

Hardwick Parsonage, 43
April 28. 1866.

My dear young friend

Your quite unexpected letter, & very kind present
to my wife reminded me of what however I had not
forgotten by any means - that I had never thanked you
for all your kindness about Saturn. I think I see
my way through it better - & while I cannot acquit
writers in general (all I know) of ambiguity or in-
completeness as to the points, I can make out which
puzzled me so much about symmetry. -

It is evident that the expression "not in the same
plane" so applied to a whole set of rings, is ambiguous.
They may either be so situated that all their possible
diam. cut the axis of the globe in one point - in which
case, however varied their inclinations to each other
might be, their perspectives on each side of the globe
would be symmetrical - and this therefore does not
meet the case in question - Or else -

They may be so situated that their diam. w^d. cut the
axis in different points - ~~or~~ which is the same
thing, if all their inclinations were reduced to 0, they
would not as in the first case be all in one plane but
in parallel planes. - This meets the unsymmetrical
appearance observed - But how to reconcile it with
dynamical requirements I was stupid enough not to
see when I "came to torment you" - but I now do see -
for tho' it would be incomprehensible that the centre

of grains of ^a single ring should not coincide with the
C. of G. of the planet - yet the Cs of Σ . of a system
of rings might be easily so arranged that the combined C.
of G. of them all, considered as one system, would coincide
with that of the globe - And this, I venture to think,
is the real solution of the mystery. But it is quæ that
it has never been, I think, pointed out in any book I hap-
pen to have seen - And it is just as quæ, how little
the best books on any subject deserve the title of exhaustives.
I have long noticed this in Astronomy - ~~and now that I have~~
but there the immense extent of the subject renders
such an idea impracticable. And I have now - against
the grain - had to "read up" Steel & Electricity for my
class at Cheltenham - & each author I look into gives
something not to be found in the others. E.g. for Elec-
tricity, I have examined Lardner's Handbook, ~~the~~ Snow
Harris's treatise, Rees's Cyclop. - the modern treatise
in Watt's Dict. of Chemistry - Peffer's Playbook of
Science - not one of them does not contain useful mat-
ter omitted by the others - Truly my lecturers ought to
be something wonderful! -

I am glad you are under Stokes - His great subject
(ill-named) "fluorescence" - is a special pet of mine, &
has charmed & puzzled me above measure - kept me awake
at night, & pressed & plagued me by day. When in town I
purpose reading his grand memoir in Phil. Trans. and if
I find any wonderment about which he might not dislike
to be asked, I am not without some faint hope that you

might favour me by being the medium of communication.
— [Gone on with Monday morning. All the gullies & ravines in the Black Mountain were yesterday filled with snow! and I dare say some will be found there on May Day.]

I hope you will get Chellis to show you by. Though much too low, & consequently fuzzed by vapour, he is a noble object - tho' a very unintelligible one. Did I tell you my dear father had given me a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch specimen of brithis, which I suspect between ourselves will in points of figure beat your great Cambridge equatorial - & that I am thinking of mounting it as an equatorial a Berthol's very cheap & effective plan: but it won't be worth while to do anything but till after my return - tho' thus I fear I shall lose the sheets I shall be sorry for. - Here evidence the other night of fresh volcanic action in D, assuming what we cannot assume, the dependability of Deen & Niadon - and if they really saw, & did not draw on describe what anybody may see now (& I was not I believe the first to see) they must have been even more unworthy of confidence than could have been supposed. My own impression is, that another $\frac{1}{2}$ century will show us proof of continuous eruption there which will be too clear for contradiction. That is, if Park is spared - on the work is carried on & others with equal care.

I heard the other day in Chelt. that V. excellent

mother had come in the same ship with Peabody - I earnestly hope he may be led to take a substantial interest in her work. -

My Chert. def. please me much, doing their work on the whole remarkably well. I dare say Dr. Wright the principal lecturer there, is right in supposing that girls show a remarkable aptitude for natural science. It is an interesting experiment, to see how far a turn in this direction may answer as supplying the vacuum caused by the modern abandonment of many departments of housekeeping. I shall be very glad however when this course of lectures is over - they have taken up too much time in preparation - obliging me to get up subjects with which I had but an imperfect acquaintance - and the result has been an impression that we are very far still from the truth of these things and that the Great Creator sees the emptiness of our boasted "Theories" - mere attempts at explaining what it is not His will ever to allow us to explain. The usual see, the less I understand. - We go to London D.V. on 14th. prox. Besides seeing Birt & Duckingham, & looking up one or two books &c. - I have not much to do there. I should like however to see the New Spectroscope, as that I have got so much interested in these wonders - & I hope I may have a chance of seeing Huggins. - Believe me,
Your young friend from my affectionate
J. W. Webb.