lay in silence at Thy feet
This sad, sad year.”

We hope you will never forget how very welcome you will ever be dear Arthur in our little home at any time, so please let us know when you want rest there will always be a room here for you, & loving hearts to welcome you.

My husband had such a nice letter from your dear Father a little before your return from America. He seemed so delighted with all you had done.

With our united best love
believe me ever
yours sincerely attached
old friend.

H. M. Webb

P.S. When you next see M^r Sadler will you give him our kind regards. We should much like to hear from him, & tell him my husband will soon be making use of his kind help in the 4th edition of “Celestial Objects”.

Pdfs 397 & 398

¹ Presumably a card celebrating Ellen Ranyard’s life (See Ranyard family). Strange that she does not mention Mr. Ranyard’s death. See Letter 261

Letter 266

About a week later

Hardwick Vicarage, Easter Tuesday 1879

My dearest Arthur

It has become, as I have no doubt you know, a practice, since my young days, to send Easter as well as Xmas congratulations. - Pray accept ours – with every good wish. The present reason at any rate would justify the combination of the two in one.

We earnestly trust your little rest may have done you great good. But surely you want more & when you can find the opportunity, you know how earnestly we wish you to take it here and you know – or should know – how much pleasure your company gives us - & therefore you ought to esteem it a charitable deed to bestow that kindness on your old friends here.-

Many thanks for the Card which you may be sure called up many a recollection of the most interesting kind.

I have repeatedly intended to mention – but have always forgotten it – that I have taken the liberty of telling the British Ass. Report people that they might send my copy to your care – and I have to thank you very especially & gratefully for a copy of the Poulkovo Observations¹ – as to which I acted on your kind advice - & wish to OΣ [Otto Struve]– which I should never have presumed to have done, otherwise, and consequently was admitted into favour in that high quarter.

I have made some enquiries myself as to Flammarion's credibility, but have as yet no reply worth having. However there is time enough.

Please do not give yourself any kind of trouble about the enquiry I am going to make – That is, if you don't happen to have the reply perfectly and conveniently at hand, please think nothing about it – but – if you happen to know of a similar case – may I beg the favour of a reply? It is this –

Our parish has recently been rated afresh (after 14 years acquiescence) and there is some reason to think, unfairly. We have I know some kind of remedy in appealing to Petty or Quarter Sessions – but it would be much more satisfactory to many (myself among them) to employ a professional valuer for the whole parish, Provided that his valuation were sure of being accepted as authoritative by the Sessions – or who ever it may be, to whom appeal is made. In the present instance the higher valuation has been made, it is said, at the instance of persons not parishioners, & not entitled in any way to interfere (farmers or yeomen in other parishes) and we cannot but notice that no one of the Tenants of our non-resident Proprietor has been raised – while others have been re-rated in an arbitrary manner. Individual appeal may have the effect of relieving some of the aggrieved parties, but my object, and that of others, is to obtain an equitable valuation of the whole parish, and to raise some of those who we think have been unfairly favoured, to the same standard with ourselves.

My wife's best love, Your very affect. old friend

T. W Webb

Surely there ought to be some person responsible for the fairness of such public burdens. As matters stand here, they are imposed arbitrarily – and one does not know by whom.

Pdfs 399 & 400

¹ The Poulkova Observatory, near St Petersburg was founded in 1839. O. Struve published the Observations, 14 vols. 1869-88 – Catalogue of double stars.

Letter 267

Around a week later

Hardwick Vicarage, 23 Apr. 1879

My dearest Arthur

We are so very, very much obliged to you for the charming portrait of whom we loved so well – and also for such valuable advice which I ought not to have asked had I known how pressed you are. Do please manage to get sufficient exercise. We cannot bear to think of you imprisoning yourself thus.

What a pity that H. S¹. Should have so committed himself! And I am not sure the affair is yet ended – a friend of mine is so indignant he has meditated further proceedings. The obligation under which I am to H. S. may stop my mouth, but they cannot falter my judgement. I fear for his future.

Our united best love
Ever yr. affect friend
T. W. Webb

Pdfs 401 & 402

¹ Herbert Sadler

Letter 268

Week later

Hardwick Vic. 2 May 79

My dearest Arthur,

I am so much obliged by your taking the trouble to write to me when you ought to have been getting a little relaxation. I earnestly hope you are not overdoing it – and have I assure you had my scruples about writing to you now even to give you the trouble of reading my scribble. However – there shall be nothing to answer – so please lay this aside till you feel quite inclined.

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First of all about Franks. He is willing to be re-nominated, hoping for you & me for 2nd & 3rd. But he is not quite pleased about the absence of any notice of the gift of his Catalogue to the Library among the donations of the past year. Of this I can of course offer no explanation & can only imagine that worthy Cayley¹ is so deep in C+a xy &c, &c. &c, that he overlooked it, and he dislikes this so much, that till explained, he L-e+y does not wish to stand again – Which I earnestly hope he will do, not only because I think he is very fit for a Fellow (much more so than some recently elected) but because it is right that the decision should be reversed as the result of either a mistake or malice (as far as I know). He could get Prof. Harley's name (who is he?) added to his proposal.

As to H. S. How kind, how peace-making, how like yourself, is the tone of your note to me! - Who could but respect & love the motive? I must the more say this, because I am not so much convinced about it as you could wish. I don't know whether I am right in fancying that ^you suppose^ I have been in communication with Knott on the subject. Not a word has passed (nor indeed could, for not a letter has been written on either side containing the slightest reference to H. S.) tho' now I think of it, he did, in a letter a good while before, express regret at the modern disposition to call received results into question – but that was all - & I have not replied to it. It was not from him or in connection with him in any way that I heard of the possibility of things not remaining as they are. – But perhaps I may have expressed myself to you in some way that might give a wrong impression. I do not for a moment question the right to criticise anything justly open to it – but I not only question but deny the right of a junior in every way, to criticise in such a tone. We may point out mistakes, and with authority through position, or age, or experience – but, if not, surely the critics' tone should be that of respect & deference. It was well for the assailant that the still more offensive letter in the E. Mechanic was not produced at the meeting.

All this of course on the face of the thing. I do not know all, as you truly observe - & yet I possibly know some things that would not have come under your notice, & that bear on the matter indirectly. I have not the slightest notion who may have been influencing Knott – though a similar rumour has reached me about H. S. which I am not inclined to take in. I must give myself the pleasure of copying a bit ^only^ of a letter rec^d 2 days ago from a most gentlemanly and kind as well as honourable man – whom I believe you know nothing of –

“I am very sorry about it, not so much about its being done, as the manner of doing it, as I have very reluctantly been compelled to abandon the illusion of the Cycle being an accurate book, but it seems to me that M^t. S. so completely ignores the undoubtedly substantial work done, & also the unique character of the book which renders it one of the most fascinating works on the subject, in this, or as I firmly believe, in any other language. I am glad Piazzi S. uses the term unique in reference to his Father's work, it is most suitable to the character of the work, it is an unique book. I believe S. has been urged by (XYZ) to undertake the attack on the Cycle, & if (XYZ) thought it necessary to be done I for one think he (XYZ) should have done it himself. If

¹ See Letter 217

(XYZ) had framed a calm quiet paper without any hostile, offensive epithets, a mere statement of facts, it would have carried great weight with it. It seems to me that for all the curious & deeply interesting out-of-the-way information which is so plentifully dispersed over its most attractive pages neither S. or (XYZ) show much appreciation.”¹

So far my friend –

One thing that I have great difficulty in getting over is the marvellous assertion of hesitation as to the giving of the Medal. That, I venture to think, ought to be probed further still. But you know my motive for keeping silence – tho’ I can hardly tell you how surprised I have been at more than one thing.

Here comes post –

My wife’s kindest love

In great haste,

Ever yr. truly affect. friend

T. W. Webb

Pdfs 403 to 406

¹ See biographical notes on Sadler

Letter 269

Five weeks later

Miss Newton's, Bredwardine¹, 6 June 79

My dearest Arthur,

I came here yesterday – leaving behind me your letter, but bringing with me a strong impression of its niceness & pleasantness, & feeling quite able to reply without having it before me.

You have been so much busied & bothered that I am not in the least surprised at your happening not to have noticed what I have once or twice mentioned about Franks. It is a fact – which I at any rate am simply puzzled by – that his MS. Catalogue was not inserted in the acknowledgement of presents at the years' end – & this has mortified & annoyed him a good deal, and contributed, with his black-balling, to keep him from coming forward again for fellowship. – It never occurred to me till this morning that possibly MS. presents have never been acknowledged in the annual list, only printed matter. If this has been the case, should it not be explained to him? – I will not answer for his not being a little over-sensitive, though I must own that in his place I should have been a good deal annoyed myself – but I am pretty sure that a good many men without a quarter of his claim to attention, have found their way into the Society. It is quite out of the question now – but one can hardly help wishing that something more than money were required of candidates – some past work actually being done, or the fair certainty of it being undertaken in future.

I do so much wish the Council would refit poor Caroline Herschel's Newtonian² so as to make it of use. I have asked With if he would undertake it, supposing the offer were made him – but he declined, & has now dismantled all his apparatus, having as large a stock of all sizes as he can ever possibly want. – But Calver could do it very well - & Horne & Thornthwaite are greatly improved as to work – I wish they may be as much so as to honourable character – but I have always seen reason to keep clear of them.

My wife sends kind love, & looking forward with great pleasure to seeing you before long, I am always dearest Arthur,

Your very affectionate



My wife tells me to add she thinks you will be interested to hear that the M^r Challis who has got Stone is a cousin by marriage of our oldest & dearest friend Miss Dew of Whitney Court. His wife is dreadfully disappointed in the income & the condition of the Glebe House in which they cannot live.

Excuse this raggy paper.

Pdfs 407,408

¹ House in Bredwardine[c.5 Miles From Hardwick,] called The Cottage. Julia and Catherine Newton, unmarried sisters, lived there

² See Letter 264

Letter 270

Three weeks later

2 Queen's Villas, West Chiselhurst¹, 30 June 79

My dearest Arthur,

We came to Town on Thursday - & on here on Saturday - & during the one clear day I was so busy I had no chance of finding you out (or rather finding you in). We stay here till Thursday & then return for a few days (I don't know how many - but over Sunday anyhow) to London - but where you might find us is unknown to me - funny enough, you will say, for the old birds - but the fact is we thought when we came away on Sat^y that we were sure to get at Burr's (11 Queen Square) on Thursday - but he writes since to say he can't take us in, but will try to get us quarters. - So I absolutely can't tell you where to find us - & I had better come & find you as soon as I can manage it (having to dovetail it in with a lot of engagements). I could not think of leaving Town without seeing my - or rather our - dear old friend.

I want to talk to you about a lot of things, - & to beg just the very great favour of 10 minutes - if you will be so very kind - of advice for a poor person of mine, about a Will. I know it is too bad after all your former kindnesses - but you know I am incorrigible in some things.

I will just mention 2 things now that I want to make enquiry about - simply because with your wide-spread acquaintance you might happen to come across someone in the meantime who could tell something about them - if you cannot tell me yourself, as very possibly you can.

I want (for a friend) to know something about the close approximation in former times of Guernsey (or Jersey, I forget which) to the French coast. There was something about it in Nature years ago - but mine are in too great disorder to find it. If I do no better I will go to Macmillan's where I dare say Kellie or Grove could help me.

The other thing is an alleged rekindling of an ancient volcano in Hungary - as far as smoke goes. It was briefly touched in Daily News - & a little more clearly in a local paper. I never heard of any volcanic action in Hungary at all, & having always been very much interested in such matters - & envying Walwyn Trumper who has just been on Vesuvius in eruption.

I wrote thus far last night - the early post today brings in the uncomfortable news that Burr cannot take us in & several places about there are full. I hurry this off, at once, just to ask if you happen to know of any hotel, clean & comfortable & not expensive, where we c^d get in just for a few nights? We had rather it were somewhere in the Bloomsbury direction - but "beggars must not be choosers".

In greatest haste for this part

Y. affect friend

T. W. Webb

Pdfs 409/410

¹ Home of their nieces

Letter 271

Nearly four weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay R.S.O 25 July 79

My dearest Arthur,

You will hardly have guessed how near you I was on Monday – from some idea that things wanted more looking after I got up at 1.30 that morning – started at 2.15 - & was driven to Hereford in time to catch 1st train & attend sale – which had been ill-arranged –was ill-managed by myself - & went off ill –so that I sold only between £17 & £18 worth & bought in the rest & brought home on Tuesday – It was best however to shew myself & I have learnt experience which may possibly be useful another day¹.

One things pleased me – at Burl.Ho. I found Sadler, extremely friendly & apologetic, & apparently unconscious of the least intention to annoy - & I hope I am not one of those who accept an affront that is never meant to be offered, so all went as straight as need be.

I could not get near my poor parishioner's humbugging Sol^r - but have written to the individual who is said to have chancerified the case & hope I shall get some reply without a Zulu "click" in it.

Now – am I not the greatest bore alive? – Here's a thing turned upon the top of a big hill this morning to torment you with. – Will you as an especial favour to myself, & as an act of charity, which I am sure you love, give your kind opinion, as to the enclosed will.

James Watkins has several sons & 2 daughters. Children all – dead but one ^son^ Thomas Watkins – and 2 daughters – one married – Smith, his wife dies leaving a daughter Frances Smith – he (Smith) has not been heard of for more than 20 years – The other daughter, Mary, continues unmarried.

James Watkins leaves everything as you see, to Thomas and Mary Watkins, his surviving children – nothing to his grandchild Frances Smith, because said T. & M. Watkins, her uncle and aunt brought her up as their own. –

Thomas Watkins recently died intestate – no one remains of the family but his unmarried sister Mary and his niece Frances Smith – whose father no one has heard of for a very long time.

Is there any reason why Mary Watkins the within named should administer to the enclosed Will? She would gladly avoid expense if possible

My wife's kind love with mine,

Your affectionate

1660

[Pdfs 411/412](#)

¹ What books was Webb selling?

Letter 272

Three weeks later

H.V 14 Aug 79

My dearest Arthur,

How sorry I am to be such a bore to you – and to give such repeated proofs of intense stupidity



'Tis a sad misfortune to have such a friend!! –
But – first of all - & then second - & then third –
Please observe there is nothing in what follows that requires immediate attention – or any attention at all, till you are perfectly at leisure and from long abstinence in being bored, have acquired some appetite for another cut at the Donkey's Ham – (vide Murray, voce Lanslebourg).

Well – let the preamble pass without a division and now for the fact.

Your most kind exposition & advice re the Will of Thomas Watkins were skimmed over at a first reading - & laid aside for the time, because I had no opportunity to act upon them. Nor till yesterday had I a chance of going to the Bank (not of England but of Bullen)¹ and reading same second time in the presence of the party concerned - & then I became confronted by a stupid double, as to the precise import of ~~the~~ ^your^ expressions. ~~For~~ ^In^ a legal mind, I have no doubt, not a moment's hesitation would have presented itself, but "am I not an Ass?"
'Tis this

In the earlier part of your most kind letter – which I enclose – you'll forgive me – to save time & trouble in copying – you say Mary W. cannot act without so & so - & will not be able to deal with his share without administrⁿ – a statutory declaration must be made & she must take out Adm." &c.

But then this is followed by some practical advice € most kind & wise I know – but the connection of which, with the previous legal & indispensable directions, I have somehow missed. The thing may be read two ways. – Either, MW must go through all the recited formalities – and then she can "arrange" with her nieces. –

Or else, she may dispense with the formalities and proceed to the arrangement – only preserving the Will as a protection in the possibility of future disturbance. I am inclined to believe you meant the latter – but the precise ^and positive character of the^ direction as to what she must do in the first part of the letter has made me feel a little uncertain.

Will you pardon the intensity of my dulness [sic], & do me the favour to clear up a nebulosity which no doubt belongs to the misty eyepiece rather than to the object? -

It makes I fancy no difference, but I may add that Fanny Watkins's portion – vide your perfectly correct pedigree – was paid on her marriage (it was £50) – and that Fanny Smith (unmarried) will do anything in the world her aunt likes, only preferring to keep a horse & cow that she has for herself.-

I think that's about all - & too much to bother you about. And nevertheless, to quote a favourite old song of the days I lived in (1648)

Neighbours and friends, pray one word more,
There's something yet behind

¹ Bullen Bank is an area in Hardwick where the Watkins lived.

And wise though you be, you doe not well see,
In which doore sits the wind. -

You recollect that evening when in your true kindness you got your good Uncle to give me the meeting & hear those absurd letters about the beautiful girl with an eruption in her face – the old hen to make broth – the button to be sent up &c &c &c .

And how you advised me to call on Watson the writer & find whether any Chancery suit was going on, at the instance of Perkins the Ex^r – or no. – And I c^d not manage to ~~de~~ call – but I did second best, & wrote to ~~said~~ Perkins - & then Perkins takes my letter to his Sol^r Mr. Grey of 93 Edgeware Road, & he sends me a very civil note to say Perkins is proceeding in Chancery for his own legacy – but that the rest of the legacies are not in Chancery as far as he is aware – Another bad proof of bad faith of said Watson. Why sh^d he have mentioned it at all to my parishioners? It was no business of theirs. And it seems very strange that he gives no account of their rent which he must be receiving all along, as well as keeping the property unsold. – Would it not be best for them to employ some respectable London Sol^r? I fear it is not much purpose their waiting longer –

The lightning mark [?]¹ is undoubtedly no insectivorous affair. I wish you were here to see it – 26 yards in extreme diam^r – no burning, but destruction. Even the central thistle unburnt. My wife's kind love. Your very aff^t Old Bother

Pdfs 413, 414

¹ This looks like “mark” and appears to be some area in a field.

Letter 273

Five months later

Cheltenham, 12 Rodney Terrace, 6 Jan. 1880

My Dearest Arthur,

Here your old friend is, laid by the heels – making progress, I thank God the right way – but of course very slowly, with a foot covered with open sores. D^r Evans considered it a most severe case - & at my age, of course recovery would be in proportion slow. The change hither has been pleasant, we propose returning home on Friday.

