

The Lockyer Letters

These comprise 24 letters written (17 Jan 1902 to 14 May 1910) by Charles Grover of the Rousdon Observatory, and one letter written by Cuthbert E Peek, dated Fri 27 July 1900. The recipient was Mr. Thomas Richards of Swindon. The originals are in the Museum of the Lockyer Observatory, Sidmouth, Devon. Copies were received 1 April 1999 from David Richards, the (great?) grandson of the recipient.

From Cuthbert E Peek

Friday 27 July 1900

Dear Sir

I am extremely obliged to you for your photo of the eclipse which I found on my return to England. I am most interested in the results you have got and should you be in this part of the Country after Friday next my assistant will be delighted to show you what we are doing and I shall be pleased to give you copies of any photos which have been taken here. Hoping to see you soon. Believe me, yours faithfully, C.E. Peek

Friday 17 Jan 1902

Dear Sir

I am sending you by this post some papers relating to the observatory which may interest you. The chart of Nova Persei in the E[nglish] M[echanic] will no doubt be useful to many observers. If you have a photograph of the region I should be glad to get a copy.

I think your idea of mounting a camera on an Old English Pattern Equatorial very good. In my early days I used an home made mounting of this form myself and found it most useful.

I remember your writing to Sir Cuthbert as to seeing the observatory - but unfortunately I was then away for a few days and you returned to your duties the same day I returned here so it fell through. If I am here when you come this way in the summer I will show you anything I can of interest. I generally get a fortnights holiday but we shall see later on.

I don't know whether I have any photo of the Equatorial, if I can find any I will send you one. The new fashioned telescope illustrated is not worth considering and is wrong at all points. The six mirrors seem introduced to prevent the telescope being any good, and the whole idea is a mere joke.

You can do a great deal of good work with 3 inch Wray, remember much depends on the patience and skill of the man at the eye end and it is well known that the most important astronomical work is done with very moderate telescopes.

Yes, Mr. Richards of Seaton Gas Works was well known to me and I was very much grieved to hear of his sudden death.

I am yours truly

C. Grover (Observer in Charge)

Saturday 8 Feb 1902

Dear Sir

I am much obliged for your letter of January 22 with photographs enclosed - the one of Orion is particularly interesting and I have studied it with a magnifying glass, it is a good star map of that region - and considering your apparatus a v[er]y good work.

I am sending you with this a no (sic) of the British Astronomical Journal which will show you what other amateurs are doing in the same line - I think you may learn much from Mr. Lunt's article. When done with please return as this is one of my set of numbers.

Yes, I am the C Grover of Mee's Observational Astronomy having corresponded with Mr. Mee for many years. I began observing in 1858.

I am afraid I cannot help you much with a model of the Solar System, few people have an idea of the scale and distance of the planetary bodies. I send you a number of the Museums Journal showing you some attempts in this direction - at the Geographical Museum, Jermyn Street, London they have the Sun a globe 2 feet diameter, and the planets are so small and so distant you can hardly find them. I have an old Celestial Globe dated 1801.

I had a good illustration of the accuracy of modern navigation on the voyage to Australia in 1882. Leaving the Cape of Good Hope we saw no other ship and no land for several days and the Officer showed me the ships track on the Charts. Now, said he tomorrow about 3 o'clock we shall be passing the Island of St. Paul and you will see it soon after 2 pm - and sure enough about 2 o'clock there lay the island right in the ship's path, and at 3 o'clock we were just going bye (sic). That was half way between the Cape and Melbourne as you will see by looking at a map. "Rapers Navigation" is I think the standard book with sea going men - but it is very advanced. I am yours truly C. Grover

Thursday 6 Mar 1902

Dear Sir,

I am truly sorry to hear you have been so ill and trust you may ere long regain your usual health. You are quite right I did not want the Museums book returned. I knew you would like Mr. Lunt's article as it is very practical - though somewhat out of date now and as you see by the English Mechanic there are some good workers in the field now - I shall not take your pencil notes off the margins as they add to its interest.

Your 3 in[ch] Wray is capable of good work as you can go down to 10.5 mag with it, and remember what the preface to "Mee's" book says "much depends on the man at the small end" Our light railway drags on very slow it will not be done this summer I think, so it will not assist you to get here - but I hope if all goes well to see you later on.

