

William Thynne Lynn.

MR. LYNN is dead. The form of words is meant to be expressive, for he was "Mr." Lynn to most people, though he had many intimates. But he was older and of an earlier type than most of those who saw him at the Meetings of the Royal Astronomical Society, and a possible stranger introduced into the tea-room at Burlington House, if asked who of those around him represented best the characteristics of the typical astronomer as shown in picture, would probably have pointed to Mr. Lynn, bent with age and research*. To us of this Magazine and to our readers, who have had the benefit of that research so freely and so bountifully given for so many years, the loss is not a light one. We shall feel a void in our pages not yet to be easily filled. We do not mourn his loss as that of a great astronomer. He never claimed to be that, but a sentence in our last number† will show the esteem in which he was held. He did what he could, and did it as well as he could, and no man can do more.

Mr. W. T. Lynn was the son of William Bewicke Lynn, an army surgeon who was attached to the 5th Fusiliers in the Peninsular War, and was with the Allied Forces at the occupation of Paris after Waterloo. His second name was the maiden name of his mother. After leaving the army, Mr. Bewicke Lynn became Senior Surgeon at Westminster Hospital, and practised privately in the neighbourhood, living with his family in Sloane Street, where the subject of this note was born on August 9, 1835.

Mr. W. T. Lynn spent his boyhood at Claygate, Surrey, to which place his family had removed when his father retired from practice, and after early schooldays was educated at King's College, London, of which he was afterwards an Associate. Having some scientific inclination, he entered the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, as a Supernumerary Computer in 1854 April, and in April 1855 was appointed Assistant at the Cambridge University Observatory, where he worked for about eighteen months, being recalled to Greenwich as Assistant in September 1856. At Greenwich Mr. Lynn was first placed in charge of the reduction of the meridian zenith-distance observations, a department which was always assigned in those days to the junior assistant; but on the retirement of Mr. H. Breen in 1859 he was made Superintendent of Supernumerary Computers, and placed in charge of the miscellaneous computations for, and of the printing of, the annual Greenwich volume. He occupied this position until 1871, when the offices in the Observatory were reorganized, and the charge of the Altazimuth, held up to then by Mr. Dunkin, fell to his share. He was promoted to be a First-Class Assistant in 1874, but held this position only for six years, for the Report of the Astronomer

* The frontispiece to this number is from a photograph taken in middle age.

† P. 460.

Royal (Sir George Airy) dated June 1880 contains this passage:—
 “Mr. Lynn, though in feeble health, continued to take charge of the Altazimuth up to the beginning of the present year, but increasing want of strength compelled him to retire in January.”
 By the good offices of Sir George Airy he was awarded a pension by the Admiralty under the regulation which permits early retirement in cases of ill-health.

Mr. Lynn was always of a studious disposition, and he read for and obtained in 1861 the degree of B.A. at London University at the same time as he was engaged in his work at the Observatory. His colleagues remember him as always eager to gather information from departments of the Observatory outside his own, and as having spent much time in the study of current and other astronomical literature. When able to follow this inclination more freely after his retirement, he spent his time in regular visits to the libraries of the British Museum and of the Royal Astronomical Society, where he gathered the information that he contributed to current literature in the form of weekly notes to the *Athenæum*, in monthly letters to this Magazine, as papers read before the British Astronomical Association, or as occasional articles in *Knowledge*. He was sometimes asked to write for *Nature*, generally on subjects connected with the calendar or chronology generally.

Mr. Lynn was elected a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society on February 14, 1862, and contributed several small papers on the Proper Motions of individual stars and such things as arose out of his Observatory work. He joined the British Astronomical Association in 1900 May, and the indexes to the Journal of the Association contain in all no less than sixty-five entries referring to communications by him. He also wrote several small books: ‘Celestial Motions,’ which reached a twelfth edition; ‘Remarkable Eclipses’ and ‘Remarkable Comets,’ the last editions of which are respectively the eleventh and fifteenth; ‘Astronomy for the Young,’ which reached a sixth edition; ‘Studies in the New Testament,’ ‘Bible Chronology,’ ‘Eminent Scripture Characters,’ and other scriptural books, as well as books on chronology*. The first of these, ‘Celestial Motions,’ was used by Prof. Todd, of Amherst College, as the basis of a larger book, ‘Stars and Telescopes,’ published in 1899. To this Mr. Lynn contributed many chapters, and may be considered as co-author.

During the later years of his life Mr. Lynn suffered from a painful affection of the right arm, which, however, did not deter him from writing, and he continued his active life quite to the last. He was taken with a stroke of paralysis on Monday, December 11, and died in a few hours. His surviving relatives are two sisters and a nephew and nieces, the children of one of them, Mrs. Murton, a well-known resident in Blackheath.

Mr. Lynn was always a devout man and interested himself in

* For complete list see p. 61.

church matters. Formerly he was an active member of the congregation of Christ Church, East Greenwich. From 1892 to 1904 he was a lay-reader of the Diocese of Rochester, being attached to the Church of St. Mark's, Deptford; but from the latter date he attended All Saints', Blackheath, where a funeral service, at which representatives of the British Astronomical Association and the Royal Observatory and many friends from the neighbourhood were present, was held on 1911 December 15. He was buried in Lee Cemetery.

H. P. H.

A Stellar Parallax Determination.

APPRECIATIVE but slight reference was made in the "Oxford Note-Book" of October last to a recent photographic determination of stellar parallax, an account of which has been appearing in the successive numbers of the *Astrophysical Journal* in 1911, and has now been collected into a reprint, with a copy of which we have been favoured. As this represents the most recent methods adopted for this kind of research, it is proposed to put before our readers some of the salient points, in words generally taken verbatim from the pamphlet.

Almost all the determinations of stellar distances that have been published before this had been made with instruments of short focal lengths, surprisingly short when we consider the accuracy that is demanded and has occasionally been attained in this class of work. Thus, for example, the Yale heliometer, used by Elkin, Chase, and Smith to such good purpose, is only 2.5 metres long. It seemed to Prof. Hale and Prof. Schlesinger that, with the great focal lengths of modern refractors and the consequent increase of scale, it ought to be possible to bring about a considerable decrease in the accidental errors of observation, or else to reduce greatly the labour necessary to obtain results within a pre-determined limit of error; and with this view prevailing, the photographs for the investigation were taken with the great Yerkes refractor in the years 1903 to 1905. It should be explained that Prof. Schlesinger, now Director of the Allegheny Observatory, was attached to the Yerkes Observatory during those years, by permission of the successive Directors, Prof. Hale and Prof. Frost, and was allowed to use the 40-inch refractor for a quarter of the nights.

It is possible to take photographs with a visual telescope by placing a yellow colour-screen or filter immediately in front of a plate that is sensitive to the yellow as well as the blue rays; but this method was not adopted for fear of any effect that the screen might have in the way of distortion. Instead, Cramer Instantaneous Isochromatic plates were used, as they act as their own filter for the region λ 4800 to λ 5200, being only slightly sensitive to that part of the spectrum.

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