I had it from a private hand – well-informed I believe – that poor Franks had 4 black balls - & that as it is the proportional & not the actual number that decides the election, it would be quite easy to overbalance these, by securing a sufficient no, of white ones – for my informant says very few in comparison will trouble their heads about writing – unless told of it.

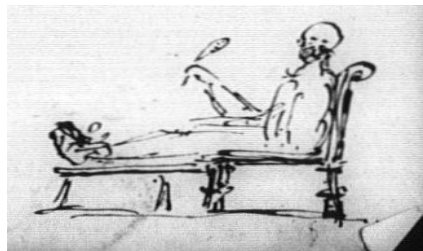
I rather want to know the number (approx) of Gaseous Neb. Did not d'Arrest¹ write expressly about them? I have borrowed so many books (& have them still) from the Council that I don't like to ask for another – but it would answer the purpose if any kind friend would just see how many he (d'Arrest) made of them – what David Hume used to call the “tottle of the whole”.-

The Surgeon has just been here – a fresh man - & says I am going on as well as possible for which I desire to be earnestly thankful – for my dear wife's sake as well as my own – for she has had a terrible time of anxiety as well as manual nursing.

I was looking the other day over one of Burnham's Cats in M Notices, & saw at the close of it a notice of a minute Neb. – I think he says a double neb. I wish I could tell you exactly where to find it – but I fancy it is at the end of his first Cat. I wonder whether anybody has looked after this. Perhaps Lord Lindsay would tackle it spectroscopically – for I should not be a bit surprised if it turned out to be a cousin of my little friend, Ex 4004

My wife's kind love

Your very affectionate old friend



Pdfs 415/416

¹ See Letter 253

Letter 274

Two days later

postcard

12 Rodney Terrace Cheltenham – 8 Jan. '80

Letter rec. this morning – many thanks. The D^r says I am going on capitally, but keeps me here till Tuesday (instead of tomorrow) – you are exceedingly kind about books. I think if d'Arrest is not bulky or troublesome to send here, I should like to see it. – I suppose he is the authority about Gaseous Neb.- I miss poor Key much¹. His noble 18 in reflector & Obs^y. will soon be in the market, & going I fear too cheap – If you sh^d know of a likely purchaser please bear it in mind.

Tues omnini [Always yours]

T.W.W.

On reverse side
A C Ranyard. Esq.
25 Old Square
Lincoln Inn
London WC

Pdfs 417/418

¹ Revd Cooper-Key died in 1879

Letter 275

Three weeks later

postcard

Gloucester 22 Jan. 1880

Left Cheltenham this morn. – going tomorrow to Troy House, Monmouth¹ – to get home. D^r. on Thursday. Mrs W. very ill in Cheltenham – much better now - & the foot making capital progress.

T.W.W

On reverse side postcard front

A.C Ranyard Esq.,
25 Old Square,
Lincoln's Inn
London W C

[Pdfs 419/420](#)

¹ Home of Henrietta's brother

Letter 276

Five days later

Troy House near Monmouth, 27 Jan 1880

My Dearest Arthur

We are here on our way back from Chelt^m where we were detained, a week or 10 days longer than we had intended, by my wife's illness, brought on I believe much by anxiety & over exertion, not perceived at the time. She is now I am thankful to say recovered, & we propose returning home on Friday, having I suppose to take our last leave of this dear old house – the scene of so many past pleasures – for my brother – in-law has just been appointed Clerk of the Peace, under very honourable circumstances – It will be no great pecuniary advantage, but very much in comparative rest & freedom from anxiety which he has most fully earned. But he will have to quit this house & where he will be able to fix himself he does not as yet know. So completely identified had Troy always been with the Wyatts ever since I can remember - & my Wife was born & reared here – that though one knew M^r W had no permanent hold here, it came like a strange surprise.

A stranger and most sad surprise has come over us this evening – in the news of the sudden death from a fall in skating of the sister of one of our dearest friends the Rev. M^r Bruce (of S^t Nicholas near Cardiff)¹ My wife had just got into communication with her by letter, & we were looking forward with much pleasure to her friendship – But in the midst of life- even the most young & healthful and sportive life are we not in death! May we be ready! -----

To turn to what I meant to write about. I have been using up this enforced leisure since my accident in preparing my new Edition - & you so kind as to say, nearly 12 months ago, that you w^d give me some assistance, when your work was over, by revising the Chapter on the Sun. I hope you are not so deeply engaged as to lead you to look on this as a trouble – if so, dear Arthur, do not hesitate to say it – much as I should prize your aid, I could get on – like Marshal Néy in the retreat from Russia “je saurai me faire jour” [I know what to do?] – but if you can by any means make it a pleasure – why then it will be so to me. Only there are parts of it written or modified by “dear Dawes” which I should be cautious in touching.

The great & heavy part of the undertaking is what has been strongly recommended to me & which I should have myself wished to adopt – a larger increase of double stars from L^d Lindsay's Σ.[symbol for Struve] The reduction, arrangement, & copying out of these involve no small expense of time & labour – but I think I have broke the neck of it already. It will add perhaps 25 or 30 pages to the vol. & something I suppose to the cost. I have had occasion to make much use of Flammarion's Catalogue² – I know him to be a strange fly away fact & fiction sort of fellow – but really – after beginning with a strong prejudice against the man – I have been obliged to admit that it is a marvel of industrious research - & I am sorry to add between ourselves, that, as far as I can see there are fewer mistakes than in Gledhill's very pretty and pleasant book³.

My foot I am thankful to say mends very satisfactory – in fact considering my age & the season, more rapidly than might have been expected – but there are still large sores on the back of it - & when I shall get into a leather shoe I know not. But I can now go upstairs capitally, & down very fairly. But nothing could have been more opportune for my little book – so “it is an ill wind that blows nobody good.”

¹ William Bruce, whose brother Henry became 1st Baron Aberdare was Rector of St Nicholas from 1840. By 1881 his son William Conybeare Bruce was Rector. See Letter 286.

² See Letter 263

³ See Letter 229

A postcard came forwarded here this morning from Hardwick, in which Wesley tells me he has sent off d' Arrest. My special thanks for your kindness in providing it for me. I am very glad Franks is in. My own idea is he has more claim to be there than 0.75 of those constant.

By elected.

Do you think it will be possible to do anything more re beautiful girl – with –an-eruption on –her face?

I hope Sadler has had no return of his lung mischief.

My wife's kind love & I am always

Your affectionate old friend

T.W.Webb

Letter 277

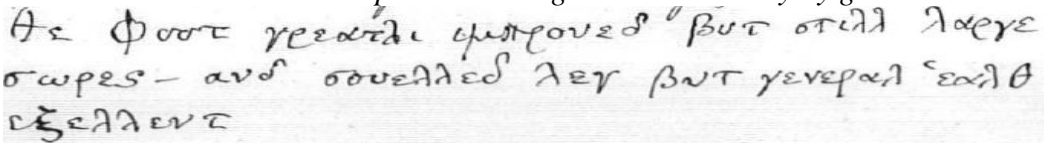
Four days later

postcard

Hardwick Vicarage, 31 Jan '80

Packet received. Gratias quam maximus. [Most grateful thanks] Will be very useful.
Came home yest^y. Evening.

Text as on card. TWW has replaced the English letters mostly by greek characters.



Θε φουτε γεαται μωρονεδ' βυτ σιλλ λαγε
σωρες - ανδ' σουελλεδ' λεγ βυτ γενεραλ' εαλθ
εξελλενε

T.W.W

[Transcription: The foot greatly improved but still large sores – and swollen leg but general health excellent]

Postcard addressed on other side:

A.C.Ranyard Esq.,
25 Old Square,
Lincoln's Inn, London W.C

[Pdfs 423/424](#)

Letter 278

Almost three weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage, 18 Feb 1880

My Dearest Arthur

I am exceedingly sorry for the result – of which I had no previous apprehension – or intimation. They have done themselves much wrong by wronging a most faithful & disinterested official.

Very many thanks for your promised comments which I shall receive with great pleasure if I may suppose they have not cost you much trouble, or cost you too much valuable time. And I shall be delighted to receive in due time your very handsome present. Great must be your relief & I can utterly sympathise with you.-

I am very much concerned to hear about poor H.S.¹. but I could not tell you I do not use the word could in a conventional sense – but in its ~~place~~ simple meaning – I do not know more than that his father's temper has been represented to me as a more than commonly unpleasant - & that he (H.S.) gave much offence by imbuing some of his brothers with opinions – my views as to which you know – but this surely is not the time to cherish feelings of alienation - & I cannot but think that you would do a very good deed in writing to his father. You would do it for several reasons better than I could – or I would sooner do it myself than that it should go undone. You are so busy I know - & so am I – that a longer letter is a mere bother, & this is long enough to assure you know truly I am

your affect. Old Friend
T.W.Webb

My wife's love – wishes she c^d see you again.

Pdfs 425/426

¹ Herbert Sadler

Letter 279

Month later

Hardwick Vic. 16 Mar. '80

My dearest Arthur,

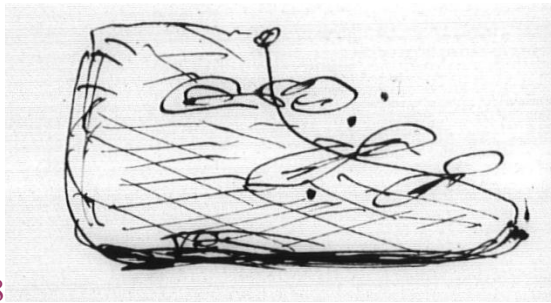
Not to press or hurry you on any account – but when perfectly convenient I should be pleased to receive the corrections & additions for Cel. Obj. – I have had very hard work in reducing more than 1080 stars from Lindsay. That truly kind fellow Franks insists upon indexing them for me. – I have noted a curious printers error in Lindsay at p 20, where X^1X^2 Tauri are put for K^1K^2 . I wonder whether there may be other errata – I see some of Flammarion & Gledhill's reductions don't exactly accord with mine.

I enclose something received this morning from M^{rs} Key¹ – ~~Could~~ Would it be practicable to have a notice stuck up in our Library as to these instruments, referring for details to Westley who might have this price list put into his hands if anyone should ask? As poor Key was a fellow it strikes me as feasible. I can say nothing about them myself except that Key thought the definition of the best mirror very fine indeed - & that I knew him to be so scrupulously particular about all his appliances that they are sure to be first rate.-

In great haste

Very affect.

T.W.Webb



Pdfs 427,428

¹ Widow of Cooper-Key

Letter 280

Five weeks later

H.V. 20 Apr. 80

My dearest Arthur

Shall I appear to you an insufferable bore if I hint how glad I sh^d be to receive the promised brief notice of Carrington's¹ mode of observation? Our time is getting very short here now – in less than a month we shall have (D.V) to leave this place, & run away, “Go it, Ye cripples!-

I have been at work this morning fitting your most kind contributions into my text - & saying something about those same prominences - & declining to give more information as the spectroscope is so seldom fitted to be a “common telescope” but referring those who wish to make spectrosc. study of the sun to the works of –

Will you please fill up the blank by sending me the titles of works that you would recommend in such a case.

(or at least the author's names – I only want to say - the works of Old Cockatoo, Buzfuz and Burstall.-)

The Mistress sends her kind love, but we despair of your ever coming to see us before we die-

Why, we know not.

My foot is much better but I am not yet right in other matters.

your loving old friend

T.W Webb

[Pdfs 429/430](#)

¹ Richard Christopher Carrington 1826-75 MN ODNB

Letter 281

Fortnight later

Printed headed notepaper

Hardwick Vicarage
Hay R.S.O

[Written by Henrietta]

May 6/80

Thank you My dear Arthur for y^r great kindness – May we dine with you on the 19th or 20th, for we cannot alas! accept y^r truly kind invitation we have personal engagements & a servant with us –

Y^r very affect. old friend.

H.M Webb

Continued by TWW

My dearest Arthur

Very many thanks from an old friend with a sharp scythe poking into his back “Move on”. – I am very sorry indeed about poor Sadler. When I see you you will tell me who manages Selen. Soc¹. secretaryship for him. I shall bring up a lot of RAS books – I am very much pleased – if it be so - that my letter was of any use - & thank you for suggesting it. If Epilepsy, which it looks like he will never be better

Ever your affect.

Deffro! Mae Dydd.

[Pdfs 431/432](#)

¹ Selenographical Society was founded by Sadler and Neison in 1878 but only lasted until 1882 when Birt, an influential member, died and Neison left for S.Africa. It was the root of the BAA lunar Section.

Letter 282

Over three weeks later

[In handwriting of TWW]

Hotel des Pays Bas Spa
plus bas 30 Mai
Le plus bas de tous [at the bottom of all?] 1880

[HMW hand]

My dear Arthur

I have been quite unable to write to you as I wished to thank you for your great kindness & your hospitality during the one night you so kindly received us into your house, & most comfortable we were, & Harriett was so attentive & good to us. I had not the pleasure of seeing your other servant, but my Mary¹ told me afterwards that she had lived many years with your dear Mother. The only drawback to our pleasure in being with you was that we inadvertently gave you so much trouble with my husband's business, & he wanted to talk Astronomical business with you, & so did I for I wanted to express my annoyance at the Astronomical Society for various things they had done, one was for having a new secretary but I have no right to express any thing, tho' I am deeply interested in Astronomical work connected as it is with my dear husband & you our old & very dear friend. Again thanking you for all y^r kindness.

Believe me dear Arthur yr affect grateful old friend

H.M.Webb

P.S. My husband much better foot and all! We wish you were here.

[TWW continues]

My dearest Arthur

My wife has said so much (*mutatis mutandis*) [after making the necessary changes] that I sh^d have wished to say, that I have little to add – but that I should not like you to think that my disinclination to enter personally into the disagreements in R.A.S. made me in the least unwilling to hear your account of them. The very reverse was the fact. I sh^d have been much interested in hearing all about them and have often wished for an expounder like yourself – but those unlucky suits Jenkins v RAS & Goode v RAS came sadly in the way. When we meet (???) I shall hope to be the wiser – As we went by a sudden resolve to Antwerp, I wrote to Baron von Ertborn², but no doubt too late - & beat up de Boz's quarters³ (it should be written Boz & pronounced Booh!) – the Polaris man – very lively, intelligent, & obliging. He talks of coming to Engl^d To see Capt. Noble (who I fear pooh- poohed – not Booh-Boohed) him as FRAS should he come will you let me refer him to you? We are here till Thursday.

Your affect. Old friend. T.W.Webb

[Pdfs 433/434](#)

¹ Mary Anne Bromage, the Webb's parlour maid who doubled as lady's maid for Henrietta

² Baron von [van] Ertborn: elusive! May have been of an old and wealthy family in Antwerp. Besides astronomy, may have been interested in geology – possibly to do with Webb's interest in volcanoes. But...??

³ De Boz: can find nothing.

Letter 283

Two months later

27th July 1880 after post

Printed

Hardwick Vicarage
Hay R.S.O

My Dearest Arthur,

Thanks for the kind remembrance of us conveyed on a P.C. to which I sh^d have replied had not a succession of callers come in & swallowed up all the time. My wife was much knocked up & wearied out with so much travelling day after day - & has been rheumatical since we returned home, but is brightening up, & I think beginning to feel the benefit of her journey. As to old Nestor¹ his foot is mending - & 'tis hoped if stuck up level & buttered with nasty stinking stuff, it will soon be well. –

But we are both very sorry that you have not been as comfortable as we could wish. Many of the poor have been complaining in the same way, & I suppose it may be something in the season. – Among others it attached your troublesome friend the mother of the Eruptive beauty, whose husband (i.e. the mother's husband) came to me in consequence, to know what news I brought. I told him as well as I could that you seemed to think there was very little to be done. He was half inclined to start off to London, get an auctioneer, & put up the cottages for sale, as a mode of unearthing the fox. But I dissuaded him as you may suppose, from so comical a scheme (NB. He does not even know for certain where the cottages are!) But while I was talking to him, an idea of meteoric brightness suddenly flashed out in my cloudy brain – which I shall beg leave to submit to your judicious & judicial criticism – if you will only be so very kind as to tell me what you think of it – I shall be as obedient as any assassin to the Old Man of the Mountain.

Well then – once upon a time I had a nasty little cottage in Orange Court, Wapping, which a great Uncle² of mine bought for a Vote. It gave me much trouble thro' a bad agent (who pretended to admire the stars) & was afterwards very faithfully administered & creditably sold by a good one, with whom I parted excellent friends. Now, do you see any reason why I should not write to this good man & ask him to get somebody just to look at the cottages, & find out their condition & possible value at a sale? We should then know whether the property is worth a fight. And if the Eruptive's father says yes, said good Agent of mine might very likely be disposed to name an attorney competent to take up the cause, & knock Watson into a Cocked Hat – Is there any sense in this?

If you think it w^d work, w^d you do us the favour to return the Will, without which we don't know where the cottages are. Goode thinks in Moneyer St. May be so. – but that would do for me to write about. –

Cel. Obj. is waiting for Klein³ whom I have sent for – I am obliged to you for making me acquainted with him. I am sorry to record my conviction that D'Arrest's⁴ memory wants pelting with rotten eggs for writing important matter about Nebulae in that equally incomprehensible and inelegant Danske – who can tolerate such ugly stuff as

Som jeg dog?

(not Canis Major or Minor, but German doch!-) I must nevertheless attack & turn his position. – The observatory is cleared out & a great family of Webs ejected to make room for the proprietor. – I had forgotten to thank you very much for the interesting paper about your dear Mother - & wish you all the success in the revision of that most valuable biography, which no doubt numbers

¹ In Homer Nestor is an elder statesman who lived to a great age.