With best wishes for your recovery,
I am yours truly C. Grover

Monday 26 Aug 1907

Dear Sir,

I was very pleased to hear from you again and shall be glad to see you here and have a talk over astronomical matters - the afternoon is my most leisure time and if you can get over about 3 o'clock it will suit very well.

There is the Lyme Regis Branch Railway now from Axminster and a train leaves there at 2-10 pm and gets to Combyne in about 12 minutes, Combyne is a little over a mile from Rousdon.

Here is a Chart of the Route, you will see a tall anemometer tower on the right when you get to Rousdon - that is my house. Be sure and drop me a line or a PC so that I may know when you are coming, and be on the lookout for you. I am yours truly C. Grover

Saturday 21 Sept 1907

Dear Mr. Richards,

My many thanks for your long letter and photos - those of myself are much better than I expected considering the approaching twilight at the time of taking - the full face figure is the best and I am much obliged to you for them.

Your photo chart of Orion is wonderful as the work of only a 1/4 plate lens and hand followed. With an 1/2 plate you will no doubt do much better this winter and I shall be pleased to see some of your work in this line.

I am sending you a light Clear Print of the Mars drawings. The reproduction on the rough paper of the EM do not do justice to the originals. You will see a notice of them on page 154 of the EM for September 20.

Myself and Mrs. Grover are particularly pleased with the Postcard Group, it was very kind of Mrs. Richards to send it on. I never saw a nicer family group with your two boys, and we shall preserve it as a memento (sic) of your pleasant visit.

I have examined your Orion photo with a lens and am surprised at the clear round image of the stars in the belt etc, they are quite as round and perfect as many expensive clock driven pictures I have seen. Your microscopic print to (sic) is equally good - evidently you are an expert at that kind of work.

Now to change the subject - thanks for your booklet on the Nature of Man. I never worry much about the future State for the good reason that of this we know nothing and never shall till we pass the line, and we have not one single Authentic instance of any one who has returned from the life beyond to tell us anything. I expect our Midnight thoughts are much the same as your verse from the "Elegy" lets me know, for I often ponder over these things - we have a double nature - the Bodily and the Spiritual. The Body is the mere Shell so to speak - the Spirit the intellectual portion. How is it that when living, people of identical tastes etc can read each other's thoughts even by a look - there is a response of mind, but the moment after death look on your dearest friend - they are not there. There is the body, the case so to speak of the watch, but that is not them, they are gone, that is the Spirit the intellectual portion is departed. Where? We should all like to know a little more about these things. But I will not run on further - but again thanking you.

I am yours very truly C. Grover

Saturday 12 Oct 1907

Dear Mr. Richards

Several of my friends having greatly admired the portrait of me you took when you were here - may I ask you to be good enough to get me 1/2 doz Cabinets printed from it - the full face one is the best.

Please allow this to be business and charge me for them and I will send the money.
I have had some fine views of Saturn lately.

With best wishes Yours very truly
C. Grover

Wednesday 20 Nov 1907

Dear Mr. Richards

I was no better off than you on the 14th and it seems the weather was about the same over a wide area - at Greenwich where they had made careful preparations they were no better so I shall not see another transit of Mercury as the next is in 1914 and by that time I shall have crossed the line.

You have got a good book in Elgie's Moon. I have Neison's Moon and that is a wonderful book too. These sort of works are monuments of concentrated study and these are the sort of books which make me think how little is the bit of Science that I am able to grasp.

I was showing a visitor the moon one night last week and saw Plato with the floor a black shadow, in a short time a few streaks of sunlight crossed the floor and I saw the little crater better than I had ever seen it before, something like this.

I have watched the sun spot groups often lately as I was putting out a fresh white card in the hope of seeing the transit of Mercury by projection.

I am of your opinion it dose (sic) an eyepiece no good to expose it too long to solar heat especially if the lenses are cemented with Canada Balsam. I often use a 4 1/2 in[ch] stop - as you say there is not the least advantage in pressing high powers on the sun - 80 or 100 gives the best general view.

