

Lecture.

The most interesting thing I have noted lately is Huggins's candid avowal of the shaky foundation of the Nitrogen nebular theory. If you'll believe an old sceptic (but you won't!) you will in all probability have to see some curious undeterminations.

I was heartily glad to see today in Nature that you have been bringing forward that very curious observation of Parrot - just the thing to do. Strange! that we cannot get a large comet - but when we do, shall we find that we understand it? *Le ne sais pas - mais - mais - de - de - de.* I don't quite believe that we understand some things nearer home.

Not much work with the Telescope for some time. I look after a Ruby now & then, with Birmingham, who has taken much & worthy pains - & we sometimes turn up curious things - the most remarkable concerns Schjellerup's No 251 & 252. Only about 9m. diff. of R.A. & 9' of Dec. - 251 is simply called "red" by Bessel. - 252 is one of the Cape Obs. stars, of a "most beautiful & extremely intense ruby colour." & this by 2 observations. Only one red star exists thereabouts now. - & I find from Greenwich (as well as W. Dim-

mingham) that 252 cannot be found - & Selye also notes that it does not appear in the Bonn Cat. - Are we to suppose that H was twice in error to so considerable an extent? If not, both stars must be variable, & to a great extent, for it is most improbable that H should have missed 251, if it had been there as conspicuous as now, or in Bessel's day. This too is not a very probable, though possible, alternative.

My δ Orionis is very small - & the period is yet I think a puzzle, though I have not gone into the continuation of the light-curve. I should, I own, like to see it brighten up once more if I may.

I see your friend Mr. Menley is backing up his friend Mr. Lucraft. If the subjects were not too serious there would be some fun in it.

I shall be returning (D.V.) on Friday. Believe me,
my dearest Arthur,

Your very affectionate old friend
J. W. Webb