² Thomas Webb of Hoxton

³ Hermann J. Klein, 1844-1916

⁴ See Letter 253

are anxiously looking for. (I have just looked at Postal Guide & see there is a Moneyer St. East road, N. Had it been near Plato or Copernicus I might have had a better chance with it.

My wife's kind love, she says Oxley's Essence of Ginger¹ did her more good than any medicine.

Yours very affectionately

T.W.Webb

[Pdfs 435/436](#)

¹ Google it – all sorts of interesting references including the recipe!

Letter 284

Two weeks later

*printed*Hardwick Vicarage
Hay R.S.O

9 Aug. 1880

My Dearest Arthur,

We saw so little of you in what was otherwise such a pleasant visit to your house, that I cannot recollect how much I may have said as to the precarious state of my brother in law M^r T. Wyatt¹ and I do not know how far you may be forewarned to hear the intelligence of his departure – which took place last Thursday night.

It did not very much surprise us after what we saw when in Town & it would not have surprised us at all had it not been that he had rallied a little a few days previously & so far misled the doctors that they thought he might be removed to Kensington this week – instead of being taken, as he will be tomorrow – to the churchyard where his wife lies, at Weston not very far from Aldershot. It was a question whether we sh^d go – but I did not consider my wife strong enough (for she has had some very uncomfortable attacks ^like what you recollect ^lately) and I c^d not well leave her for her own sake, nor conveniently for my own, as her attention to my foot is so continuous – it is I hope going on well but not quite healed. And nothing could be more considerate or kind in the matter than the feelings of these dear people in London. – We have long thought he was wearing himself out by the restlessness of his professional life. I have often wished he would come here for a few quiet days, even if he brought what he could of his work with him – but in vain – we – never could get him here since the time when he so kindly came to remodel this house for my dear Father to join us - & our only chance of seeing him in was in London. – It was a great mercy for him that his only daughter, long frustrated by chronic illness, had so far recovered of late years as to come & be his most tender & efficient nurse in his latter days. -----

You will be glad I know to hear that I have received a specimen of the type of Cel. Obj. which looks I think very well. Klein's book – my acquaintance with w^h is entirely due to you, has been very useful to me, & furnished me with many improvements.

Thank you for your repeated information about that curious 15 puzzle² – you will recollect that you gave us the form 2134 for the first line – the rest as usual. My wife has solved this over & over again – but there seems to be unsolvable cases of that form. And – to go back to the beginning of them all – I never understood from the first in what position the numbers are to ^ be ^ placed before beginning – if they are to be taken from the table & put in the frame at the pleasure of the player – or the looker on – it will make a great difference in the ease of solution in any case - & in some circumstances I believe render solution impossible.. but never I think when all 15 are employed ad libitum from the beginning. You may, as far as I can see, so place 8, as to render the solution impossible under certain circumstances with the remaining 7, but not ~~always~~ in others. At least it is so with the case you sent us. If you knew the interest & amusement it gave my wife during one or two days when she was far from well I am sure you would be pleased. If you will give further directions as to the management of your 2134 case from the very beginning, I am sure she would some day be much interested in the various ways of solving it. With our united kind love.

Your affectionate old friend, T.W.Webb

Pdfs 437/438

¹ See Wyatt family

² The "15 Puzzle" consists of 15 squares numbered from 1 to 15 which are placed in a 4x4 box leaving one position out of the 16 empty. The goal is to reposition the squares from a given arbitrary starting arrangement by sliding them one at a time into correct order (for some initial arrangements, this rearrangement is possible, but for others, it is not). Invented in the 1870s in USA.

Letter 285

Five months later

Hardwicke Vic 13 Jan. 81. (at night)

My Dearest Arthur,

I have not written more than some rum card I don't know when - & it is quite time I did - first to apologise for my rudeness in telling the British Asses to send their book to your care without asking your leave - & next to reply to your kind enquiry about my foot which I thank God is practically well at last, only a few specks of eczema remaining I think she must have been X Y Z emma - & I don't like her at all. My irregularity of circulation is also fast disappearing & I see - to speak seriously - what deep cause of thankfulness I have for such a restoration at my age. And that too notwithstanding the season, which however cheerful as you say for young people is disagreeable & almost depressing to me - in fact to us both. We are summer birds. - I want to know how the memoir of your dear Mothers gets on - more speedily I hope than my affairs "which like a wounded snake drags its slow length along"¹ However I have seen proof of Sheet 2. which I think finishes Auriga², or nearly so. I have hard work of it in revising the current sheets & preparing future copy so as not to get caught. I don't know what I could have done without the kind & very efficient aid of Franks, thro' which I shall gain a good deal in correctness, tho' with some loss of time in sending to & fro & asking & answering questions - occupying hours of correspondence instead of minutes of talk. Poor Sadler too has been very kind - pressing volunteer assistance in a way that I can't altogether decline. I find however that like the rest of us, tho' wonderfully painstaking, he now & then makes a good sized mistake.

I am very sorry to tell you of a trouble that we have had lately - and which has distressed both of us, especially my wife, very much - the perversion of our greatly - loved niece at Chislehurst to the Church of Rome. We were especially attached to her - & she had been to us - but there is a wide & I fear irremediable separation now³ - & we must give up the hope we had so especially cherished of going to her in the spring, and if spared, many a happy time in days to come - But I will not enlarge on this. -

I read with a great deal of interest, tho' hastily, your remarks at the meeting on Sidereal Chromatics⁴ - but I know you don't mind a bit of friendly discussion and will allow your loving old friend to differ from you as to the superseding of eye estimates by the spectroscope. It is a long time since I convinced myself that with regard to terrestrial colours the eye was far more sensitive than the instrument, and as regards stars d'Arrest has shown that no unqualified inference from the apparent colour could be drawn as to the spectrum - that is without many exceptions. I have never compared, or attempted to compare, stars - colours with Sm's [Smyth's?] plates - but those plates have helped me to form an ideal scale which answer sufficiently for me.-

Big specula are going fast ahead. My friend Bruce has one of 12 in. which Sadler pronounces equal to Dorpal in light & superior in definition.

My wife sends kind love

Always your very affectionate.

T.W.Webb

N.B I can procure noble specula unmounted, very reasonably, if you know of any opening.

Pdfs 439/440

¹ From The Dunciad by Alexander Pope

² A constellation in the northern sky

³ O dear!!

⁴ See Letter 209

Letter 286

Month later

[Written by Henrietta]

Hardwick Vicarage
Hay R S O
Feb. 24 '81

My dearest Arthur

My Husband will try to write on the back of this note, but he is off into his parish there are so many sick poor just now.

He is pretty well but his head work has been hard with "C.O" & though M^r Sadler had helped him in some things, he has made several mistakes which necessitated my husband looking very carefully over it before going to press. M^r Franks has been an invaluable friend to him, but even he has missed some corrections. It will be a blessed thing when it is ended. I fear my dear Arthur that we will not be able to go & see you till quite the last week in April if you can have us then.

It will be a great pleasure to us to spend a week with you & I hope the weather will be fine & warm then. This is a short letter, but we have a choir dinner to day (20 in number) & my duties of arranging & carving will soon begin. I hope you are pretty well. With our kindest love believe me.

Yours affectionately
H.M. Webb

My dearest Arthur

How kind of you to write & to express such interest in your old bescalded friend – who has quite recovered at last & heartily thank God for it. That's a very interesting letter & I think I must find a copy somewhere for ^ a present to ^ the writer. Two or 3 things combine to keep us back in a work where error is most easy - distance from Town & are having 2 assistants & all of us mutually distant. But we are on in Equilaus¹ or somewhere thereabouts (does that mean Donkey?) – There's one favour I want to ask relating to the ^book^, - can you tell me what is Stampfress[?] Scale of mag^s. which Schönfeld² adopted? He (Schöfn) has rather stupidly omitted to tell us what it is or where to be found. Wherefore I am very angry with him. And in fact wish all the systems of mag^s. packed up & put on top of Great Pyramid. There isn't a good one in the lot says that stupid old fogie at Hardwick who is nevertheless his dear Arthur's very affect. Friend



Pdfs 441/442

¹ Reference to the lesser horse in Tarot cards

² See Letter 183

Letter 287

Over three months later

Cheltenham, 2nd June '81

My dearest Arthur,

Its an ill wind that blows nobody good – the heat or the Derby or something has made people lazy & given me a welcome opportunity of writing to you this evening – desirable in another respect, because I dare say I shall have to plunge into the billows of business as soon as I get home tomorrow. –

We both have - & how could it be otherwise? – the most pleasant & grateful recollection of all that generous kindness that made our wish to you so very nice at the time & so delightful in remembrance. And it gave us great pleasure to see our kind wish so well. – As usual, after we had left you, engagements of one kind or other thickened & drew tighter & I found no opportunity of seeing you again either in Hunter St. or Old Square, as I fancied I sh^d. - & I found, as to Burton's books, that the only plan was to leave them for him at the Library, where I contrived to get a short time while my wife was waiting for Dr Kidd on Tuesday morn^g - & where I was fortunate enough to meet Sadler, who pronounced himself quite well, & certainly looked better than formerly, & was very friendly & kind. – yesterday's journey to this place was tremendously hot – but I think we are here a little cooler than among your 5 millions – the therm^s however is a shop window have ranged from 76^o to 80^o degrees – What a lot of things I sh^d have liked to have talked over with you – And if I am very queer – as I know I am about various dicta or commenta of the day (- not a bit taking in, much that others receive - & seeing no difficulty where others are stuck fast) – you were most patient with me & treated my ignorance with the greatest consideration. Many would have thought it not only ignorance, but presumption into the bargain – but you at any rate are too kind a friend. And we know have very little such matters signify to the real benefit & happiness either of the individual or the community!

I hope you will continue to get time enough to follow up your social speculations. They are deeply interesting - & deserve - & indeed require – to be wrought out to the end not merely tracked a little way for amusement, but followed rigidly to their logical conclusions.

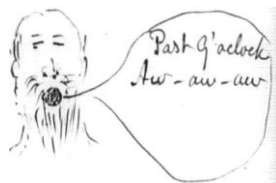
What about Greenwich? H.S.¹ mentioned the matter to me, so it is no secret - & said he hoped Stone w^d be the man. I was stupid enough not to recollect what were your wishes, or belief, on that subject.

Burton's books interested me exceedingly, tho' I had to scramble over them like a flying fish – and I was more bitten than probably he expected for I don't suppose he c^d have known that in young days I was a speculum – worker myself tho' only on a pigmy scale. Lady M. Howarth very kindly sent us a Ticket for the Horticultural Soc^y's Garden in Regent's Park, but we did not avail ourselves it – nor did we see her again – but I hope they will come to Hardwick in the course of the summer. –

My wife sends her kindest love with mine & I am always dear Arthur.

Your affectionate old Friend

Pdfs443/444



¹ Herbert Sadler

Letter 288

Six weeks later

Hardwicke Vicarage, 19 July '81

My dearest Arthur,

Many thanks for your kindness. I am very sorry to have given you so much trouble to no purpose. I cannot help thinking that Taylor and Francis may have such a notice which somehow did not reach me or was forgotten, & in consequence they retained it. I have written to them about it. –

Your news about dear Mr Horwood is most sad, we had a special regard for him, & meant to have seen him when we were in London – but we had many hindrances & had not time enough for many things we might have done. I fear he suffered much from his son's death. How dark is, at least, one side of this world!-

We are most fortunate in our Hay, all of which was placed in safety & in excellent condition this morning. We are so especially glad that you will come here some time you would very indefinite about it, but I hope[you] will soon be able to get your plans into some form. Our united best love.

Your affectionate Old friend

T.W.Webb

[Pdfs 445/446](#)

Letter 289

Month later

15 Aug. '81

printed

Hardwick Vicarage,
Hay R.S.O

My dearest Arthur,

We want to know how you are – what you are doing - & when there will be a hope of seeing you? I trust you have not been thinking of coming for the next 6 weeks or so, as we propose (if permitted) going into Wales next Monday & afterwards for several visits elsewhere – nothing very positively arranged. –

The great annoyance & disadvantage counselled with – and inseparable from the present arrangements of my church – has led me to a re – examination of the original Deed. And as far as an outsider can make it out, it seems to me that the Incumbent can dispose of nothing whatever beyond the annual Interest, not even the accumulation which is yearly going on & being added to the principal – That is the stock is annually augmenting rapidly, & will ultimately become very large – while nothing beyond Interest is in the power of the incumbent. This I am sure was not the intention of the Donors. I was told they meant it to accumulate, in view of the possibility of some ^great future^ damage (not covered of course by Fire Insurance which has been effected) But this intention is certainly barred by the wording of the Deed giving the incumbent no right to anything but Interest. So that were a Cyclone to strip the roof, or lightening to shatter the bell gable, or the roof want general stripping, the Church Building Society as Tr^{ees} w^d have to go to Chancery to obtain the release of even the accumulated portion of Interest to meet the claim. Such a state of things might just as well be rectified at once, as at some future day - & if this were effected, it would enable me at the same time to effect some improvements both by addition and removal from which the present Deed debars me, though most advisable for order & decency's sake. The simple question then is, whether I am correct in thinking that an unopposed claim such c^d be carried through for not much more than £15 (as you once led me to suppose) – and, what is of equal moment, whether it would not be perfectly fair to pay Chancery out of the Fund, as it is solely for the benefit of the Church, & merely (so far as any great future repair is contemplated) carrying out the Donor's intention – frustrated by the inefficient wording of their own Deed. –

They meant no doubt that ordinary repairs sh^d be provided for out of the Interest – but they never meant I am sure that in case of extraordinary repair the very accumulation sh^d be tied up & incorporated with the principal.

Please forgive me giving you all this trouble and my present haste & with my wife's kind love believe me

Your affectionate Old Friend
T.W.Webb

Letter 290

Five weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage, 26 Sept 1881.

My dearest Arthur,

We returned on Saturday from a pleasant & salutary holiday of about 5 weeks & now having your last kind letter before me I write to ask when we may have the great pleasure of seeing you here? It will be a great pleasure indeed, & you will have so many things to tell me, about so many people. So here comes the 4th Comet in as many months - & here come two quarrelling telegrams about him – for which I wish somebody's knuckles could be made to suffer. How little after all did the 2 previous bright ones do, to instruct us as their composition - & I should not wonder if more should never be done till some fine fellow comes near enough to us to give us a taste of his composition. It has been said that in such a case the Comet would be the sufferer – I should not feel quite sure about that! –

One place that we have recently stayed at, Rev. W. Conybeare Bruce's,¹ 6 miles from Cardiff, was very interesting. A beautiful Romsey Observatory with very fine 12 ¼ in Mirrors, which Sadler can tell you about. C^d not my try it - bad weather. He has a little telegraph from the house to the observatory, for wife & self.

My wife is looking forward with very great pleasure to seeing you here.

Our united Kind Love.

Your affectionate Old friend

T.W.Webb

[Pdfs 450/451](#)

¹ Was son of William Bruce. See Letter 276. Born in 1844, he was Rector of St Nicholas, probably after the retirement of his father. Went on to be vicar of St Woolas, Monmouth and Canon of Llandaff.

Letter 291

A week later

*From HMW
printed*

Hardwick Vicarage,
Hay R.S.O
Oct. 3/81

My Dearest Arthur,

Alas! That we were to be disappointed of your promised visit this month looked forward to with so much pleasure by yr. old very old friends at Hardwick – Must it be given up for this year? Will not Nov. or Dec, do for you? You are young dear Arthur & can wait for the visits of friends, but we are old, & can only count from month to month. Do think of this and try to spare us a bit of your valued society if only for a week. We have had our prescribed outing for this year, indeed it will be probably a week beyond the clergyman's 3 months¹. My dear husband is pretty well when his heart does not strike 100 or upwards[?] – he would be all the better for seeing you, & we both of us feel unable to bear the thought that you will not come here. Please think it over any time will suit us.

With kind love from your affectionate old friend
H.M.Webb

P.T.O continued by TWW
My dearest Arthur

While literally & figuratively endorsing my wife's note, I wish to add one or two little matters – I have desired Longman's to send you Cel. Obj which I hope you will do me the favour to accept – bearing in mind that you have contributed most of the Solar chapter – I have also taken the liberty, which I hope you will forgive of telling Longman's they might send to your quarters a packet of Glass negatives &c. belonging to the Civil War book – which I yet hope you will favour me by bringing here. Cel. Obj. is out this very day

Hip! Hip! Hip!
Your affectionate old friend
T.W.Webb

[Pdfs 452/453](#)

¹ Refers to the stipulation laid down in the Pluralities Act 1838: "Every spiritual person holding any benefice shall keep residence on his benefice, and in the house of residence (if any) belonging thereto; and if any such person shall, without any such licence or exemption as is in this Act allowed for that purpose, or unless he shall be resident at some other benefice of which he may be possessed, absent himself from such benefice, or from such house of residence, if any, for any period exceeding the space of three months together, or to be accounted at several times in any one year, he shall, when such absence shall exceed three months and not exceed six months, forfeit one third part of the annual value of the benefice from which he shall so absent himself; and when such absence shall exceed six months and not exceed eight months, one half part of such annual value; and when such absence shall exceed eight months, two third parts of such annual value; and when such absence shall have been for the whole of the year, three fourth parts of such annual value"!!

Letter 292

Five days later

Hardwick Vicarage

8 October, 1881

My dearest Arthur,

Thanks for your kind letter. Your marvellous & exemplary diligence about that exhaustive Eclipse Report – which delights me – has indeed qualified you to sympathise with your old & well-bothered friend. The negatives can take no manner of harm with you. I only took the liberty of asking house-room for them because Longmans wanted to get rid of them, & I thought you could & would kindly escort them here. As to ourselves I do not think there is any prospect of our fetching them before Christmas, when you will be coming, & there will be Hip-hip-hips in every rosebush to welcome you. – I am very glad about Denning¹. He was snubbed at first but has fairly made his way through it & is now sailing off to fame on a Comet's tail (if it has got one!) He has a famous mirror & knows how to use it well.