I am sure you will be interested in the little spectroscope and small as it is you will find the spectra of many chemical substances very interesting. I don't think you can improve this by putting the lenses at a longer distance, but if I have the pleasure of seeing you here again, I will show you a larger spectroscope on a table stand which will interest you.

I am enclosing you a PO 5/6 as I want you to do for me 1/2 doz Cabinets of my portrait which I want to send to some of my friends between this and Christmas - I have no objection to your giving any one my portrait who is interested in Science. I am only too glad to hear of Kindred Spirits and am glad to meet with those of similar taste.

I must now conclude this long gossipy letter with best wishes to you both from yours truly C. Grover

Thursday 19 Dec 1907

Dear Mr. Richards

I guessed you have been busy as I have been too as I lend a hand at many things.

Please put the enlargements in the Oval mount as you say and I will pay up later on.

I knew the 2 1/2 in[ch] OG was of unusual focal length and am glad that you have been clever enough to cut it down by separating the lenses. I will send you after Christmas one or two of Browning Achromatic eyepieces for trial - I have some old ones I used to use on reflectors many years ago, the field is very small but the definition is perfect, and though no use where you want a field of a square degree as for variables - they are just the thing for making drawings of Jupiters belts or the transits of his satellites, and they are just now coming into a good position.

I replied to Col. Watson as to Hyperion in the EM of December 6 and in the EM of December 13 (letter no 482) a gentleman makes out I have been seeing some of the Martian Canals with a glass of much less than 8 inches aperture - I shall take care to correct this error - I am glad you saw my drawing when at Rousdon - and you know my views on these matters.

I presume you read the correspondence in the EM on the British Astro Association. I have never yet had the opportunity of attending one of their meetings as I live so far from London but I cheerfully pay the 10/6 a year for the Journal and Reports of the sections. I am bound to say the Journal has not improved of late and I am afraid the Society has passed its Zenith.

With best wishes to you and Mrs. Richards

I am yours very truly

C. Grover

Monday 23 December 1907

Post card, addressed to Mr. T Richards, 10 London Street, Swindon. With 1/2 penny stamp franked ROUSDON

Just a line to acknowledge receipt of enlargement it is splendid, also Cabinets etc with your kind letter - will write fully after Xmas - with best wishes to you both from us both.
C & E Grover

Wednesday 1 Jan 1908

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Richards

As this is our first letter for 1908 let us both wish you a happy and prosperous New Year and I hope we shall sometime renew our acquaintance and all meet once more.

I am delighted with the enlargement and am going to get it framed, it is very skilfully worked up and is much better than the Cabinets and they are v[er]y good too.

I should be pleased to hear of an old Kindred Spirit or brother thinker who has travelled so much farther on lifes road than I have. I often think my journey has been long but 88 is much longer, 20 years more in the Wilderness.

I should have liked to have seen my portrait on the screen - it makes a very good slide no doubt. I have slides of the observatory and a number of Astronomical Subjects - moon, planets etc but have not seen them for years.

Your copy of me at the telescope is much better than the original - many thanks for it.

I am waiting for a chance to try one or two of the acromatic eyepieces on the telescope before sending them on to you so you will soon hear from me again as soon as I get an hours clear sky. We are having real winter now, first cutting cold NE winds then heavy snow. No sight of sun for last 6 days, no observing since Dec 23 - very poor for astronomy.

I have as you say been very busy with many engagements here but they are all got over and things are quieting down again. Our Lady Peek gives grand entertainments and does the Lady Bountiful in good style to all the people round here.

With best wishes
Yours very truly C. Grover

Thursday 9 Jan 1908

Dear Mr. Richards

I should have written to you long ago but have been waiting for the weather and only last night was able to try the three eyepieces enclosed before sending them to you - they [are] about 35 years old and I wanted to be sure the balsam of the lenses was alright. I send them to you on loan for a time so that you can see what they will do and I shall be glad to hear from you when you get the chance of trying them - the adapter is the Standard Astronomical thread.

Now let me tell you how pleased we are with the enlargement, it is beautifully done and means a lot of work for which I v[er]y warmly thank you. That photo of me at the telescope is very much better than the original and I am sending you a PO 6/6 to pay for the oval mount on the enlargement and 3 Cabinets of me at the telescope and three Cabinet Portraits as before, of course these at your leisure bye and bye.

