

Dr. Downing.

The *Journal* will doubtless record fully the valuable scientific work of the late Dr. Downing. I should like to be allowed to add a slight personal appreciation.

From time to time I sent letters to the *Nautical Almanac* office, and my inquiries were always dealt with most promptly and courteously, the first reply being dated 15th October 1895.

It was at Dr. Downing's suggestion that I applied for membership of the Association, and was elected on 27th November 1895. For this alone I owe him a large debt of gratitude, but I owe a still larger one for most useful help and information afforded by correspondence.

On several occasions I was privileged to meet him, both in London and, in 1900, in Spain, and have the happiest recollections of these personal interviews. He was an Irishman, and had a very real gift of genuine humour, which came out not only in his conversation but also in his letters.

To give two examples: In reply to an inquiry as to the mean value of the Moon's parallax, used by the *N.A.* but not anywhere stated, he sent me an answer, marked "strictly confidential," giving me the value, but he wrote the figures on a postcard.

On another occasion I well remember the merry twinkle in his eye when he told me that he had retired comfortably to bed at the date in 1899 when the less instructed were sitting up in expectation of the Leonid shower, which he had good reason to conclude would not take place.

By his death we have lost not only an able astronomer but a cheerful and charming personality.

Hyde Park, Leeds,
21st December 1917.

C. T. WHITMELL.