And now I have a very great favour to ask you. It is a shame to be bothering you in your nice quiet holiday, but I think it won't give you much trouble - & the annoying & I may say disgraceful state of the Organ loft here – which only wants money – (but a good deal of that) to rectify it makes me anxious to press the matter as rapidly as I can. – The enclosed is a careful copy of the only material part of the Trust Deed for the Repair of our Church – under which you advised me, (as I had previously supposed) that as virtual Trustee (the Church Building Soc^y. being the legal ones) I can only repair & restore – not add, take away, or improve. Now, I told you that, in consideration of many inconveniences & evils following from being thus tied up, I sh^d be glad to get an unopposed Chancery suit, releasing me from such strict terms in the appropriation of the Dividends – and you told me you thought such a thing might be done with a lot of affidavits, costing at the least £15. Which I duly laid up in mind. – But subsequent examination has shewed me something, which as a non-lawyer seems to me to give a much stronger ground for application than a mere complaint as to bad arrangements with its consequent evils, great as they are.

It seems to me that the Trustees – i.e.. Church Building Society & I acting under them, have not merely no power to touch the original stock, but not even the accumulation! What follows?

That if a cyclone should strip the roof, or damage the painted windows – or if the roof should require general & extensive repairs – which in time to come must happen – the unfortunate incumbent for the time being cannot touch a farthing beyond the bare Dividends – quite insufficient for any such purpose. When the time of general repair (which we call stripping the roof) comes, we must (at least my successor must) apply to Chancery for relief. Then why not do it now, when so many most desirable, I might almost call them essential, alterations are only standing still for want of money? –

It might well be considered too that the Deed, as it is, is not calculated to carry out the known intention of the Donors. For Mr Penoyre told me that their intention was that the accumulation should form a fund for any future great repair, such as the renewal of the Roof when necessary. But as the deed is worded, all access to accumulation as well as to principal seems to me barred for ever. However, will you kindly let me know your thoughts? And whether, if such a decree were comeatable, the expense of it might not be conscientiously paid out of the fund itself? I fancy it might, being entailed by the oversight of the original Donors.

Many apologies for this bother. And as an Oriental would say “may your shadows never be less”. We unite in kind love, Yours very affectionately, T.W.Webb

Pdfs 454-455

¹ See Letter 211

Letter 293

Four days later

Hardwick Vicarage

12 October, 1881

My dearest Arthur,

You are perfectly right - & I was perfectly wrong – or rather imperfectly, for I have yet to learn how wrong can be perfect! – But tho' I might have spared myself a good deal of trouble, & you some, had I had sense enough to notice what you have pointed out, - and tho' the force of my objection to the Deed is much weakened by this correct view, I have still (what a bore that TWW is!) to beg the great favour of your opinion as to another point arising out of the Deed, which as it is now worded precludes as you see anything more than repair. The arrangement of the Organ Chamber is so bad that the Choir children have every inducement to irreverence & misconduct - & the effect is so bad - & is so irremediably bad with the present construction – that there can be little doubt that the framers of the deed would gladly have it re-worded so as to admit of alteration and improvement (so evident is this that the lady who in course of time will succeed to the property at the Moor, & the pew which might have to be cut up, thought I might lay hands on the fund as it is for the purpose – without asking anyone's leave – But of course she did not feel as a Trustee would.) What therefore I now want to know is whether there would be a chance of getting a release from Chancery – so as to empower alteration & improvement – on the ground that the intention of the original donors cannot otherwise take due effect. It is a fact that by the existing arrangement the Choir (composed of the élite of the children of the parish) are being trained up in irreverence & misconduct – and it is also a fact that I am sure the donors never contemplated & would be extremely annoyed at such a result. Would this be ground enough to apply to the Court – there being no chance of opposition – and I may add, could the cost of a successful application be legitimately paid out of the accumulation? I have no hope of being able to get the money for the improvements in any other way. The Estate is in trust – the next probable possessor has 10 children – the present lessee of the property cannot of course be expected to take much interest in the matter – and minded as I fear he may be, & am pretty sure his wife is, I imagine he would take none.

I am a dreadful bore, I know – but you see how much trouble people bring on themselves by being good natured! -

I have got a waste copy of Cel. Obj. made up of proofs - & wanting only the plate of the Comet on the Sun & the Chart of Mars – (the key to which is however there.) It only requires to be put in rough binding to be quite serviceable tho' not ornamental. Would this do for the worthy fellow whom you mentioned as so much wishing for a copy? If so it is entirely at his service. Our united kindest love.

Your affect. Old Friend
T.W. Webb

Pdfs 456, 457

Letter 294

Nine days later

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay

21 October, '81 After Post

My dearest Arthur,

Best thanks for all the kind & friendly consideration that you have given to my case. It is at any rate satisfactory to know the result, even though it may not be a wished-for one, & to have a suspense terminated which only did more harm than good.

About the unbound sheets - if they can wait a little I think I can put them in better condition - & perhaps you would not wish them sent till you return to Hunton St. When that may be I do not know, but you will please tell me when convenient. ^ see p.s. Jackass!^ We are going from home for next week to visit an old friend of my father's a Miss Martin, of the banking family¹ of Lombard Street, whom, curiously enough, we have never either of us seen - but who has so repeatedly pressed our going, from love of my dear father, that we must positively go before worst weather sets in.

That awful gale did much less damage here than in most places. When we first came almost a quarter of a century ago (please don't stare! it's quite true) I thought the neighbourhood of the mountains must be associated with a tempestuous climate & furious winds & thunder. We have found it the very reverse. In this instance much more mischief was done at Hereford than here.

My old eye - which sometimes I think is darkening - & cannot wonder at it, picked up ring C very fairly the other night. I have today received the Washington Obs. by which I see that γ^2 Androm. has been pinching up so very tight that it is no wonder I have been unable to split it lately. Burton too thinks the same. -

My wife's kindest love. -

Ever dearest Arthur
Your affectionate Old Friend
T.W. Webb

I am a Goose (not the Celest. One) & did not notice till this minute that your date bespeaks your return.

However I hope your poor friend will pardon a little delay for I don't think I can manage to put up the sheets tomorrow & we are off 1st. thing Monday. However I will try - & if I fail it must be after our return tomorrow week.

Pdfs 458-459

¹ Martin & Co. 68 Lombard Street. The Martins appear to have been friendly with TWW's grandfather and his father, John, used to visit the family frequently at their home in Overbury on the borders of Worcester shire and Gloucestershire

Letter 295

Five weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay

26 Nov. '81

My dearest Arthur

Best thanks for your letter & all the many kindnesses it contains.

As to matters past, I am too busy to go into it this morning – but not the less obliged.

As to the Council idea and all the accompanying generosity – so like my dear old friend; I am very sorry to disappoint you, but I think it would not at all suit my arrangements here. And I sh^d. be very sorry, again, to think so badly of the RAS as to imagine that it had not many better men to whom it would be less inconvenience and some pleasure.

Again, about the Lectures – How good of you to send in my name – This is more in my way than the others – yet I fear not sufficiently so – But at present I c^d. not give a positive answer till I know what they want. I suppose I shall hear from them whether it is one Lecture (hardly?) or a set – or how long a set would take &c. &c. I presume they pay. But there is one serious bother. I don't think such a thing w^d. do without Diagrams - & I have hardly any big eno' for Ex. Hall!¹ Hardly big eno', some of them, for Ladies' College small lecture-room. However, I won't pitch the parcel over without a sight of its contents. No Dynamite, at any rate, I know, if commended by you.

My wife's kindest love

Your affect. old friend

T.W. Webb

Thank you much for your offered hospitality – no small inducement.

[Pdfs 460-461](#)

¹ Exeter Hall was a hall on the north side of The Strand in London erected between 1829 and 1831. The smaller hall's auditorium could hold around 1,000 people, and the main hall's auditorium could hold more than 4,000 people. Used for serious meetings, concerts – and presumably series of lectures.

Letter 296

Month later

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay

29 Dec. '81

My dearest Arthur,

I have no Xmas holiday, & can therefore send but a few lines – but these you must have, in purport from both the old fogies, to wish our young friend very many happy returns of the season – and to wish him here.

You know what a pleasure a visit wd. give us - & you have long held out the hope of it – please don't disappoint us only give us as early notice as possible. It will have to be during next month, for in beginning. of Feb^y. we hope to take flight for Cheltenham, where I shall have to tell a bevy of young girls a lot of stuff that I don't very well understand myself about luminiferous other & such monstrosities.

I was so pleased to get your nice & thoughtful present – but have never yet, I'm sorry to say examined it. But it will keep cold, & shall be duly devoured in that state.

Our united best love

Hoping you will write soon to say you are coming

Your affect. Old Friends

T.W.Webb

Henrietta M Webb[*signed by HMW herself*]

Pdfs 462-463

Letter 297

Month later

Hardwick Vicarage

28 Jan '82

My dearest Arthur,

I do not know which of us wrote last – nor is it very material – but I ought at any rate to write now, to so good & kind & old a friend, to let him know of a little bit of preferment for which I am indebted to the Bishop of the Diocese. He has just presented me to a vacant Prebend in the Cathedral¹ – no emolument, and quite an inferior position to a Canonry – but still looked upon as a compliment – giving a position in the Chapter, and a stall in the Choir. To me, lover as I am of music, and church music above all, this renewed connection after so many years interval with the Cathedral service is very pleasant. Duty only one sermon in the year - & incidentally perhaps a little more presence at meetings of a Church character in Hereford, &c. It was somewhat of a surprise – not wholly so – for I had been much more surprised (that was a surprise indeed – one of the very greatest I ever had) when the Bishop asked me to preach at his Ordination at Hereford at Xmas – but my wife was quite taken aback by it - & to both of us it seems like a dream. I went yesterday to be “collated” in due form – my “installation” will take place at the Dean’s convenience. – In point of long standing in the Diocese, I am so near the top of the tree, being now in my 52nd year of service (without intermission except 5 years in Glo’ster Cathedral) that perhaps, if I had never had such an offer, it might have seemed intentional - & however obscure I have been (especially so, except for being asked to preach in the Cathedral like others of late years) I am not conscious of having given offence – so there is not much to be surprised at. – But quite enough about this – only I know your kindness will lead you to take an interest in it. – I am not sure I ever thanked you (more shame if I have not) for your most kind & friendly advice as to the Probate Duty. It was of very material service, giving me just the legal information I wanted, to decline becoming a part to what I must think a shuffling transaction, and so enforcing the only right course – regular administration. As you know Mr Osmond Wyatt & others of the family, it is right to tell you that he is not in the least the party referred to, but a cousin whom you never saw, or I suppose heard of, but who was somehow induced to propose a course that neither you nor I sh^d have liked to set our names to.

But I must stop the chatter – so many letters to write.

My wife’s very kind love
 Ever your affectn. Old Friend
 T W Webb

We shall be in Chelt. D.V. during March, & might run up to Town if it were perfectly convenient & agreeable to you to receive us for 2 or 3 nights. – Your Eclipse memoirs very interesting – What a scamp that boy was. I wish the hook had been hot enough to make him drop it like [word indecipherable]

[Pdfs 464-465](#)

¹ An honorary canon . Webb was made Prebend of Nunnington.

Letter 298

Month later

Hardwick Vicarage,

23 Feb '82

My dearest Arthur,

I enclose you a pinch of meteoric Snuff from the inside of my roof as you wished. Please let me know if it is enough, for Tom brought down a lot more, which I have put by till I hear whether you want it.

We were hoping to go to Cheltenham on Tuesday, for the month of March - & during that time to have gone up for a few days to your hospitable quarters if it was perfectly convenient and agreeable to you. And I had engaged Mr Tudor¹ to take my duty for the month. But this morning I regret to say comes an unexpected letter to say he is ill & unable at any rate to come as soon as I wanted him. I have written straight off to Chelt^m. to see if I can get a substitute for him – but till I get two replies – one from his wife and one from my Chelt^m. man, I am quite at sea as to plans (little expected that, at breakfast time.)

If all goes well with our arrangements and yours, would it be quite suitable if we came up on Thursday March 9 (or next day) running down to our niece at Christchurch on Saturday & returning to you on Monday for two or three days again? Will this do?

Of course things may turn out so that I may have to run backwards and forwards here for Sunday duties – which, with lectures at Cheltn. w^d. complicate matters awkwardly – but more about that another day – enough this hurried morning if I can lay one scheme before our dear friend,

Our united best love (our Mary would not be with us),

Your affectionate old friend
.W. Webb

Pdfs 468-469

¹ Henrietta's nephew from Monmouth

Letter 299

One week later

Rodney Terrace, Cheltenham,

1 March /82

My dearest Arthur,

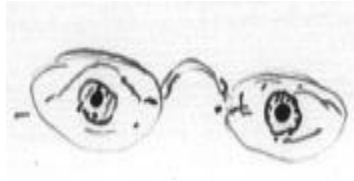
I am so sorry to trouble you in this unconscionable way (by the way where did that queer word spring from?) but our movements having been to a considerable extent in the power of others, we shd. feel particularly obliged – supposing of course that it is all the same to you – if we might change our plan and be allowed to come to you on the evening of Monday 20th – for a few days – returning here sometime in the latter part of that week. We might possibly be detained till the morning of Tuesday before getting off hence – but as far as I can see, I think we may calculate on Monday. –

It will be a great pleasure to see you.

You did not say whether you were dusty enough, but if not I can easily get some more of the same lot, put by on purpose.

Our united kind love and many apologies

Your affectionate old friend



Pdfs 470-471

Letter 300

Nearly five months later

Hardwick Vicarage, 26 July [?Aug] 1882

[*Written in a different hand across the right side*] Burton's death

My dearest Arthur,

Thank you very much for the sight of the very interesting letter, which I ought to have returned sooner, but have been very busy one way or others. Poor dear fellow! I feel his loss very much - & have ventured on writing to his father. –

I never saw him excepting twice (possibly 3 times) at your house – but our correspondence (due to you as the originator) was tolerably frequent for years, &, to me, very delightful. What he had to say was in all ways so worth saying, and reading – and there was something so very modest & unassuming about him. I loved him very much – with the impression that had his life been spared it would have been only an increasing feeling. I have no reason to suppose that he had me in his thoughts when he made that entry in his little book – but you may recollect his lending it to me at your house & my leaving it under your care. It is a most interesting record of his experiments & progress in speculum–working interspersed with many valuable observations, not I fancy all published. I wonder what will become of his specula. –

Thank you very much for bearing with my stupidity about the prism. I had some idea of sending to “Knowledge” the result of my experiments on the Rainbow, & I did not like to describe it incorrectly.

That last statement about Encke's division on Ring A is marvellous. – you know my suspicions that there are many mysteries not answerable to our enquiry, experimental or analytical. –

I had been trying an eyepiece for a half-satisfied friend – (one of Wray's – very good, but might be better) - & I was somewhat surprised in the villainous definition of last night to see very distinctly ϵ Böötis with 2 inches of aperture of my mirror, & about 450. –

I rejoice to think that the Earls' vexation is at an end.

We both hope your hay fever is better, and unite in very kind love

Your affect. old friend

T. W. Webb

I have found at last (can't imagine why I missed it before) Birmingham's last new Var. in Cygnus. It is a great beauty for colour. -

[Pdfs 472, 473](#)

Letter 301

Over four months later

Hardwick Vicarage 17 Nov. '82 (after post.)

My dearest Arthur,

Little did I imagine when I wrote to you yesterday, that I should do so again this evening – but “look ye here!” this morning brings me a letter from a N.Zealand correspondent, which is, to my thinking, too valuable and interesting to be kept back from the R.A.S. Will you please read it - & if you agree with me, will you please get the Secretary (I forget who he is) to read it as communicated by myself – which I think is etiquette on such occasions. I have crossed out with red ink the portions which do not suit the purpose – and when done with, should feel obliged by the return of the letter. Here is one of the very best cases of the anomalous Tail! –¹

- If their right worshipful Dignities will please to put it in, I have this morning sent a short notice which you will see in the Times – but I have taken care (as I hope) to word it in so general a way that it would not prevent the publication of the letter in M. Notices, if the Editor of them (please who is he?) should think fit. –

Stevenson is, I suppose, a clerk in a merchant's office at Auckland – a very nice fellow, as you will see at once by his letter – and his ability & modesty thoroughly deserve the recognition which I wish to get for him – very much I expect to his astonishment – in the Old Country. I first became acquainted with him thro' his anxious desire too get as good an instrument as his means would reach. In those days Calver was cheaper a good deal than With, & with the full cognisance of the latter generous and noble spirited man, I recommended Calver, who supplied him with a 6½ in. mirror of I believe very good quality, of which Stevenson has made good use, & reports progress to me from time to time. I do not know enough of his circumstances to say whether it might be right to suggest his admission as Corresponding Member – but I will tell him our terms - & this may bring out some information. One way or other he is evidently the right kind of man to have. –

I forgot to thank you as I ought to have done for all the kind trouble you have taken about Frank's friend. He (Franks) is getting his observatory into capital order & going to use electric light - & will do I am sure something - & I have been much interested in his account of the spirited doings of Canon Beechey².

By the way, would you tell me who was D^r. Stallo - & who is J.B. Stallo - & what nation under the sun ever turned out such a name? –

Here's enough for tonight. Possibly I may see our bearded friend again in the morning & if I do I'll add something about him. By the way we have got now a clearer proof than ever that nuclei do not, all of them at least, revolve on axes. There's a curious exception, to all solar & planetary arrangements.

What has Huggins done? – I have omitted to say how pleased I have been, this morning, to see so much more of the aspect of the Comet in the proceedings of your late Meeting – just filling up, in part at least, the great gap I was complaining of.

¹ English Mechanic: Issue 925 Dec 15, 1882 p334 Report at December meeting of RAS of communication from TWW enclosing observations by Mr J.T. Stevenson in NZ of the anomalous tail of the Great Comet. Ranyard also spoke on this point. From later letters one realises Stevenson was in fairly regular correspondence with TWW.