What a snap of cold we have had, 17 below freezing - I tried to observe on Jan 3 but Dome and Shutter would not work - all froze and set, better now - but I believe more frost coming. This cold was quite enough for us two old ones nearly curled us up - hope it won't be so bad again.

With best wishes to Mrs. Richards and yourself
I am yours very truly C. Grover

Saturday 25 Jan 1908

Dear Mr. Richards

I think you will like to see this catalogue I am sending along - not only to see what modern instruments are now made, but for the very excellent astronomical photos which are here reproduced. I know you take great interest in Celestial Photography as well as many other things.

With best wishes

Yours very truly C. Grover

Saturday 8 Feb 1908

Dear Mr. Richards

I am very much obliged to you for the lengthy epistle you wrote to me and which has given me vast pleasure to read. Now to begin with I am glad you find the Achromatic eyepieces useful and when you try them on Double Stars or the transits of Jupiters moons or their shadows you will see where their Superiority comes in - yes, keep them and also Steinheil's Catalogue till you come this way as I hope you will in the summer. You are an all round man to take such an interest in Natural History etc as you do.

I looked up your quotations carefully they are v[er]y applicable. Look in the EM this week p12 you will see Mr. Burnerds 2 in[ch] telescope - even a 2 in[ch] is not to be despised and I did a lot of work with a 2 in[ch] during the years 1862 - 1867.

I went to see the Burning Cliff on the 6th and have sent an account to the EM which I expect will come out next Friday - it is an immense body of Solid fire - no flame, and the heat is intense - if I can get a photo I will send you one, though there is not much to see only a little cloud of Steam outside - the fire is within and the Cliff too hot to stand on.

Now for your friend Mr. Bickle, I was vastly interested in your account of him and he has a grand personality and a noble head as you say much like the late Lord Salisbury, of which I have a medallion bust in the room where I am writing this - however he got through all these things passes my comprehension.

I had no idea any body in England could make these Chinese Puzzle Balls - the one in the museum here has 13 finely carved balls inside - is the orrery you mention anything like the little toy in the R Observatory here. I tried your dodge of holding the dark print round a lamp shade with great success, the print showed up well - another simple thing I never thought of before, Live and Learn.

That old Roman Pavement is wonderful and the Rabbit very realistic.

Please tell your old friend Mr. Bickle it has given me great pleasure to read all about him and see the photos of his numerous works. I should dearly like an hour with such a genius but I am too old to travel about much, and my Annual visit to London and pilgrimage to the Royal Observatory is about enough for me.

Now about your old english Equatorial - your diagram recalls to my memory an affair I saw at the Hartwell Observatory in 1865 - something like this, it was set up on the lawn for occasional use, the telescope being strapped in the cradle when wanted, three blocks of stone let into the ground to mark the points of the legs - and the whole thing could be brought out and set up in a few minutes - telescopes from 3 to 5 inches were used on it, with great comfort on fine calm nights. Your diagonal is not to be laughed at as you only want it for a guider and for that it will do very well. I don't know that Le Verrier had a son who was interest[ed] in astronomy - the Paris Observatory like Greenwich has been remodelled since his day.

With best wishes to you and Mrs.

Richards I am yours very truly C. Grover

Wednesday 12 Feb 1908

Dear Mr. Richards

This is not a reply to your kind letter that will follow later on, but I now send you a print of the Burning Cliff - as I said before there is not much to see, but a lot to feel - the hole with the crow bar was made where the jet of steam is coming out just below the arrow, and the Cliff is inside a mass of dull red fire - see the EM on Friday - the owner of the negative is:

Mr. W Down
C/o R Southwood and Co
Broad Street, Lyme Regis

He is an old friend of mine, and you can write him as to reproduction etc.

I was showing him last night your Portrait of Mr. Bickle and his works and he was surprised and delighted - he wonders how you got that medal so beautiful both sides together - he read your account of the old Gentleman with the greatest interest and you can tell Mr. Bickle although he is not personally known here his works are looked upon with wonder and admiration.

