

It will hence be seen that your President, in what seemed a novel suggestion, was only saying over again what had already been much better said by some high astronomical authorities, and defended by the historian of astronomy as that to which, in her judgment, the weight of evidence seemed to incline.

In regard to another point raised in the Australian paper, viz., the physical constitution of comets, my use of the word "nebula" to describe their origin ["nebulous masses" is Miss Clerke's phrase], while apparently sustained by the appearance of the comet at a distance, and the very attenuated character of its coma, seemed hardly consistent with the undoubtedly solid character of portions of the nucleus. My paper, however, pleaded for a somewhat *later* construction of the term "nebula," so as to include such *chaotic* solid material, gradually evolved, as the case demanded.

I ventured also to suggest that the loss of material which a comet must experience in its long history might be recuperated from the "trail" of material along the course of its orbit, of which we had decisive evidence in the case of many comets, and which might be the case with all. The meteor showers illustrate this in the case of some short-period comets. The "family" of comets in the case of the great comet of 1882 and its *compagnons de voyage* illustrates this over a wider field.*

Obituary.

Friedrich Wilhelm Ristenpart.

We regret to record the death of Dr. Ristenpart, Director of the Government Observatory at Santiago de Chile, at the early age of 45 years. Dr. Ristenpart was employed in the capacity of assistant successively at the observatories of Strassburg, Karlsruhe, and Kiel. He displayed such zeal and ability, especially in problems connected with stellar positions, that he was appointed in 1900 to take charge of the work of the *Geschichte des Fixsternhimmels* under the auspices of the Berlin Academy of Sciences. Inspired by Prof. Auwers, he applied himself with great assiduity to the congenial work of collating and comparing the positions of stars derived from all available sources, and his friends hoped that he would be able to complete and publish his researches in the form of an epoch-making catalogue of stars. But it was not to be. Attracted by the wide field of astronomical research that appeared to be

* Mr. Beattie writes that before reading his paper on the Parabolic Comets—of our System or from Beyond? he had stated at the meeting that he was not acquainted with either Miss Clerke's History or Carrington's paper in the *Memoirs of the Royal Astronomical Society*. This would do away with any charge of plagiarism.—[EDITOR.]

opened to him in South America, he accepted the position of Director of the Santiago Observatory in 1908. He appears, however, to have found himself much hampered by administrative difficulties, and his output of work at Santiago was not in accordance with his expectations or his desires. He died on 9th April last.

Frederick William Henkel.

The death of Mr. F. W. Henkel, which occurred on 28th ultimo in the 44th year of his age, is announced. Mr. Henkel's name became known to astronomers on his appointment to the charge of Col. Cooper's Observatory at Markree Castle, Sligo, in 1898, in succession to Marth. His record of astronomical work there is, however, very meagre, due apparently to difficulties connected with the manipulation of the telescope, as well as to the (astronomically) unfavourable character of the climate of the West of Ireland. He left Markree on Col. Cooper's death in 1902, and returned to London, where he obtained employment in the office of the University of London (he was B.A. of London), and occasional jobs of astronomical computing. He also engaged in literary work, his most ambitious effort being a book entitled *Weather Science: an elementary introduction to Meteorology*. He was during recent years a frequent contributor to the *Journal* of this Association, and served on our Council for two sessions commencing October 1910. He was a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, to which he was elected in 1890.

Luis G. Léon.

The announcement of the death of Prof. Luis G. Léon, the courteous and efficient general secretary of the Astronomical Society of Mexico, has been received. Prof. Léon died on 23rd April last, after a long and painful illness, at the age of 47 years. His notes and articles published in the *Bulletin* of the Society with which he was connected since its foundation were of a very instructive character, and must have done much to popularise astronomy in Mexico.

Correspondence.

The Resistance of the Atmosphere to the Flight of Meteors.

With reference to this paper, which appeared in the April issue of the *B.A.A. Journal*, Mr. T. P. Tatham has pointed out to me that the first equation ignores the effect of gravitation. This is, of course, left out of consideration, because its influence is very small during the short time the meteor is moving through