² St. Vincent Beechey (1806–1899) was vicar of Fleetwood and Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire and later of Worsley, Lancashire. He is known for founding Rossall School in Fleetwood, Lancashire in 1844 and was also President of the Manchester Photographic Society.

Saturday morn^g – a jolly fog – was up several times & might as well have been down – on my back in bed. –

On second thoughts – partly because my wife & self are so interested in the letter we don't like to risk it with printers – in case it never gets so far – and partly because it would not be very kind on our part to saddle you with the responsibility of its return, I have determined to copy out the communicable part, which you get herewith – but I should like you to see the whole some day. I am sure you would be interested in the good fellow.

Prince has sent me a book which I have not had time to look into – but I expect will delight me – all about my very dear friends of old days, Hevelius, Gassendi, etc. – men I think too little remembered in our modern hurry & scramble – but noble leaders of thought: “giants in the earth.”

By the way, please note - & sh^d you be at the meeting you c^d point out if you liked, that this seems the only instance in which an anomalous tail has been prolonged on both sides the nucleus as a distinct formation – in other instances, as far as I know or can remember, it has been only traced “sunwards”, as Stevenson expresses it, & if continued past the nucleus, has been merged in the ordinary tail.

We have got a proof here, I fancy, that ~~the~~ however rapid may be the translation of the Sun thro' space, its immediate neighbourhood must be intensely heated. For if the Comet was gaseous, would it not be too ~~transparent~~ ^{^diathermanous^} to be heated up to such intense brilliancy by radiant heat? Would it not rather be fired up by convection? I don't feel at all sure about a matter too deep for me – but just throw it out as material for thought – Also, it never occurred to me till this moment – but surely it is an indication of all but perfect emptiness of space, that that motion of translation affects the form & extent neither of the prominences nor corona. –

Your old friend is speculative, you see, in his advancing age. I bless Him who has been pleased to continue to me so long, serviceable sight & brain.

- There was a fine crimson aurora yesterday evening after sunset. Perhaps they are returning. Other regions were yellowish, & the spectrum-band strong.

My wife's kind love

Yours very affectionately

T.W. Webb

Letter 302

Four days later

Hardwick Vicarage, 21 Nov. '82

My dearest Arthur,

Many thanks – owing to your kind letter I was able to project on paper a sufficient image of that wonderful spot, to show that it was, or must have been, a noble object – but stiff mist, heralding rain, prevented anything sharp. –

About the anomalous tail – your explanation – which I recollect given for a smallish comet a good many years ago ^{^(1824)^} - is very ingenious – but I want to controvert if I can – for 2 reasons – imprimis because I love a mystery; & secundo because I have a strong impression that the explanation would not fit Newton's in 1660 – the first anomalous case I believe, & by the way one much resembling this in its close perihelion – Now as 1660 was visible with a big tail before perihel: & afterwards with a still bigger after close approach –

There now! I have broken down. And I feel I can't push the argument, for want of knowing more about it!

I see from Flammarion's "Astronomie Populaire"¹ – which my wife gave me some time ago, but as it has been in the binder's hands I have hardly had a chance of looking at – that after 1660 had gone so near the Sun a vast Sunspot appeared. Might it not be worth your while to look up authorities – which Fl. – (more shame) never gives – and see if anything could be made out of this. And did anything similar happen in 1843 ? And is not, at any rate this magnetic storm – of which I had not heard – a very curious indication ? Must we not fall back upon either electricity – or some unknown force – as the "vera causa" of Comet's Envelopes & tails ? And if there is no alternative, will not the ordinary rules of philosophy require us to adopt the known rather than the unknown solution ? One may believe anything of so incomprehensible a force as electricity = magnetism in treating of which, by the way – it always seems to me that there is a vast deal very quietly ignored – in the middle of a dust of volts & ohms & Farads. (my compliments to the "~~whole~~ whole boiling" of them, as I think they say in Leicestershire) But I suppose any big man feeling about ^{^for^} the foundations would get broken shins or knuckles - & I doubt they would like such a risk. Reputations cost more than money !

Burnham has just sent me Vol.1 publications of Washburn Observatory² – by which it appears that what they called the Great Comet of 1881 – i.e. the 1st of the two comets visible at once – had at one time a Double Nucleus – like our present friend. – so I think Donati, teste Lassell – a smaller comes. These things want collection & discussion. – But then, where's the centre of Gravity? And if the centre of gravity is not the centre of figure, where's our place - & where's our orbit ? –

You'll think me a Professor of Botheration, as I once called a pupil of my father's (but in that case I added "and Bad Spelling to it, to my father's great amusement.)

What has become of Schmidt's Comet?³

What of Enck's deceptive stars of reference?

What could have been the marvellous meteors of Friday, - described in 2 letters in yesterday's Times? (with a jolly erratum in each) –

¹ See Letter 259

² The Washburn Observatory is located on the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus. Completed in 1881, it was a major research facility for about 50 years. Now it is used primarily by the public during open houses and by students in introductory astronomy courses.

³ See Letter 48

What is Langley¹ at, turning the Spectrum bottom uppermost?

What is Webb at, writing a letter so full of nonsense ? –

I thought I had done – but whatever has Burnham been about in publishing such extra villainous figure of a most interesting object (more like 1861 than possibly he may be aware of).

And what is Dunkehl² about, when he says that not only the Sodium but other bright bands were displaced by the motion of the Nucleus - & then never tells us what said other bright bands belonged to – which he must have known – or he could not have told their right places.

(Ans. He was not in his right place.)

Post comes - & impertinence goes –

Our united kind love ~

Your affectionate friend

Old Cleres[. - ?]

Pdfs 476, 477

¹ Samuel Pierpont Langley 1834 –1906, American astronomer, physicist, inventor of the bolometer and pioneer of aviation. Particularly interested in solar physics.




² Looks like “Dunkehl” in the letter but cannot spot him in Google

Letter 303

Next day

Hardwick Vic. 22 Dec. 82

My dearest Arthur,

I ought to have written to you long ere now to condole with you on your disappointment, after all the pains and trouble you had taken. However I hope you got something out of it, & had an agreeable time among the French savans, who I am sure were glad to have you there. We were more fortunate – the sun was too low for the big gun, so I rigged up my wife's little Bardou o/g in her room, and projected the sun on cardboard, & caught the ingress when not more than 4" or 5" could have entered - & saw internal contact – but there was too much vapour & fuss to say whether there was any black drop – we saw none – but when well on disc we both of us saw a feeble luminous annulus of possibly 1 radius in breadth. It is a pleasure to hear of such successes abroad. – I have never seen Comet since, nor probably have you. Desperate weather, besides . – I had a very fine view of  [Saturn] on 9th. – Encke's division distinct on [??], & transparency of C pretty evident. – I am stuck with the badness of 's [Jupiter's] limb compared with discs of satellites. It looks not solid.

Thank you very much for kind information about tides – my incredulous neighbour has not turned up yet.

But now I am going to be troublesome again – you'll think there is no end of it. Please try to make the best of it as a compliment to your tried good nature. –

I want to know why the eye-part of a spectroscope is called a Telescope? If as I fancy the image is that of the slit, is it not rather a long-focussed Microscope? I can't see anything of a telescope about it. – But I must own that I am rather at sea about the anatomy of the spectroscope - & tho' I have instruction what it does & how to use it I have not met with a drawing of a skeleton (probably have not looked far enough.)

- The other question is a much more important one - & I shall feel very much obliged by one line in return – which I am thankful to say will suffice. You recollect there was a bother about the affairs of my wife's deceased sister. She ^{^(my wife)^} has a claim to a share of the assets – which she is going to make a present of. Query – is there not some modern enactment which gives her a sole right to this? so that I have no control over it – but she would have to sign the receipt ^{^to the Exrs.^} & could do as she pleased with it entirely? – Which I wish her to do.

Pray forgive my giving you this trouble. We shall be obliged by a speedy reply as the affair is being wound up. –

Our united best love, with every good wish of the coming season



The Publication of the Hardwick
Philosophical Transactions is inevitably postponed.”

Letter 304

Five days later

Hardwick Vicarage,

27 Dec. 1882.

after Post

My dearest Arthur

I am so much obliged by your kind letter – which has very much enlightened me as to the spectroscope, as well as the Married Woman's property act¹. – I am I know very troublesome – but the fact is that in the hurry & turmoil of this Christmas – which has exceeded I think all previous experience, I can't lay my hand on the information (scientific) which I believe I possess all the while.

I am so sorry you were not here at the Transit. You would have made something of it. I understand there is something curious in the Times which I shall see tomorrow. When are we going to see you again? Years slip away so fast - & though you do not perceive it as we do, & I trust may not for many happy years to come (God send you many!) still the night cometh ! –

I have been very much concerned at a report about poor M^f. Sadler – that he is falling into habits of intemperance. I feel much concerned about this. Do you ever see anything of him now ?

Schiaparelli² has sent me such a love of a drawing of the Comet – with its wonderful external envelope, which must have been entangled in the coronas (unless it were developed afterwards) – its strange dark lacunæ – its anomalous tail etc. – But I have said very little about this, because I think perhaps he may prefer telling his Tail his own way – as most folks do. – I like that Schiaparelli –

When you are quite at leisure & have nothing else to do, would you kindly answer as to a point or two ? That stupid & troublesome business will now be very soon I trust at an end – but the Sol^f though a real good fellow is a man of peace, has been a little of what is called shilly-shally, & not quite straight-forward in expression, tho' I dare say he is quite so in his own ideas. And therefore, I should feel especially obliged if you will kindly tell me, in the case of an unmarried sister being entirely dependent on others, on whom lies the legal obligation to maintain her. Is her brother solely responsible – or does any liability extend to sisters or sister's children ? – This of course is only legal responsibility – the moral & equitable question being another matter.

(Of course I am aware that I as a sister's husband have nothing to do with it in law.)

- 2. Supposing the troublesome cousin whose extravagance has caused so much botheration had brought in an account – which he has not done – the result of which would have been to swallow up all hope of balance for anyone out of the assets – Would it have been competent to any members of the family to dispute his account on the grounds of extravagance – or from want of vouchers etc ? – They are not thinking of doing anything of the kind, especially as he has – with a very bad grace – abated part of it – I sh^d. Only like to know whether such a step c^d. have been taken ? – And pray understand dear Arthur, that I only ask for my own satisfaction – for the affair is on the point of completion & I trust may never be heard of again & to say the truth I do practically see my way to the end of it - & so much the more, as I never intended, even if I could, to receive a penny out of it – p[er] contra it is, & was meant to be, an algebraic minus.

¹ The Married Women's Property Rights Act of 1882 significantly altered British law regarding the property rights granted to married women, allowing them to own and control their own property.

² Giovanni Virginio Schiaparelli 1835 –1910 Italian astronomer and science historian. In 1859-1860 he worked in Pulkovo Observatory and then worked for over forty years at Brera Observatory. Particularly known for his studies of Mars.

But having I fancy to deal with one of the Clerks of the Circumlocution Office, I sh^d. feel especially obliged if you w^d just satisfy a mere curiosity. I must not go on. We were delighted with your beautiful Card – pray accept a ^^ far inferior ones, but the best I have at hand. – You know you have the best wishes of us both for your best happiness.

Time I finished this stupid letter
Your very affect. Old Friend
T. W. Webb

P.S. May I trouble you with another little matter ? I have received the enclosed circular which I have signed ex animo – for it seems to me a foolish move – but like a great goose I destroyed the letter accompanying it without copying Mr Fordham's address - & now don't know where to direct it. I dare say you know. Will you kindly fill up for me ?

Pdfs 480, 481

Letter 305

Month later

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay, R.S.O.

26 Jan. 1883.

My dearest Arthur,

As usual, come to torment you: - but you are ever “a friend in need”.

I forget whether I told you that I am preparing a very elementary little thing on Optics for the Christian Knowledge Society. ~~Have consult~~ I do not want to go into minutiae, but there are some points that have cropped up, about which I want to still my intellectual grumblings – I have got Lommel & Brewster, & have read Spottiswood’s lecture, & Herschel’s Lectures, & Ganol, & Lardner, & Pepper(!) And all have left a nebulosity about a point or two – which I dare say you can sweep away. It is marvellous, to me, now very nebulous eminent men can be, who look at matters only through their own spectacles. –

E.g. – I want to know what becomes of the beam of polarised light when incident on the analyser the wrong way. A friend has told me he thinks it is reflected. As far as I can make out it is spoken of as ~~abs~~ extinguished – i.e. absorbed. But what becomes of it then? Ought it not to become Heat ? If not [?- looks like Fried!], this ought to be. –

2. Am I to conceive of an unpolariser ray as composed of undulations in every possible transverse direction, as ~~I think~~ some say – or only 2 directions at right angles before separated? I see that practically this is unimportant, because every possible direction must include 2 at r¹ angles – but it ought to be stated one way or other. Fresnel gives I believe 2 directions.

3. I am of course aware that all doubly refracted rays are polarised. But is the converse as universal? I fancy not. ~~Or a~~ That is I don’t see how light, polarised by reflection ^ if Doubled also as in refraction, ^ could escape producing a double image in our eyes. (stupid I dare say.)

4. Do all reflecting surfaces polarise except metals?

5. Would it be right to call all contrivances in general – such as a Nicol prism, a Rochon crystal, a Tourmaline – a Nörremberg affair – in short everything that can polarise & analyse, - by the name of Polariscope ? or is this name restricted to some one contrivance’s ? I see Lommel uses # ^“polariscope”^ for analyser but perhaps that is German, not English usage? –

There’s a lot of bother ! Do forgive it. The more I look into books, the more convinced I am that though they be many-sided they are not all-sided.

We are thinking of going to Cheltⁿ. For March to escape the lion - winds & give me a chance of donkey-lectures. And possibly we might run up to Town for a few days. How delighted we should be to see you!

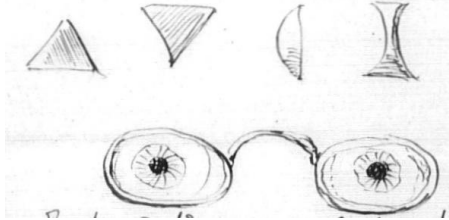
Apropos of the Sun, which I am to bray about, do you happen to have Prof: Young’s book¹, which I hear a high character of. If you have, & think so of it yourself, & that it contains matters not touched upon in Cel: Obj: would you kindly lend it to me? ~~Of~~ Or if in RAS Library I would write to Wesley for it. –

¹ See Letter 150

I am getting a new & more convenient roof to the old Telescope House. Have you forgotten it ? You have been long enough away from us to account for it.

My wife's kind love

Your affectⁿ old friend



Envelope Reopened to say – O dear, dear ! More bother. – A lady in London, one of the Whitney Rectory Dews, now Hospital Nurse in London, & very wisely anxious to improve herself after putting on a pair of very long ears in a matrimonial affair, writes thus –

“Could you recommend a weekly or monthly publication on Astronomy & Botany – not very deep but suitable to enquiring & ignorant minds? Do you recommend Science Gossip”? (which T.W.W never sees!) also can you tell me whether there are any Lectures held anywhere in London on Natural Science that ladies could attend of an afternoon? – poor TWW. Has broken down in toto – A.C.R. to the rescue, please, please – a lady's in this case.

– (which sort of case ? Glass, or metal, or what ? I never had that defined.)

Pdfs 482, 483

Letter 306

Week later

Hardwick Vicarage, 2 Feb. '83 After Post

My Dearest Arthur,

Best thanks fir your very kind letter & all the trouble you have taken for me. I did not ~~ne~~ ask you all those bothering questions till I had failed in all the books I could get at – so you see what a proficient in Optics you have shown yourself to be. Where did you get it all? One or two other matters I should like explained –by one who can explain so clearly to very dull & slow capabilities like mine.