I am yours very truly C. Grover

Thursday 20 Feb 1908

Dear Mr. Richards

I did not answer your kind letter till I went to Lyme yesterday where I found my friend Down much pleased and interested with your letter to him on the Photo medal business he will not be long before he tries that dodge as he is a clever man. Yes I saw by the photos and your description the Puzzle Balls of Mr. Bickle were not Carved like the real ones, when you are here you shall see the Rousdon specimen - but Mr. Bickles are quite good enough to show what a clever man he must be.

It is early early days yet and I can't say much as I am only a lesser light myself but I should much like to have you with me at Greenwich and show you the mighty instruments they have got there. I cannot say anything now but I shall not forget it later on. I think I told you I was cheered by a visit by Prof Turner (Prof of Astronomy, University of Oxford) about 6 weeks ago - he has just written me a letter in which he speaks in high terms of my work here and I have just sent the Report for 1907 to the British Astronomical Association - when it comes out you shall see it.

I read your Poem on King Time with great attention - the first three verses are grand and true, as I have before pointed out to you everything in this Vast Universe is going along a never ending Cycle of Changes and we ourselves are only particles of the Great Whole - and are going with everything else - I should like to realise the last verse but cannot muster the faith to say all that - I cannot see Beyond. When we die the door Shuts and I am not one of those who can see the other side, I wish I could. I am however a firm believer in a future State.

We are both very grateful to you and Mrs. Richards for your kind invite and kind wishes. I am sure you would take every care of us old people and perhaps at some future day when the Genial Summer is with us we may meet at Swindon - I hope we may.

I note your elder Boy starts in the Works and hope will have a prosperous career - if he has got a fair share of his fathers intellect he ought to do well. I note the works close for the Cup ties next Saturday so they can play as well as work.

With best wishes to you both from
Yours v[er]ly truly C. Grover

Tuesday 31 Mar 1908

Dear Mr. Richards

I don't think you see the Journal of the BAA. So am sending you a Slip of the Report of this observatory for 1907 - as I know you take a kindly interest in this place. I don't know if you saw the kind remarks concerning me in the EM for March 13.

We have not been feeling very sprightly lately but am looking forward to the warm Summer to feel better, and hope to see you both here again later on.

With best wishes to you and Mrs. Richards

Yours very truly C. Grover

Friday 15 May 1908

Dear Mr. Richards

Your letter made me open my eyes, I thought I wrote to you and thanked you for the magazine but I suppose I did not, anyway we all thought it a most interesting production and my Son and Grandson read it with much pleasure.

I can well understand your feelings at your Son taking up a definite career and Sincerely hope he will progress alright. My Grandson will be out of his time at Wallis & Stevens in October and he is going to look out for a place to improve. I hope he will have his head on the right way and do some good - as you say these are anxious times for the parents who want to see their children doing well.

I had a fine time in London, Prof Turner asked me to attend the meeting and give some account of Recent work at Rousdon, and then I was invited to Dine at the Astronomical Club where I was most kindly received - and lots of good things said about me which I did not deserve. The Astronomer Royal and some of the Heads of the Greenwich Staff were there so it was a very interesting function. I will send you a report later on.

Depend upon it public Observatories are not a success - there (sic) only use is to give an hardworking observer like yourself the chance of using larger and better instruments than you could otherwise get, in return for which you would get appointed Curator and find yourself the servant of a host of mere sightseers with an evening with nothing to do, and you would be worked and worried beyond endurance till the novelty wore off and you would mostly find that just when something of importance was coming on some busybody would look in and just stop your work. I know a little what this is by painful experience - better have a little 3 in[ch] of your own that you can use when you like - than a giant telescope that you cannot use, only be worried with.

If you come this way about the 10th July - I hope that will be a quiet time here so that we can have a few hours together and talk over things. I don't know that I want any more of my Portraits, but shall be pleased to have the negative to take care of as I shall never get a better one.

Don't trouble to send the eyepieces, let them be till you come. I only stick to routine work now, and rarely look at much else than Variable Stars, except to show things to Visitors.

I have not looked at the moon, but Venus has been fine sight. I have had her beautifully defined with 300 in daylight several times about 6pm. I looked very carefull (sic) but could not see a ghost of a marking on the disc, yet some people make drawings of distinct markings and are sure of the Rotation Period.

