

In Memoriam.

ELIZABETH BROWN, F.R.Met.Soc.

Who passed away suddenly at her Residence,

Further Barton, Cirencester, Sunday, March 5th, 1899.

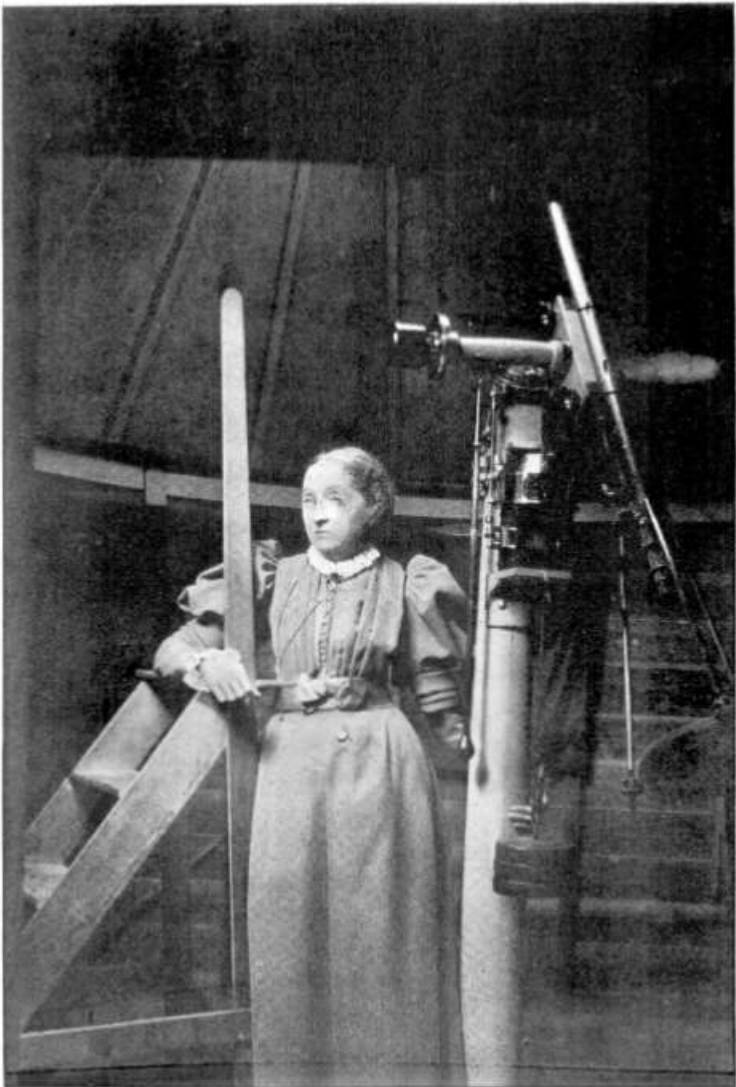
Since the issue of our last "Journal" the British Astronomical Association has met with a heavy and unexpected loss in the sudden death of the Director of its Solar Section, Miss E. Brown of Further Barton, Cirencester; a loss, the gravity of which it will take time to fully appreciate, because the work she did for it was not merely mechanical and formal, but personal and sympathetic. It was heart work done for love of science and of the study of the works of the Creator, and also for love of the Society with which she had been from the first associated, and it was permeated in every smallest detail by the special features of her character--by a perseverance which waited for no flattery, nor even encouragement, a thoroughness which made what she did wholly reliable, and a humility which left entirely outside its sphere of action any petty promptings of self-esteem, any shadow of jealousy of the work of others, any desire or expectation of public recognition of services given purely for love of truth and for the joy of work.

Her scientific tastes dated back to very early years, when, with a tiny hand-telescope, she used to rejoice in the sight of Saturn's rings or Jupiter's Satellites, tastes quietly growing more pronounced year by year, until, through patient private study, she gradually learned to "call by name" the stars of heaven, and to enter intelligently into the writings and teachings of her masters in the field.

It was not until 1883 that her astronomical life took any public form, when she thought it a great honour to become Director of the Solar Section of the Liverpool Astronomical Society, which, while it continued active, leant much on her quiet help and warm interest in its objects and members.

It was a great disappointment to her when, from one cause or another, the Liverpool Astronomical Society ceased to be a living and active organization, and the thought was constantly present with her that it might be possible to form a new society that should be more successful and more stable. She therefore broached the matter to, amongst others, the late Mr. T. Gwyn Elger, F.R.A.S., and to Mr. Walter Maunder, recurring to the point with her characteristic quiet gentle persistency, until the latter was at length induced to sound a number of the leading English astronomers on the subject. Their full approval and ready help quickly led to the formation of the British Astronomical Association, and Miss Brown was at once invited to fill a similar Directorship to that which she had held in the Liverpool Society, and from that period her whole time was devoted to her favourite science, her special line being the daily watching for and recording of sun spots.

Members of the British Astronomical Association are well acquainted with the character and results of these observations,



The Late Miss E. BROWN, F.R.Met.Soc.

Director of the Solar Section.

and it was very soon known that they could be depended on, and that the care and accuracy given to this arduous work never swerved from the strict aim and desire for truth in the smallest particular. Her method of drawing by projection always commended itself to her as the most suitable and faithful, and her trained hand and eye made her own contributions to the illustrations of the annual "Memoirs" a noticeable feature, their uncommon beauty and delicacy being an almost perfect transcript of the spots themselves.

Naturally the correspondence inseparable from this sort of work grew and multiplied, and she had no greater pleasure than in receiving help from and giving help to others in any and every possible way.

Beside her studies in Solar Physics, Miss E. Brown also worked at different times at variable, red, and coloured stars under Mr. Espin, Mr. Gore, and Mr. Chambers; also at meteoric and other observations, but her delicate health made much night work in her observatory undesirable. So that whilst maintaining a keen interest all round, the Sun remained her chief object to the end.

One other branch of work she also had in connexion with the Royal Meteorological Society, of which she was a Fellow (an honour offered her and accepted with pleasure), in the registration of rainfall, &c., in which she continued the long labours of her father, Mr. T. C. Brown, Fellow of the Geological Society, a man large-hearted in every sense, and loving science in all its branches. One of the last things she accomplished during her short spell of illness was the adding up, in her bed, of the rain record for February.

This little account would not be complete without mention of her Eclipse journeys, of which she made three; one to Russia in 1887, one to the West Indies in the winter of 1889-90, and one in 1896 to Norway, with a party of fellow-members of the British Astronomical Association.

Of these, only the second was rewarded by success, but she was not easily depressed by disappointment, the gentle and even tenor of her mind soon adjusting itself to renewed hope, and she had of late been looking forward to a fourth journey to Portugal in 1900.

And so the happy life went on. Living in her quiet country home with her one sister (now left desolate), she avoided unnecessary claims of society which might have interfered with her chosen occupation, and, save during her occasional travels and the often monthly visit to London for the British Astronomical Association meetings—always looked forward to with intense pleasure—she rarely missed her daily work of observation—watching, drawing, recording, and comparing with the work of others.

Then, at last, an apparently slight catarrhal illness came, but there was no thought of danger, and only a week had elapsed when on Sunday evening (March 5) with but an hour or two's increased apprehension on the part of others, she passed away in an instant into the greater light, the surer knowledge, and the more perfect peace.