Thank you again very much for the promise of Young's ~~Optics~~ Sun –I hope the loan of it will be no inconvenience to you – I wanted the latest & best information before giving some “scratch” lectures in Cheltenham, where we are to go .D.V. on 19th but I think I told you this before. I don't think however I did  tell you that we had had T.E. Espin¹ here for the inside of a week N.B. This blot is not meant for a likeness. It is ^has^very much the character of a snail's head & horns! which can certainly claim no affinity with him except it may be in delicacy of feeling. He is a very charming fellow & I think has a bright astronomical future before him. I have just rec^d. Holden's beautiful Orion. Neb. – but have scarcely looked at it - & the Washburn Observ^{ns}. containing some fresh Red Stars – they are not exhausted – but one has to beware of personal colour-equation. I hope Birmingham will extend & weed out his catalogue. Schiaparelli was so very kind as to send me a beautiful drawing of the Comet – ~~about~~ with description from which I could have quoted much with the greatest advantage to the RAS – but as he gave me no authority & might possibly intend to send a communication himself, I kept mum. – He will I think surprise us yet - & I dare say there will be a fight over Mars. I asked him whether such a speculum as mine which shows Encke's division would reach his Canals – he said he thought it would the larger ones, but not the germinations. – I had Encke so plain one night this season that I not only held him fast – in best moments, - but saw that he made an unequal division of that ring. Espin saw 5th. in Trapezio easily enough, which is a puzzle to me. – You will see a signed review of mine (of Ledger's Lectures) in “Nature” – they asked me for my name to it, which I had no ground to refuse, though it is not to my taste – I love to be more quiet – And I would not give it at any time when it might be likely to lead to what, I so cordially dislike – paper skirmishing. I suppose Nature may wish to smother Knowledge – not a very unlikely thing, though R.A.P.² goes on gallantly enough – but he has a queerish team I fancy. – My telescope roof is all to⁴ pieces – no wonder after long rough wear, entitling it to an honourable cremation when defunct – battens started, canvas rent & torn away &c.&c.. yet the old instrument holding its own famously. I'll put on another roof with 2 pairs of opposite shutters, not only saving time in turning, but, as the one side rises more steeply than the other, giving relief in positions where now it cramps the head awkwardly. There was a bright thought ! – My little S Orionis (my only discovery worth the name) has faded down to insignification. Espin examined all my observations, which I was astonished to find amounted to 80, & found it quite possible to get a good curve [wave?] – but I do not recollect what it was. I have looked at one or two of my own rubies for variation but never found it,

And so I might go on – but only to tire you & spend time – so, especially as my wife is going to write, I shall close and remain

Your affectionate Old Friend
T. W. Webb

¹ Thomas Henry Espinall Compton Espin: See biographical notes

² Richard Proctor

P. S. I had to go out to dinner yesterday after writing the above, & during my absence – my wife wrote her note – not being aware at the time that the Meetings would be (unless I am mistaken) on March 9. – I hope that time may perfectly suit you. I shall be so very glad to see you again. She would like to know if there would be a chance of her seeing M^r Green.-

Pdfs 484, 485

Letter 307

Two months later

Hardwick Vicarage, 5 Apl. /83

My dearest Arthur,

I have been thinking & thinking, of writing, - but partly have been much engaged with a Visitation Sermon I had to preach last Tuesday in Hereford, & partly have been inordinately bothered by stupidity & good-for-nothing-ness – the [...?] of my severe chill, which has bothered me in various troublesome ways. However it was nothing worse than troublesome, and I am much better, & getting mischievous today. Ergo I am going to bother my kind dear friend on some matters connected with my little book on Optics which I must push on as far as possible now. –

1. I want the most modern & dependable value of the Velocity of Light. I got Glazebrook's book to put me straight about all the data – have mislaid it - & spent I know not how much time, alas ! in hunting for it.
2. I have stated that when a ray falls on a polished surface – reflection will take place, [...?] if the surface should be that of a Transparent medium. I have added this note “There is an exception, but it w^d not be intelligible here” – in the pappy condition of my brains I cannot possibly recollect, or make out, what that exception is – I had it all clear before me once – but surgical & other bother has produced a very diffused nebulosity here.
3. I have found for you the instance of a Cometary Hood set on one side (after having repeatedly missed it.) it was Donati. Vide Astron. Nachr. Vol LII. N^r. 1242.

And now you must allow me to congratulate you on the admirable spirit with which you met M^r. Davis's groundless assertion. You have got above him 50% C^t. In the opinion of every calm, dispassionate, gentlemanly man. – I had no opportunity in Cheltⁿ. of making out anything about him.

“Sarah Jones is here, Sir” – a message from beneath which cuts off all the rest I had to say – which was nothing – so with my wife's kind love, believe me dearest Arthur

Your very affectionate Old Friend

Turnip Top. –

Pdfs 486, 487

Letter 308

Two days later

Hard. Vic. 7 Apr. 83

My dearest Arthur

Best thanks for your truly kind friendly letter – my trouble arose from retention & some troublesome consequences from which however I am thankful to say I am getting all right, tho' not at once.

I brought with me - ^from Cheltenham^ or thought I did, Glazebrook's Introduction to Optics – but to my entire disgust can find it nowhere after sad loss of time in hunting – here & hence my enquiry about values of velocity of Light. I shall be greatly obliged by Lieut. Michaelson's[sic]¹, w^{ch}. I sh^d prefer to any other – at your entire convenience. But a number of other data I meant to have taken from that book – so that its loss is very irksome.

And now, another very great favour. Will you oblige me by looking over & correcting the enclosed? It seems to me right – but I don't quite understand why the undulations (at the beginning) being decomposed so to speak into two normal directions are said to have one plane of polarisation? They may be said to be in one plane – but in opposite directions in that plane. And then, which of the directions is chosen as descriptive of the plane? I think no book has cleared this to me –

How troublesome I am – and there's the post actually waiting

Your affect. old Friend
T. W. Webb

My wife's best love – very glad about Cook –
Please return paper, as well as correct it
Vile pen. –

Pdfs 488, 489

¹ Presumably Albert A. Michelson 1852 –1931, American physicist known for his work on the measurement of the speed of light . He was a naval lieutenant. Later a Nobel prize winner for physics

Letter 309

Two days later

Hardwick Vicarage Hay

9 April/83

My dearest Arthur,

Hurrah! We have treed the possum alias found the Book – I am delighted & sh^d. be more so had not the mislaying been so utterly discreditable to my own sense & memory –

Write me down an Ass – only no doubt you have ~~got better~~ done so long ago (talk going on about a person getting better!) –

I wrote in such a hurry against post on Sat^y. That I don't know whether I made my meaning clear to you - & how could it be when it was muddy to myself! But what I mean – or intended to mean was this. –

By polarising ordinary light – the vibrations of which, you taught me, are perpetually performing little ellipses in all directions, I suppose you turn all those undulations into 2 directions normal to each other – of course in the same plane – and you say the light is polarised in that plane, no matter what may the direction protempore.

Now, if this is right, have I expressed it accurately enough for the simple popular purpose in the MS. I sent you? It seems to me right – but when you understand a thing superficially it is so easy to make some misstatement without being aware of it - & that is what I am afraid of. – and fly to you about. –

And here, I am sorry to say, comes another great liberty taken with your kindness. Would you do me the especial favour to say whether the enclosed would hold water? There is no hurry about it. –

We have been sorely hunted, & house cleaning drives us from home on Wed^y. Evening so that our address on Thursday & Friday morning would be

7 Rodney Terrace
Cheltenham. –

From the welcome discovery of my Book I have found what I meant in an exceptional case of non-reflection at a polished surface – it would be in polarised light.

Glad to have one Deraliey's ear amputated. – *[do not understand this]*

No time yet to hunt up the reference to Gesta Dei ¹ in my Father's MSS. – Do forgive it.

My wife's best love – hopes your Cook suits -

Ever your very affect.

T.W.Webb

Pdfs 490, 491

¹ Gesta Dei per Francos is the title adopted by Guibert de Nogent (died about 1124) for his history of the First Crusade – just the sort of thing John Webb might have had in his MSS!

Letter 310

Three weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage

21 Ap^l 1883

My dearest Arthur,

There's an old proverb (you know I am a proverbial man) that says "Much would have more" – and I am going to exemplify it. First of all let me thank you most cordially for all the very valuable help you have given me in so many ways – legal as well as optical – The former has been the means of making a poor man – as well as myself – very comfortable – as to the latter, you have pointed out several things ~~that were~~ ^{^where^} the books only left me in the mud – but I am still not quite clear - & you will think me very stupid - & so I am! But you are accustomed, I dare say, to deal with stupid clients. – Here then is the next nuisance. - ^{^Through your kind explanation^} I now perfectly comprehend that I have ~~mistaken~~ ^{^confounded^} what might be called the plane of direction of the undulations of polarised light, which of course is normal to the direction in which light enters the eye, and invariably so – with the plane of polarisation, which if I am right at last, is normal to that ~~directio~~ transverse direction of the undulations, & contains within it, as a plane contains a line, the direction in which the polarised (or any other) light – enters the eye. – So far, may I hope ? so good. But here ^{with} comes the rub. If I am right in stating that by polarisation the undulations are turned in 2 directions at right angles to each other – how can we speak of light being polarised in one plane, whatever it may be? Must it ~~not be pol-~~ there not be 2 planes of polarisation, one corresponding to each direction of the transverse undulations? – This exactly agrees with your last kind note & diagram – but statements are constantly made, I think, that in such or such a case light is polarised in a plane passing thro' so and so? Is this to be understood as ~~meaning, in full,~~ ^{^as an abridgment of the full meaning^} that the light is polarised in 2 planes normal to each other, but that, for ~~descrip~~ purposes of description one plane only is specified? And if I right as to this, possibly it may be customary, in selecting ^{^one^} from these 2 planes, to specify the one in which the light is extinguished by a transverse analysisation?

All this I can suppose, but feared I sh^d never have made it out from books. – But there again, if I have travelled so far profiting by your tutorship, in safety, ought I not to modify what I have written, & which I re-enclose, hoping you will again forgive the trouble I give? – I should omit what I have crossed out with red ink on p.1. ^{^as quite wrong & misleading,^} & add what is substituted in red at the bottom of p. 2. Will this give a clear & correct notion to an Ignoramus? – If that should happen to be right, won't I crow? –

I don't think a master like yourself can fully appreciate the difficulties of awkward – squad-boys like me. But I will say this – that I do hate needless ambiguity & perplexity - & find lots of it ! – Amongst it all I am stupid enough not to see the objection you have taken to my opening sentence – which as altered by you gives no name to the property of light I am about to describe. Of course it would be more correct to say ^{^instead of polarisation - ^} its capacity of being polarised – but is not this a needless refinement for Nursery Optics?

I must be off into the parish & with my wife's kind love remain

yours very aff^{te} & obliged
Old Friend

Possum up a Gum Tree. –

Do you happen to know the most accepted number of terrestrial Chemical Elements?

Letter 311

This is virtually a blank sheet of the same type of paper as Letter 242 and has on it only [in pencil by ACR ?]

Missing link

Life work

Pdfs 494

Letter 312

Hardwick Vicarage

29 May /83

My dearest Arthur,

I got your kind P. Card, but am a little annoyed – too late – at the thought of what a cumbrosity I have inflicted on your domestic space. When are you coming, to get rid ~~th~~ of them by bringing them with you? I ask this just now because I do not know whether we told you that for the whole month of July we are to be in Hereford. One of the Canons is too infirm to keep his 3 month's residence – so it has been split in three, & one portion assigned to your humble servant, in the idea that he is particularly fond of Cathedral services – which is true – but without any ~~prof~~ prospect of remuneration, which will all be eaten up by lodging house keepers & purveyors for daily consumption, in addition to having to pay a substitute here. However, I don't think I shall lose much, my wife being such a capital manager. –

Next month (June) I think we c^d. hardly manage a visit from you with convenience – but do come in Aug^t. or better still Sept^r. - & give us what notice you can. –

Meanwhile will you bestow another favour on a poor old beggar – who wants to know what number of years of non-use would extinguish a right of pasturage on a common? I am told that a right belonging to the Church farm here is threatened in this way. Of course I am not going to stand quietly by – but I wish to know my ground before I move. –

Observatory in nice order. –

Our united best love –

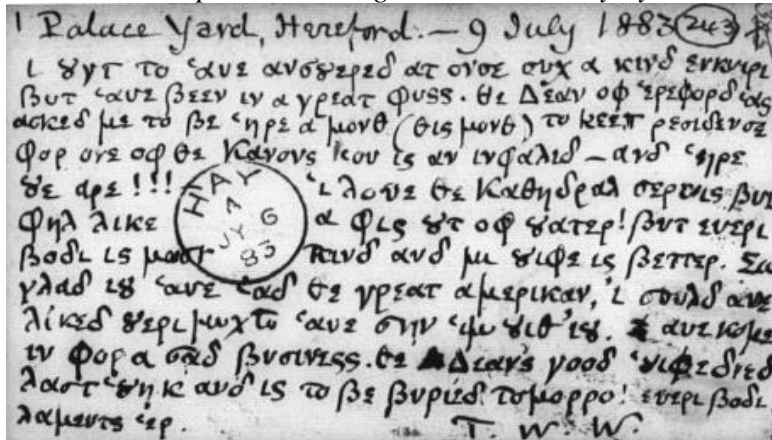
Pdfs 495, 496



Letter 313

Six weeks later

A Postcard on which TWW has replaced the English letters mostly by Greek characters.



1 Palace Yard, Hereford

9 July 1883

I ought to have answered at once such a kind enquiry
 but have been in a great fuss. The Dean of Hereford has
 asked me to be here a month (this month) to keep residence
 for one of his canons who is an invalid and here
 we are!!! I love the cathedral service but
 feel like a fish out of water! But every-
 body is most kind and my wife is better. So
 glad to have had the great American, I should have
 liked very much to have one of With 18. Have come
 in for a bad business. The Dean's good wife died
 last week and is to be buried tomorrow! Everybody
 laments her.

T W W

Letter 314

Five months later

2 Rodney Terrace Cheltenham, 3 Dec. / 83.

My dearest Arthur,

The above address will explain to you why, as we have been “knocking about”; your very kind letter has remained unanswered. We left our home on Sat^y & were busy in Hereford all day – my wife going on to her friend Mrs West at Fownhope, I to the Deanery, having to preach for the Infirmary yesterday morn^g – after Fownhope (a beautifully restored village Church) in the evening & today finds us here. –

So much for apology – now for business. Euge. Op [what is this??] – time. Bravo. Macte virtute esto! [Well done!] You’ve done it - & Heartily do I rejoice that my dear old friend has won so noble a place in Saturnian discovery. Some recompense for all the trouble & expense of getting what proves to be such a noble instrument. And thank you for letting such a “sub” as myself know about it. I have looked at \mathfrak{h} [Saturn] but twice this season & have only noted one date, Nov. 26. I don’t know whether my instrument w^d have caught have caught the “Ranyard Bell” (it might however as I have repeatedly last year seen Encké division¹) but I recollect that neither time had I a very good image – And I certainly did not look at the planet at the earlier date when your strange discovery was so visible. What next? – Why this, I think, pretty clearly – yet we really know much less about the magnificent globes than we have been flattering ourselves - & that one mystery solved – or fancied to be solved – is but the entrance upon innumerable more! [that’s my old vein you know.] Well, go on & prosper. Find us half a doz: more such stripes - & rediscover Trouvelot’s² transverse notches (which certainly are very queer) & ~~if you~~? Seriously speaking, ~~I do~~ if you do all I wish & hope, you will take rank among the first observers of the age. –

And now my dear old friend come down for 2m from the “ocular” - & help me in one way or two matters?

Our hostess of last night is very anxious to recover the address of an artist which she says she got from you through me, but has since lost. He painted the beautiful portrait of your father which hung I think over your sideboard. She will be greatly obliged if you will kindly direct her to the man again.

And another point is – a parishioner of mine, an orphan, of excellent character & good agricultural position, has committed the grievous folly of engaging herself to a scamp of a butcher in Hay – the father of several illegitimate children – who, it is pretty well known, only wants to get hold of some money of which she is possessed. I have talked to her about it, & spoken about a settlement. She fancies that she would be safe without, under the Married Women’s Property Act. But I want to know whether the mere existence of such an Act is a sufficient protection, or whether it only supplies forms etc. which women intending marriage may avail themselves of, if they choose to shelter themselves. I shall be glad if you will kindly tell me about this. – (no hurry)

¹ A dark region within the outer major ring of Saturn

² Étienne Léopold Trouvelot (1827–1895) was primarily a portrait artist when he arrived in Massachusetts in 1852. Passionate for both astronomy and moths. Illustrated celestial phenomena. His drawings were so good that the Director of Harvard College Observatory put Trouvelot on staff where he gained access to their powerful telescope. He would go on to produce some 7000 astronomical drawings and publish 50 scientific papers.

We are here till Thursday – then back to Hereford to meet at the Dean’s the Primate Designate of Australia !!! [sic] D^r. Barry whom we have known for years & years – a clever & agreeable but schoolmastery man – home next day. –

The sunset glows have been astonishing. Something seems to be the matter, somewhere. –
Do you ever see or hear from H. Sadler?

My wife’s best love –

Your very aff^{tn}. Old Friend

T. W. Webb

Pdfs 499, 500

Letter 315

Fortnight later

Hardwick Vic.

17 Dec. / 83.

My dearest Arthur,

I am come to torment you – as I am pretty sure to do when I am in a mess !
Stevenson, the worthy observer at Auckland, wishes to become F.R.A.S. & is going to send me £4..4..0 for entrance fee & first year: What he seems to want is companionship & encouragement in his studies, out there in an intellectual wilderness. Now it has occurred to me that probably fellowship in the Liverpool Astron. Society w^d. answer his purposes just as well, & at much less expense – but there is no time for me to ask him & get his reply before posting up his proposal at the RAS meeting in Jan^y. next. Under these circumstances what I want you kindly to tell me is this – could we propose him ^at RAS.^ & if I found he preferred Liverpool, withdraw the nomination afterwards? or even after the ballot if I cannot get his answer in time which may be matters of doubt? All he w^d. lose by exchange for Liverpool w^d be the Society's publications & the tail of F.R.A.S to his name – otherwise, for spirit and “go” I w^d sooner belong to L'pool. And he can make no use of our grand Library. Please let me have y^f. good advice as soon as convenient & believe me

Your loving old friend TWW.

If he still prefers RAS & we propose him in Feby. without the publications of 1884? -

Pdf 501

Letter 316

Week later

Hardwick Vic.

Xmas Eve 1883

My dearest Arthur,

Every good kind happy wish for this holy & happy season to our much-loved old friend – of so many years! –

Many thanks for kind letter – have signed the Proposal & shall feel greatly obliged by its being seconded & thirded – have written to M^r Stevenson to give him the choice – but of course it will be some time before his reply can reach me. No snow here yet – or prospect of it – sunsets & sunrises still very strange. I have taken care not to give publicity to your discovery on **h**[Saturn], tho' I have asked several friends to look out for any strange dark belt on the ball, but without mentioning your name as I thought you might like best to do that yourself

Your truly loving

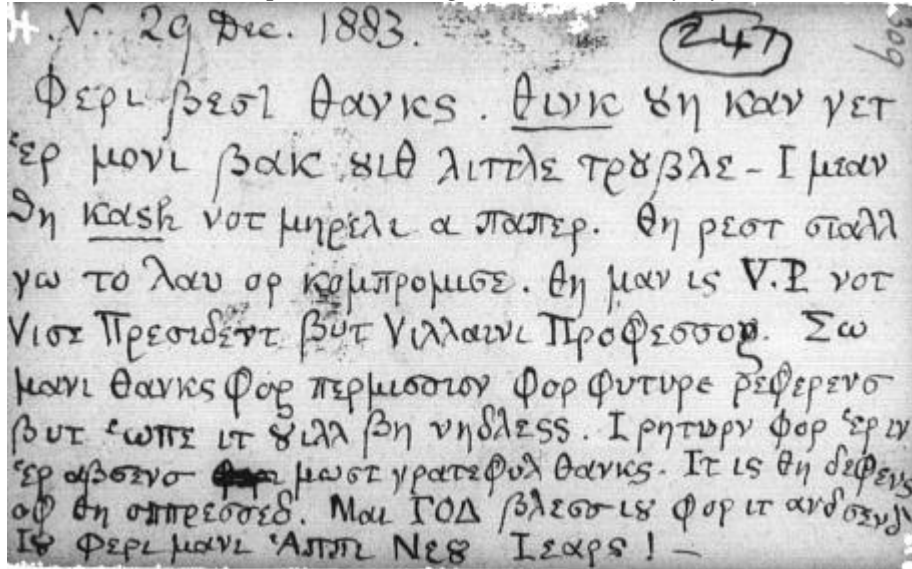
T.W.Webb

Pdfs 502

Letter 317

Five days later

A Postcard on which TWW has replaced the English letters mostly by Greek characters.