With best wishes to yourself and Mrs. Richards

I am yours v[er]y truly

C. Grover

Tuesday 6 Oct 1908

Dear Mr. Richards

I dare say you wonder I have not written sooner but we have had great excitement here in the wedding of Miss Margaret Peek - our eldest Young Lady, and I have had a very busy time.

Now let me thank you for your clear explanation of the reason for sometime subtracting and sometimes adding the 12 and 24. I never understood it this way before. I have just had the Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway staying here and he is an enthusiastic transit observer. We took several transits and the results were very consistent only 0.01s or 0.02s of error. Showing that even with such a small instrument as this one could obtain excellent results with due care and patience.

I presume you have seen the new Comet - Morehouse - I first saw it Sept 24 very faint in the Rousdon telescope - but it will be an interesting object when this moon is gone and it moves on past Vega and on to β Lyrae - of course you have seen its position given in the EM. It may give you a chance of photographing it as it will be well placed at the end of the month.

I see in this months Observatory the Positions of Halley's comet are also given but that is beyond the reach of any but the largest telescopes.

With best wishes to you both
I am yours very truly C. Grover

PS Thanks for the Photos returned out of Knowledge. I am sorry there is no information forthcoming of the numbers and marks on the Short's Gregorians - they meant something important which only Short himself knew.

Friday 15 Jan 1909

Dear Mr. Richards

I dare say you wondered why you got no reply to your kind letter of Jan 2nd but we have both been very bad this last fortnight and I have had a lay up in bed for several days. the Dr says "Chilled Liver" and I have had a very bad time - and of course quite unable to look in at astronomy as yet this year.

Anyhow I am about again, but far from well and I shall never catch up our old friend Mr. Bickle - this cold snap has carried off a lot of old people and he is a miracle to be alive, tell him though not seen by the eye he is often in my mind and I often think about him, and as you say he will leave many fine works as his monument.

There are a good many Lists of astro instruments here which are worth keeping for the beautiful Illustrations, and I will look up some and send you before long, as they are not required here. I will also look out one or two high powers for you to practise with say on double stars, and Mars when he comes round again. Those 2 in[*ch*] glasses of Burnerd are no doubt very good - my old one in 1862 cost me £4. So beginners now can do better than that, and I expect they are very light and portable, and now I see he supplies a 3 in[*ch*] also very cheap.

I have done no Photography for some time now but will bear in mind your kind hints when I do. I have not seen any Specimen of the "Ensigna" paper yet. I used some of the Wellington Gaslight paper some time ago and it gave fine black clear prints.

Now let me wind up by wishing you and Mrs. Richards and family a happy new Year for 1909 - myself and Mrs. Grover are decidedly shaky but we may perhaps cheer up as the Spring comes on, and hope to meet again in the Summer.

Yours very truly C. Grover

Tuesday 26 Jan 1909

Dear Mr. Richards

I am sending you with this a collection of Catalogues which will take you some time to look through and digest - they are very useful as showing the wide range of instrumental apparatus which is used now, and how wide a subject astronomy is become during the last 60 years.

You will see a picture of the Great Melbourne Reflector, built about 1875 - and with which I had a most favourable time one night in October 1882. The Great mirror is 4 foot in diameter and the lattice work steel tube 5 foot inside diameter - I could easily walk down the inside of the tube - but size is not everything, and although on nebulae and Clusters of faint stars the power of the great mirror showed up well - on the Planet Saturn you saw no more than with such a telescope as the Rousdon Equatorial, and in the case of many of the largest and most complicated instruments the time which should be devoted to observation has to be spent in adjusting and getting them to work.

What about Swindon's Poet Blacksmith - as illustrated in Saturday's Lloyds paper, truly your works must be a nursery of Genius. He must have made Good use of his time to be a good Latin and Greek Scholar and Mathematics too, if he has attained to this, what a philosopher he will be by the time he reaches old age.

I am glad to say that I am getting a little better, but when you are old you do not recover very quickly - but I hope to feel better as the days lengthen and Spring comes on.

