

Nov. 1894.]

Correspondence.

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intending to make an effort to carry the undertaking through. I am glad to say I have met with some success, and have been able to make some decided progress in the way of collecting materials. Mr. Ranyard, in particular, has been most kind in the matter from the first; and I have also received valuable aid, either in the loan of letters or in indications of useful sources of information, from Mr. Ward, Mr. Denning, Mr. Mee, Mr. Elger, Mr. G. F. Chambers, Dr. Copeland, and others. My plan includes a short memoir, with letters and a collection of papers of permanent interest. I would be much obliged if any of your readers, who may be willing and able to assist by furnishing letters, reminiscences, references, or indications where further material may be sought, would communicate with me at the undernoted address. Any letters or other MSS. will, of course, be most carefully preserved, and returned as soon as possible. Of course, it will be readily understood that the collection of materials for a work of this kind is both a slow and a troublesome task, and the extensive character of Mr. Webb's correspondence, and the way in which his numerous contributions (many of which are most valuable) to various publications are scattered about, do not render it in this case any easier.

C/o W. L. Wilson, Esq.,
254 St. George's Rd., Glasgow,
1894, Oct. 26.

I am, yours truly,
S. MAITLAND BAIRD GEMMILL.

The Chinese Astronomers, Hi and Ho.

GENTLEMEN,—

With reference to the last paragraph on p. 346 of this month's 'Observatory,' it is stated in Rambosson's 'Astronomy,' a work published about 1870, that the Shu Ching alludes to an eclipse of the Sun, which occurred in the reign of the Emperor Chun King, who put to death Hi and Ho, the astronomers, on account of their neglect in observing the phenomenon. "They created confusion in the *celestial chain* and left their functions unperformed." The astronomers Hi and Ho were put to death in conformity with the decree: "Whosoever advances the march of time shall be put to death; whosoever retards it shall also be put to death!"

There is a translation of this work of Rambosson in the Library of the Royal Astronomical Society.

It seems that very severe punishments were inflicted by the ancient Chinese kings on calculators who made mistakes in their observations or calculations.

Walthamstow, 1894, Oct. 4.

F. W. HENKEL, Jun.

An early unobserved Transit of Mercury.

GENTLEMEN,—

It may have escaped notice that in November 1664 a transit of Mercury took place under very similar circumstances