H V 29 Dec. 1883

Very best thanks. Think we can let her move back with little trouble – I mean in cash not merely a paper. The rest shall go to law or compromise. The man is V.P. not vice president but villaini professos. So many thanks for permission for future reference but hope it will be needless. I return for her in her absence most grateful thanks it is the defence of the oppressed. May God bless you for it answered. I w[ish][you].very many Happy New Years! -¹

The PC is addressed to ACR's home address:

A.C. Ranyard Esq.
13 Hunter Street
Brunswick Square
London W.C.

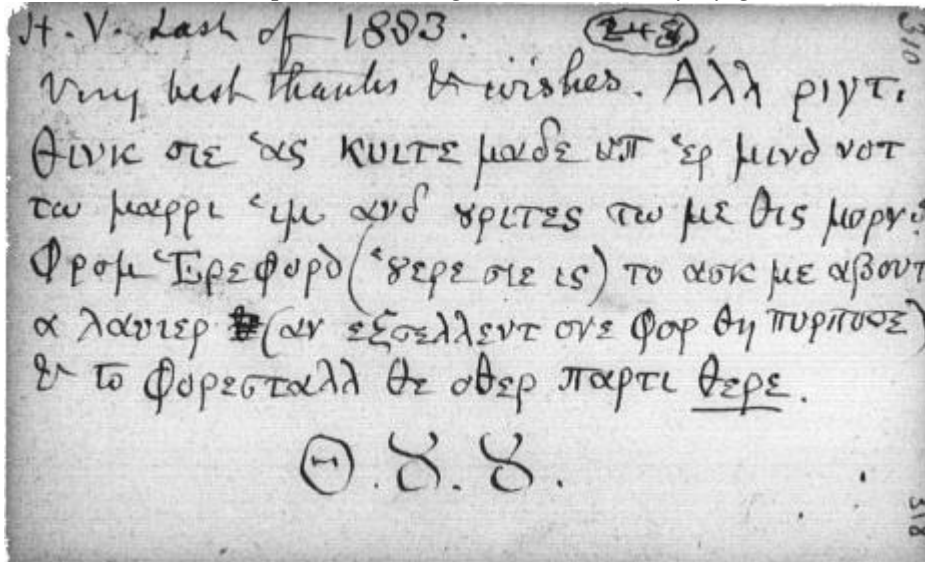
Pdfs 503, 504

¹ This card refers to the Webb's maid Mary Anne Bromage [Webb must have told Ranyard about her pregnancy in a previous letter now lost] – the story continues in subsequent letters.

Letter 318

Two days later

A Postcard on which TWW has replaced the English letters mostly by greek characters.



H V Last of 1883

Very best thanks & wishes. *All right.*

Think she has quite made up her mind not to marry him and writes to me this morning from Hereford (where she is) to ask me about a lawyer (an excellent one for the purpose) & to forestall the other party there.

T W W

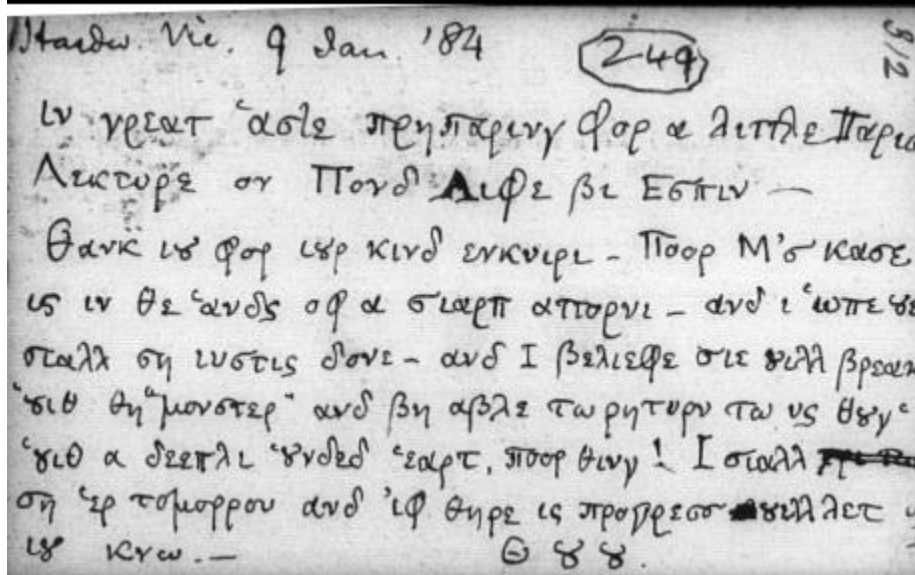
The PC is addressed to ACR's chambers:

A.C. Ranyard Esq.
 25 Old Square
 Lincoln's Inn
 London. W.C.

Letter 319

Nine days later

A Postcard on which TWW has replaced the English letters mostly by greek characters.



Hardw. Vic. 9 Jan '84

*In great haste preparing for a little parish
 lecture on pond life by Espin –
 Thank you for your kind enquiry – poor M's case
 is in the hands of a sharp attorney – and I hope we
 shall see justice done – and I believe she will break
 with the “monster” and be able to return to us though
 with a deeply wounded heart, poor thing! I shall
 see her tomorrow and if there is progress will let
 you know.- T W W*

The PC is addressed to ACR's chambers:

A.C. Ranyard Esq.
 25 Old Square
 Lincoln's Inn
 London. W.C.

Pdfs 507, 508

Letter 320

Six weeks later

Hardwick Vicarage, 19 Feb 1884,

My dearest Arthur,

How kind of you to think of us! But as often happens, we had been thinking of you - & meaning to write very soon. My wife, to ask if you happen to have any good account of the Krakatoa¹ eruption to "pick her up" to the present state of information - about which we are much in the dark here - And I, to report progress in general, according to your kind wish - & about poor Mary in particular. - And now I have first of all to thank you very affectionately for your truly friendly invitation, & to say that we have no idea at present of going to Town - all the less because my wife has managed to get through the winter (so far !) better than some previous ones, by very careful seclusion from cold. If spared till the beginning or middle of May we might very probably venture upon such an excursion - & then what a pleasure to see your kind face again! and by that time I hope we may be able to bring with us the one so kindly included in your invitation. Her story, with all its strange alternations, has been a romance - of a peculiarly sad kind - Her mind has been so weakened & confused by all she has gone through that she has been almost incapable of seeing her way - between strong love for her child, & some lingering thought - after 7 or 8 years courtship - of her betrayer - & great attachment to us. -She was reduced to a wreck, in personal appearance, & became so irresolute & vacillating that it was extremely difficult to deal with her - & many sad scenes I had with her in Hereford where I have been repeatedly to see her, & to try to strengthen her resolution, though of course carefully leaving the final decision to herself. But I am very thankful to tell you it has been made at last, & I trust irrevocably, in our favour. The man showed himself in his true colours as utterly false & hardhearted & she could see it plainly enough at times - though at others she would forgive all & be content to sacrifice herself for the poor child's sake. It was indeed a pitiable sight - our Mary with a baby in her arms!

He, in order to escape breach of promise - telling her he was willing to marry, but his mother was not ^ because she had not money enough ^ - then all full of tears & misery & saying that his mother was so too, because the lawyer obliged him to repay the £100 he had got out of her under promise of marriage - there was a lover for you! And she, poor thing so utterly worn out that, for the child's sake more than any other reason, she was willing to do anything so that her only her worry & uncertainty might be ended - it has been a miserable affair indeed! & we have had hitherto little comfort in it except the consciousness of right intentions. But at last, *after* all his boast of not caring for the law, he has been driven by a writ to repay her her money, & tomorrow he is to arrange with the lawyer for the support of the child, & then she goes to her sister-in-law in Leicestershire till we can receive her in May

-I should indeed have liked to have seen your Saturn - with all your flood of light - but mine has been very nice when it has been possible to catch him - but what a season! I think I have seen your belt (but not very dark) on one occasion. That is, if it lies close to the S. edge of the white equatorial band, forming as it were an edging to it. And in spite of Trouvelot² & 26 in. I always think I see the limb of the ball thro' the whole extent of C down to B. But it has several times (that is, the limb has) seemed darker on the F than the P side - & the shape of C across the ball seems unsymmetrical - turning up ~~too much~~ on both sides too sharply to meet C on the dark sky, but more sharply F than P. This kind of thing

¹ The 1883 eruption of Krakatoa, Indonesia. began in May 1883 and culminated with the destruction of Krakatoa in August 1883.

² See Letter 315



[Drawing not edged in original but much the same size]

- Of course not so distinct as, ^ & less exaggerated than, ^ I have sketched it here. Is this something abnormal in my old eye? One thing seems to me certain, as far as recollection of ^the^ old drawings goes – that C has much faded where it crosses the ball. It never could have been mistaken, as I think it used to be, for the shadow of the ring. – The non-meeting of the projection of C across the ball & on the sky would be explained by a greater extent of C across the dark aura than my optical power can reach – but I fear this is not confirmed by others who command the inner edge of C on the sky more plainly than I can pretend to do. - My wife adds her kind love & promises every care of anything you may please to send her

Yours very affectionately

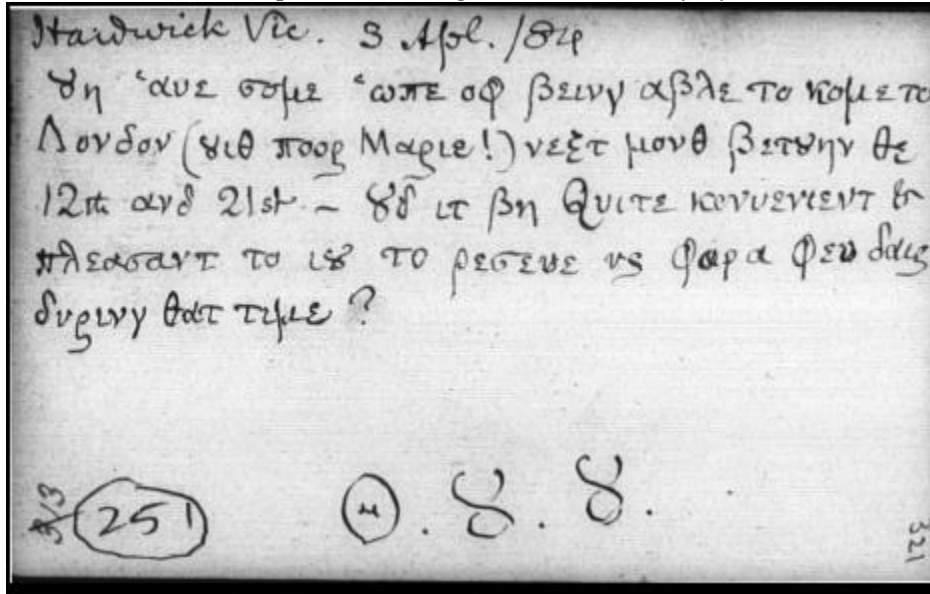
T. W. Webb

Pdfs 509, 510

Letter 321

Six weeks later

A Postcard on which TWW has replaced the English letters mostly by Greek characters.



Hardwick Vic. 3 Apl. /84

We have some hope of being able to come to London (with poor Mary!) next month between the 12th and 21st – will it be quite convenient & pleasant to you to receive us for a few days during that time?

T. W. W

A Postcard addressed to:

A.C. Ranyard
25 Old Square
Lincoln's Inn
London W.C.

[Pdfs 511, 512](#)

Letter 322

Seven weeks later

7 Rodney Terrace Cheltenham
24 May /84

My dearest Arthur,

I am very much obliged by the interesting pamphlets you have kindly sent – which I ~~hav~~ will send back in a few days. We are all plainly in a very unsettled condition. –

We hope your Hay Fever is better or at any rate not worse. –

Mr. Jackson has written to ask if you will send him the Vol. of letters for examination – so I suppose he has not quite made up his mind to the purchase - & adds that “any time” will do, as he will be from home “on an off”. I presume he means “on and off” for “the next few days.”

(A pattern of inexplicitness – however one must make the best of it.) You too will be going away I believe but if you will before leaving, have the kindness to forward the book as a parcel to his address – (letting me know what it costs you) I shall be especially obliged to you. Please excuse this paper & believe me – with our united best thanks for your most kind hospitality –

Yours very affectionately
T. W. Webb.

Professor of bad Lecturing at Cheltenham & everywhere else where there is a chance.

[Pdfs 513, 514](#)

Letter 323

Over three months later

Hardwick Vicarage

8 Sept. 84

My dearest Arthur,

None will more faithfully sympathise with me, than yourself in this grievous affliction. My dearest wife has left me to join your good mother and the saints in Paradise! This took place from apoplexy yesterday evening. Pray for me – you will be heard for Christ's sake

Your very loving friend

T. W. Webb.

Pdf 515

Letter 324

A week later

Black border

Hardwick Vicarage 15 Sept. /84

After Post

My Dearest Arthur

I would not have left your two most kind letters unanswered so long, but they have been absolutely crowded out by heavy pressure of business & correspondence. –

I am so very much obliged to you, my Old Friend of so many years, for your prayers, and your touching sympathy & offers of help, and for your invitation. I am so sorry that there is no prospect of my being able to accept it – nor indeed, if I could, would you find me otherwise than a burdensome companion. I have abundance of work here you are quite right in thinking how desirable work is - & especially when I cannot expect much ^ remaining^ time for it but I feel that it must be the work that my Master has appointed me not such as I might pick out for myself, in which I could find little alleviation for my great sorrow. Do not think me ungrateful, dear old friend, for such a kind offer, but join with me in the hope that I may find comfort in the path of duty.

I have had the kindest possible help from 2 friends who seemed to be, accidentally, but I am sure providentially, visiting here, Lady Emily Harding's youngest daughter who was always as a sister to my beloved one, and her friend Mrs Gibbs, a most kindly sensible, & efficient person. They will stay here for at least a fortnight to come. She was buried at Mitchel Troy near Monmouth, where we were married 41 years ago (blessed be God for that!) She had chosen that ground 7 years ago, & was borne to it covered with her earthly treasures of flowers disposed in wreaths & crosses – no pall.

I have many letters to write – pray for me and believe me

Your affectionate & grateful

old friend

T. W. Webb

I cannot forget how very much she loved you.

Pdfs 516, 517

Letter 325**Fortnight later**

Hardwick Vicarage

29 Sept. '84

My dearest Arthur,

For your good kind letter of 10 day's back, accept my best thanks. Its friendliness is too apparent not to merit my warm gratitude – instead of requiring any kind of apology. Please do not be uneasy at the idea of my making any such great change here as you seem to apprehend. My household will be what it was, with the exception that my 2 maids volunteered to do the work of 3 - at least as long as poor Mary remains but she will I expect be married some day – and I cannot wish it otherwise provided only I can be sure of the man's true repentance, and determination to make her a good husband. –

Many, many thanks for your most kind invitation. Nor am I inclined to accept any other though some friends have pressed me. But I get on here at present as well as I could anywhere. – Till the beginning of next week the same two invaluable friends stay with me – and I can have dear little Helen Wyatt here any time – and others would I believe be ready to come – so please cross me off from your most friendly & kind anxieties.

But there is one matter in which you may do me a kindness & I am sure you will – when quite convenient. A day or two ago I have received the enclosed from that very worthy fellow Stevenson. He is altogether mistaken in asking me – but you I know could get for me the materials of an answer, which would quite please & satisfy him. What he says about the Pons Comet¹ is in reply to my request that he would send some account which might perhaps find its way into the M.N as that would be just the kind of encouragement for the poor fellow in his scientific isolation. So you see I have not forsworn astronomy. Please return me the letter ere long & believe me dearest Arthur

Your very affectionate old friend
T. W. Webb

Pdfs 518, 519

¹ Jean Louis Pons (Marseille) originally discovered the comet in 1819, it was later rediscovered by Friedrich August Theodor Winnecke (Bonn) in 1858. it is known as 7P/Pons-Winnecke or Comet Pons-Winnecke and is a periodic comet in our solar system.

Letter 326

Over a fortnight later

Hardwick Vicarage 16 Oct. /84

My dearest Arthur,

I ought to have thanked you ere now for your great kindness in M^r. Stevenson's business - & especially for the friendly consideration which spares my copying out your instructions. I have duly forwarded your letter.

Do you happen to recollect my having, some months ago, forwarded to you a curious MS. By a M^r. Peal of Asem[?] about the snow & ice in the Moon. If you have quite done with it, & when you can conveniently lay your hands upon it, would you please let me have it. I want to send it to Espin for the Liverpool society. They heard something of his idea a good while ago, & it raised a little discussion – I think it would be as well if the subject were more fully put before them.

My excellent & admirable friends Miss Harding & Mrs Gibbs – having done me such services as they alone could render – left me last Monday week, and I have been alone, as the world expresses it – yet not alone, as I venture to believe, since till yesterday evening, when good kind Helen Wyatt, my godchild, came to me. & will be able to remain some time.