With best wishes I am yours v[er]y truly
C. Grover

Saturday 6 Feb 1909

Dear Mr. Richards

Thanks for your kind and interesting letter. I am glad you found the Catalogues interesting and your friend likewise. With this I am sending another which shows how complicated a telescope can be made, by the time you had got the motors, Dome etc to work your energies would be about gone and not much real observing would result.

I am sending you for your acceptance 4 eyepieces. The no 6 I used above 30 years ago on a 12 1/2 in[ch] Silvered glass reflector about 7 foot focus. The power was too high for general use, but on your three inch it will be about half this and for Close double stars if kept near the centre of the field ought to be useful. The F ought to give you good definition on Jupiter and Mars. The other two I don't say much about, if they are any good you are the man to find it out.

I think it quite possible the ultra Neptunian Planet will be discovered by Photography but will possibly never be seen visually or in only two or three of the largest telescopes - the same holds good with the new distant Satellites of Jupiter and Saturn. I saw the negatives of Jupiters distant moon at Greenwich and they are a revelation (sic) - on a plate 8 in[ch] square with thousands of stars crowded over it, is a most minute speck, easily overlooked unless you was (sic) hunting for it, and only know to be the satellite by its motion among the crowds of Stars as shown on Successive plates of the same region. I have not heard yet of their being seen Visually.

Yes the Italian earthquake was a dreadful affair - how dreadful we here can never realise in our quiet Safe Island where such things are practically unknown. I am often asked Silly Questions about the probable approach of the end of the world. Now here is an awful and realistic example for to all these thousand of poor people overwhelmed by this earthquake this was indeed the end of all things. How true are the plain words of the Bible - In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man Cometh, this is clearer than Volumes of commentaries.

I did not wish you to send stamps for postage - but there I know your mind and you would not have been happy if you had not done it.

I am glad to say I am getting [better] and so is Mrs. G - hope we shall prosper with the return of Spring - like you my most sensitive part to feel cold is the back and like you I have a good wife who has put a cloth lining to my waistcoats - so we are both indebted to our partners.

With best wishes I am yours v[er]y truly
C. Grover

Tuesday 16 Mar 1909

Dear Mr. Richards

Many thanks for your interesting letter - you have evidently given the eyepieces a good trial - I expect you will find their value when Mars comes round in the Autumn. I was sorry to read about poor Mr. Bickle though it is only what is to be expected at the extraordinary age of 90 years. I was much amused in your previous letter to read about the gentleman who took credit for making his electric Clock - that is what I call "flying with some one else's feathers" - anyway you had him there.

That letter on the Dumbell Nebula in last week's EM though signed A is really written by Mr. Edwin Holmes whose letters I expect you have often read in the EM - he was a rare man to criticise and say unpleasant things generally and at last got put down by the editor so now he has written several articles signed A. I met him at Greenwich Observatory last June, I don't take any notice of his criticism of my notes of 1893, they are not worth it.

That is a most interesting picture of the Observatory at Bournemouth, and as you say the Genius must be a very interesting person. Well worth knowing, I expect there are many such only we don't know them.

I should think Burnerds telescopes are a great boon to many of small means, the 2 in[ch] are by no means to be despised and a 3 inch is capable of a lot of good work as I personally know as we have a good 3 inch here.

We have both felt this long winter very trying - we had heavy snow yesterday morning and it is very cold now, it has carried off a good many both old and young, we are about the same age as your father and mother. I was 69 on March 2nd and Mrs. G will be 70 next August, so we are getting on.

There have been several fine nights lately when the cold was so intense that nothing could be done, once it went down to 19 below freezing, and of course an old man like me has to be a little careful.

With best wishes to you both I am
Yours very truly
C. Grover

PS Jupiter is just now in fine position for observation no doubt you will get some good views of him this year.

Monday 14 Jun 1909

Dear Mr. Richards

I knew you would find the Feb M[onthly] N[otices] of the RAS interesting, and am glad you enjoyed the good obituary notices they contain.

So poor Mr. Bickle is gone at last. I hope I shall not live to such a great age, as when mind and body are so completely worn out it must be as the bible tells us but labour and go now, he must have been a great man in his time and as you say his handywork lives after him.

I was at the Greenwich Visitation on June 5 and as usual there was much to see - a fine set of about 40 photos of Moorhouse (sic) Comet were a proof of how many midnight hours they work - more photos showing the movements of Jupiters minute distant moons, which so far as I know have never yet been seen Visually, also photos showing several minor Planets, also new Photos of the Sun, Moon, Various Nebulae and fine Star fields, so the sky there cannot be so bad.

I met Mr. Holmes and had a long chat with him he is a grand old man notwithstanding his cranks and his articles on Nebulae etc in the EM lately show a wonderful research. There will be a great set [to?] made on Mars when he come[s] round again in September and all the old Squabble about Canals etc will be fought over again.

I also met Mr. Hardcastle the Sec[retar]y of the BAA for whom I am doing some Charts of Halley's Comet which will appear in the Journal. According to Mr. [Andrew Claude de la Cherois] Crommelin they have got it well predicted and I have drawn the path among the Stars from Sept 12 1909 to July 1910. The Comet has not been caught yet but all the great telescopes will be turned that way in September. The Observatory is in splendid order, more than 60 persons are employed there, and it is certainly the leading observatory of the world.

The final result of the Eros observations was announced at the last meeting of the RAS, the parallax comes out at 8"803 which I take it is not far from the truth.

I am sorry I do not no (sic) of any observatory near you, there are not many down at this end of the country. I don't know about the 2nd 100 inch disc of the American Reflector they are not short of money in that land of Millionaires, but strange to say big results do not always follow big money, or even big telescopes - if these giants were perfect and powerful in proportion to their size and cash, does it not strike you that many knotty points in astronomy, Canals of Mars to wit would have been settled long ago.

We are both fairly well again now that Summer is come, and hope we may hold out for some time, it is the winter that gets hold of us - if you are round this way later on of course you will let us know and we should be pleased to see you and Mrs. Richard[s] drop in for a Cup of tea and a chat.

With best wishes to you both I am yours very truly C. Grover

Saturday 14 May 1910

Dear Mr. Richards

I was pleased to hear from you again and particularly to hear you had got the handling of one of Brownings 81/2 in[ch] SOG reflectors. I expect you are right and that it is an old friend of my early days - I may tell you at once the 81/2 in[ch] were the most popular and more of them than others were made, the mirrors were of great perfection as With seemed particularly successful with this eye of speculum. The book you mention is I expect the old "Plea for Reflectors" of which I wrote (and rewrote for successive editors) most of the astronomical portion.

Now if your friend Values his instrument he will just let Solar observations severly (sic) alone, the continual warming and cooling of the mirror and the great heat applied each time to the flat will soon ruin the figure of any Speculum, but if he will go at it - I expect you will find figured in the book - Brownings Solar Eyepiece which used to be £3-3-0 which is a prism so mounted as to throw away most of the heat and to transmit a comparatively cool image - even then you will want it considerably stopped down. When you get it adjusted you will be surprised at the superb view of Jupiter you will get, and his moons will look like sharp little discs, especially III [Roman 3]
I hope you will try the perforated Stop you figure - I did it many years ago and it is a most interesting study of diffraction and interference effects. You will see the stars with rays and you will see numberless images, it is worth trying.

When resilvered the 8 1/2 in[ch] SOG is about equal to a 7 inch OG and is a powerful astronomical instrument - there were many made shorter than 5'6 in[ch]. I had many 5 foot 2 to 4 inches, and excellent telescopes they were, all the handier for being shorter and the definition did not suffer.

I expected you had seen my notes on Halley's Comet in the EM. I got up at 2.30 on 16 mornings between April 14 and May 14, and on 12 mornings got good observation, and saw it turn the curve and change the direction of movement on April 25.

Your friend had a good bargain for £12-10 for the 8 1/2 certainly less than half the Value, especially as you say all in good order. I am glad you got a sight of a 12 1/2 Calver Equatorial - this should be a most powerful instrument.

Thanks for your good wishes we are both fairly well only a year older. I hope later on you will give us a look in if round this way. I expect to go to Greenwich for the Visitation on June 18. Let me know how you get on with the 8 1/2

With best wishes yours very truly
C. Grover

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25 December 2000

October 2005 Corrected Edwin (not Edison) Holmes in 16 March 1909