My health I thank God continues unimpaired - & I am able to get through all my duties as previously.

Thank you so much for all your friendliness – not thrown away, I may assure you, on this poor old heart, if not at present acted upon.

I hope the box of MSS is not in your way. I must have a great sorting of such matters here some day or another. Perhaps you would come and help me. Meanwhile I hope God may abundantly bless & prosper you.

your affectionate Old Friend

T.W.Webb

I have seen Miss Thomas whom you refer to, & she will probably come next week to take away a very beautiful little 2^{1/3} in. Bardou OG. of which she is well worthy

[Pdfs 520/521](#)

Letter 327

Five weeks later

Black border

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay

24 Nov. 1884

My dearest Arthur,

You will be glad I know to hear that through God's great mercy to me I am preserved in health & able to get through all that is required of me - & I have been most efficiently & tenderly supported ^assisted^ by one kind friend or another throughout - but it is a sad scene.

There has been a melancholy apportionment among my beloved one's relations & near friends - of personal articles - & there are a few which a gentleman might like to possess - so I write a line just to ask you whether you would care to make a choice among the following -

A good Binocular, that she used to travel with.

A Railway Reading Lamp, new, which, unless otherwise provided, might be of use in an Observatory. -

A Ring - Aberystwyth crystal picked up by me or herself - mounted in gold hoop. -

A plain crystal mounted in swivel (but this wants better mounting)

A Book (folio) of Sea Weeds.

A Musical box - 4 tunes. Good but not in perfect order easily rectified in London.

There might be many other nice little mementos if you were here - but these are what most readily occur to me -

Will you kindly let me know soon, as I shall be glad to terminate these very painful businesses.

I had a very sad journey to Cheltenham week before last - the only time I have slept from home! but business - in part connected with my Will, made it necessary. & I must go again by & by. Meanwhile I am not likely to stir. I suppose there is no chance of getting you here - but if there was, I do not much like asking you to come where all is so changed! - But I, at any rate, shall ever be

your affectionate old Friend

T. W. Webb

[Pdfs 522, 523](#)

Letter 328

Five weeks later

Hardwick Vic.

2 Jan. '85

My dearest Arthur,

How extremely kind – that is, how exactly like yourself to interest yourself about those papers! I send today what I presume must be the memorandum you wish. Many, many thanks for all your kind wishes and prayers. I get on very fairly. Good kind Miss Dew left me on Wed^y. 2 Miss de Wintons (young girls) come tomorrow. A parish Lecture – the continuation of what she set on foot – on Monday. Poor dear little Mary was married by me on Tuesday from her parents' home: she had not lost the traces of past suffering, but looked very pretty and very nice in her light blue dress: and her style & behaviour were just what one could wish. He did not appear to advantage, having a painful and swelled face, but his manner was grave & earnest, & I thought indicated compunction. I hope you have many, many happy New Years in store, & remains always

your very affectionate

T. W. Webb

Pdf 524

Letter 329

Ten days later

Black border

Hardwick Vic.

12 Jan. '85

My dearest Arthur,

I am sorely afraid I am going to give you a good deal of trouble – but I know your kind heart to everybody, & especially to your very old friend - & I cannot but hope for your most valuable aid. – Some months ago, a man named Aitken of whom I otherwise know nothing, asked as a great favour for copies of some letters of Sir Rich^d. Steele¹, which he had found out, from the Blue Book of the Hist. MSS Commission, were in my possession. I wrote to put him off till I could look for them - & then in my great affliction forgot all about it. My silence brought another letter from him which I enclose - & which I answered by explaining my position & offering a search as soon as I could manage it. The result has been 1. That his MS on p. 684 is in the Vol. sold to M^r. Jackson, to whom I have referred him - & it is a question with me whether the reference on p. 692 may not be to some of the MSS. left under your kind care. I hope it would not give you much trouble to consult the Report. Probably you may have it. If not, it is sure to be in the Temple Library. I am very sorry to impose upon you the trouble of looking into it ^ and into the Mss box: ^ - but sh^d. the result be that you have got those papers it w^d save me much bother. P. 681 in M^r. Aitken's letter seems to mean nothing more than a reference to p. 684. –

Thanks for your last very kind letter. Poor little Mary's marriage not only had my sanction under the special circumstances, as she c^d get no one to take care of her miserably cross baby, but was solemnised by myself at the parish where her parents live. She has called here once since, & seems much more cheerful; she looked very pretty & nice at the wedding, in a light blue dress - & behaved as well as possible – he seemed downcast – which I thought no bad sign. Her small sister Maria was bridesmaid & is my very efficient & attentive factotum. -

Lockyer has asked me to write something about **h**. I shall do it badly for want of access to materials – but you would help ^me^ if you could kindly tell me 2 [³ is overwritten] things –
 1. Is Encke's division on Ring A ever visible in your grand reflector?
 2. ~~Does it appear in Trouvelot's figure in Harvard Annals Vol. VIII~~ Is anything known of the magnificent working of the Nice achrom. as regards **h**? What, by the way, is the proper designation of that instrument? Do you happen to know its dimensions, or who made or gave it? I never see the "Observatory" & am therefore behind in many things, & likely enough to write "bosh". –

The young girls you mention did "tice" me to shew them **h** [Saturn]& very fairly he shewed himself – but not quite Encke². –

I have plenty in hand - & better so, I believe - & God is very good to me in sending me many sympathising friends in my great sorrow

Ever dearest Arthur

Your very affectionate friend, T. W. Webb

I sh^d have explained that it is the confusion & dislocation of the papers here that makes me dread a search, if I can avoid it by asking you first. Selfish enough !

Pdfs

525,526

¹ Sir Richard Steele 1672 –1729 Irish writer and politician, remembered as co-founder, with his friend Joseph Addison, of the magazine *The Spectator*.

Letter 330

Nine weeks later

Black border

Hardwick Vicarage

17 Mar. 85

My dearest Arthur,

I had been thinking a good deal of you lately, & of writing to you – and you have been thinking of me & sending me a most kind invitation, and most welcome as a proof of your undiminished friendship. But there I regret to add it must stop. I shall not be going anywhere before Easter. – Easter week I have promised to spend with the Wyatts – the following week comes our Bishop's Visitation¹, & before the end of it come 2 Webb cousins, who will I believe stay on well into May. – So I fear, unless you will come here, which nothing I have said need prevent while I am at Hardwick (I cannot bring myself to say at "home") our meeting will have to be postponed. I am very sorry for it. I have few such dear friends as yourself. –

I often glimpse Encke – not a night fine enough to be sure: ~~P~~ but I fancy A brighter or B duller than formerly.

Please look at ζ Cancri & tell me what amount of division you see. –
I am sending Red Stars to D^r. Copeland – so kind. –

Please pardon this abrupt letter – I am very full of work & feel it best for a poor half-broken down man. –

I made my Will over again last week in Cheltenham.

It is a pleasure to see poor little Mary looking so well and happy: some alleviation. But I ought to be thankful to a merciful Father for many alleviations – more than that, I neither deserve nor expect.

Always dearest Arthur
your very affect. Friend
T. W. Webb

I sh^d. have said my health is very good.

[Pdfs 527,528](#)

¹ See Letter 186

Letter 331

A week later

Hardwick Vicarage, Hay
25 Mar.85

My dearest Arthur

Thanks for the Circular which I send on today.

Very sorry you can't come here.

I ought to write to Lady M. Howarth but don't know her address. Will you please send it me some time. –

I am much concerned indeed about Young's Sun¹. You were so kind as to send it me – but I have the fullest conviction that I returned it long (i.e. months) ago: & I can see nothing of it here. Do please have a severe search – for I should be so sorry if it were not forthcoming. And you will let me know the result. –

I want very much your kind opinion on a point – not of law! I am making quiet & gradual preparation for the general sale which must some day or other empty the poor old Vicarage. And I want you to tell me whether in view of that event or of previous disposal by private contract, it would be better to have the following, bound.

Monthly notices
Gentleman's Magazine
Proceedings of Soc. Antiquaries
D^o – Royal Soc. Literature

It will cost me a good deal to do it – the only question with me, however, is will it repay me (or my Ex^{cts}) in the end?

You will very much oblige me by your kind opinion.

I sh^d like to sell Russell's Globe of the Moon². It is not of much scientific value, but a pretty astronomical ornament.

I know you will be glad to hear poor little Mary is going on exceedingly well. The marriage seems to have brought a great blessing. Her poor wasted cheeks have been rounded up, & she looks years younger, & well, & happy.³

Please excuse this piece of paper & believe me always

Your very affectionate

T.W.Webb

[Pdfs 529/30 and 31](#)

¹ See Letter 154

² John Russell (1745-1806) was the finest British pastel artist of his time, though he was mainly a portraitist. One of his sitters was William Herschel, from whom he bought a telescope and became a dedicated sky-watcher. He produced a moon globe in 1797 made of papier mache; plaster; paper; stipple plate engraved; varnish; hand-coloured and on a brass stand.

³ Webb left Mary £30 in his will. She and Charles James bore two more sons. They farmed at Dorstone [the next village in the Golden Valley] but retired back to Penypark Clifford. They died in their 70s.

Postscript

With grateful acknowledgements to National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth

Llysdinam Estate Records:B707 and B667 Letters to Rev. Richard Lister Venables, Vicar of Clyro, residing at Newbridge

1. from Fanny Dew. 6 (4+2) sides black border to first. Fanny was the sister of Tomkyns Dew of Whitney Court with whom she lived. Tomkyns was brother of Henry, Rector of Whitney

May 21 [1885]

Hardwick Vicarage
Nr Hay RSO

My dear Lister. Once more I am spared to write to you on your Birthday, which seemed impossible last autumn, you must accept my most affection¹ wishes, dear old friend of so many years, & may God continue your health and grant you to see those two sweet girls grow up. What blessings they and your dear Agnes are, making home so bright to you - I conclude you are back from London ere this.

I hope George has kept pretty well through this very cold weather, really it was bitter last night when Helen Wyatt & I took a turn in this lovely little garden all bright with gentians & spring flowers - so sad to think /new page/ that the dear inmates of Hardwick are passed away. They were such loving kind friends to me ever since they came here.

I heard that Mr Webb had been failing recently & suffering a great deal. I came to stay & look after him a bit on Monday week and was shocked to see how feeble he had become but Mr Turner [?] from Hereford did not anticipate the end was so near. He only took to his bed Monday & early next morning was called to the "Better Country". Life had been very sad for him since he lost his wife 8 months ago & for his sake I rejoice, and I feel we shall not see his like again, so cultivated a mind, & talented in many ways & yet such a meek Xtian spirit. I felt so thankful I was here to nurse him at the last.

I telegraphed for Mr Wyatt & Helen & they came to arrange everything & he will be laid by his wife at Mitchel Troy on Saturday - I am going to Hay Castle for Whit Sunday & then return here next week to help Miss Wyatt with much there is to be done. We can hardly believe that every thing in this pretty house & garden must be swept away by a sale shortly. Mr Palmer* is one of the executors. Will you give my very dear love to Agnes & the girls. I am pretty well, considering what a sad trying time I have had here - Much love and all good wishes for yourself from your very affectionate Fanny Dew

I hear that Mrs Penoyre has the next presentation to this living.

2. Part of a letter from Louisa Bevan, (Mrs.W.L. Bevan)wife of the vicar of Hay, to her brother the Revd Richard Lister Venables, the vicar of Clyro also dated 21 May 1885. She wished him a happy birthday and continued:

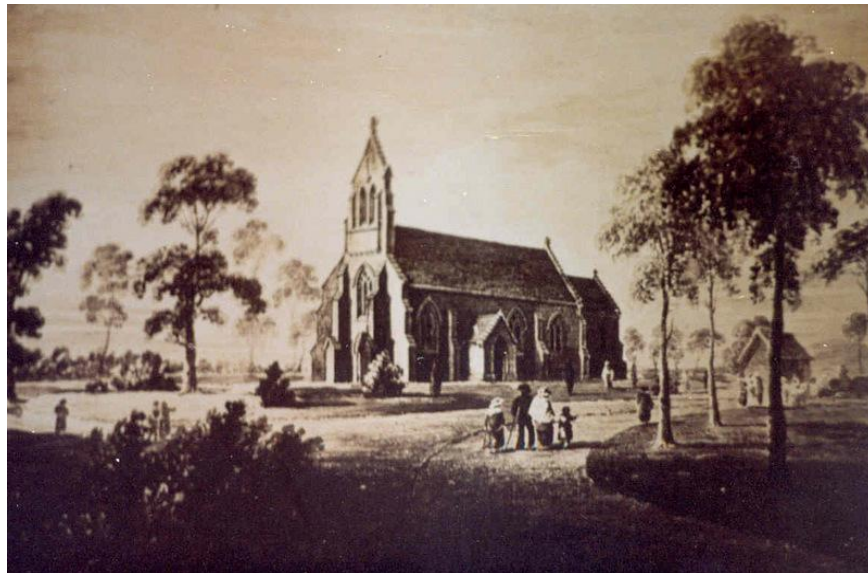
Fanny Dew came to Hardwicke Monday week having heard Mr Webb was ill; she could not persuade him to see a doctor till Friday and the Tuesday morning he died. No one in the house but Fanny and the servants, but the Wyatts came Tuesday night. He suffered much of late but was so unselfish and patient that he never complained, his wife's loss to him was quite irreparable, he depended so much on her for everything. We have lost a very kind friend and neighbour.

Appendix III

The Parish of Hardwick

The hamlet of Hardwick is two miles from Hay on Wye, a market town on the border between England and Wales. In Webb's time it was usually called Hay or The Hay and had a population of just below two thousand, larger than at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It would have been the first recourse for shopping for the inhabitants of the vicarage.

The parish of Hardwick was carved out of the parish of Clifford at the beginning of the 1850s. It had been agreed that a new church should be built to serve the 250 people of Hardwick and, incidentally, to provide a pulpit for Napleton Penoyre, the son in law of Mrs Penoyre of the Moor Estate. The church, paid for by the Penoyres and designed in the Gothic style by Thomas Tudor (Henrietta Webb's uncle by marriage), was consecrated in 1853.



This postcard – originally a watercolour – must have been executed not many years after the church was built. It is thought to have been painted by Henrietta Webb
(Editor's collection)

The stone vicarage, also built through the generosity of Mrs. Penoyre, was relatively small and plain, being originally intended for a curate, but was extended less than five years after the arrival of the Webbs to provide appropriate accommodation for Thomas' father, John Webb, in his retirement.



This photograph was taken in 1867 and is reproduced, with that of The Moor below, by kind permission of Mary Penoyre-Morgan. It shows Thomas and Henrietta Webb and a carriage from The Moor (one of the visitors had taken the photograph)



The Vicarage, now called The Haven, in 2000
(Editor's collection)

The parish contained many small farms, at least two beer houses, a number of tiny shops and tradesmen providing services to the local population.

Beyond Hay and the river Wye lie the Black Mountains, the Brecon Beacons, Radnorshire and wild Wales. Twenty miles to the east of Hardwick is the cathedral city of Hereford. When the Webbs came the railway had only just reached Hereford and it was several years before direct journeys to London could be made by train. Hay and Hereford were linked by rail in 1864. Before that the Webbs often travelled to Gloucester by carriage to catch the train to London.

The main estate in Hardwick was that of The Moor. The Penoyre family had owned it for some five hundred years. John Webb had been a trustee of the estate in the early 19th century and the family had been friends with the Penoyres for at least two generations. It was therefore unsurprising that Thomas was offered the living by Mrs Penoyre when her son in law died in 1856.

The Moor itself was occupied by the widowed Mrs Penoyre and her daughter Anne Maria but they were frequently absent. After the elder Mrs Penoyre died her daughter had cousins to stay with her. She herself died in 1874 and, there being no direct heirs, the next owner was a cousin, Mr Brown. For details see Letter 156.



The Moor – originally a Tudor farmhouse, much extended and embellished in the early 19th century

Benjamin Haigh-Allen and his family lived at The Priory, (or The Priory Mansion as the Census has it) about half a mile from the vicarage. Haigh-Allen was a magistrate and deputy-lieutenant of the County. The Webbs were on visiting terms but one gets the impression that they were not close friends. (see Letter 207)

The local society with whom the Webbs mixed can best be understood by reading Kilvert's diary¹ Thomas does not elaborate and there are few letters which describe social events in any detail. Perhaps if there were an extant diary by Henrietta we would learn more. Thomas and his wife were clearly very fond of their Wyatt nieces and nephews. They also liked to entertain and support young local curates like Francis Kilvert and any young astronomers like Ranyard, Sadler, Espin. Indeed Espin became TWW's executor when still in his twenties.

¹ William Plomer, ed. *Selections from the diary of Francis Kilvert* (Jonathan Cape, London 1st published 1938 Reprinted 1980) Other publications about and by Kilvert will give more details of local social life.

Webb enjoyed his association with Revd Henry Cooper-Key at Stretton Sugwas and George Henry With in Hereford and there must have been other local connections of which we have no record.



Rev. Henry Cooper Key 1819-79



George Henry With 1827-1904

Pictures by kind permission of Hereford Archives and Research Centre

The Webbs occasionally stayed with or visited gentry in Herefordshire and the neighbouring counties as can be seen in the letters. They also took holidays on the continent and spent time in Cheltenham.

It should be remembered that the Webbs were “gentry” and this put them a cut above the local farmers and tradespeople. Webb gives the impression that he was not at all stand-offish but nonetheless distinctions of class were automatically observed.



This work is dedicated to the Webbs who have given us an absorbing hobby, pleasure and occasional anguish, for many years. Many thanks to Bob Argyle and the Webb Society for suggesting that the letters should be published, to Dr. Sian Prosser of the RAS for her support, to the late Peter Hingley, to Paul Haley and the Webb-Share team for the original transcription.

Janet and Mark Robinson 2017

Photo by kind permission of the RAS.