

The Old Quarters, 62  
Aug. 6. /87

My dear young friend,

I am going to give you a little trouble - wanting your  
Judicious Opinion Upon A Matter of Business. —

I have had, from time to time, some little correspondence  
with a certain Rev. W. O. Williams of Parllheli, N. Wales -  
he writes about testing an Ajit-Plaf - and afterwards about having  
seen a high spot of a Moon's Back (a very curious & good do. by  
the way,) which led me to put him in communication with Birt  
and finally he writes the other day to ask me how he c<sup>d</sup>. become  
F. R. A. S. - I gave him all particulars, & said I ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~your~~ <sup>your</sup>  
his recommendation, but I was afraid the Soc<sup>y</sup> w<sup>d</sup>. not consider  
such communications as amounting to personal knowledge - but,  
as I did not know their practice in such cases, he might ask Mr.  
Williams about it. He <sup>i.e. W. O. Williams!</sup> writes to ask J. Williams <sup>i.e. my Secretary!</sup> whether he thought,  
in such a case as mine, being driven as it were to the remotest  
corner of the country - the Society w<sup>d</sup>. admit of correspondence as  
constituting "personal knowledge"; and, if he <sup>i.e. John Williams</sup> thought that that con-  
struction upon the words in question was admissible, that I <sup>(i.e. W. O. Williams)</sup> had  
no doubt but that you (i.e. J. W. W.) would be happy to favour  
me with the "first signature" &c. - And this enquiry brought Mr.  
Williams's reply, on which I am writing now. - Now, what do you  
think about this? I certainly think the man very fitting to be a member,  
& think it a pity he sh<sup>d</sup>. ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~advantage~~ <sup>be</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> ~~cut~~ <sup>cut</sup> ~~off~~ <sup>off</sup>  
from the advantage, upon his retired situation, but that is not to lead  
me to do a wrong thing - so will you please consider the matter? and  
very probably you can ask some one at Cambridge. if you feel a  
doubt about it, how may know what is thought right on such occasions,  
I had hoped Williams w<sup>d</sup>. have referred to some precedent, pro or con,  
but he does not. Query Does personal knowledge mean know-  
ledge of a man's person? If so I ought not to sign. But if it



means knowledge of what he is, I can do so, very satisfactorily.  
It is rather a case of conscience which puzzles me - & if you can  
settle it for me - ~~yourself~~ - or get me a good opinion from a good  
man, I shall feel particularly obliged. I hate - it is not too strong  
a word - a conscious embarrassment - such as I have felt  
and ~~felt~~ for the first time in my life. - I do not think there is  
any great hurry, if a little delay would make the point more  
clear. - If it is decided that I may honorably sign as  
first, I dare say you w<sup>d</sup>. not object to ~~add~~ add your name as  
second - and perhaps you c<sup>d</sup>. get a friend to give a 3<sup>rd</sup> signature  
- ~~these~~ the 2 latter signatures being only pro forma & imp-  
lying no knowledge at all. Possibly your experience in the  
Mathematical Society, or your own Union at Cambridge, might  
help you out.

We are thinking with so much pleasure of your coming,  
I shall soon begin to count the days. I hope the weather will  
not have broken by that time. Shall you come from Hunter  
St? excuse my asking but I have a reason for that  
impertinent question.

On second thoughts I will enclose the form of recommenda-  
tion - not, for my belief, as wishing to induce you to sign, if  
you have the slightest hesitation as to the propriety of my doing  
it first - which would be a <sup>sneaking</sup> dirty artifice - but simply to save  
a little time, & suspense to the party concerned, either one or  
on the other. The question is evidently not in what sense I may be  
understand "personal knowledge" - but in what sense it is meant to  
bear in the Rules of that & similar Societies?

Ever & dear your friend

Yours very affectionately

J. W. Webb



Royal Astronomical Society,

SOMERSET HOUSE,

Augt 3 1867

Dear Sir

If Mr Webb feels he has  
a sufficient acquaintance with  
you to propose you the Society  
will not presume to enquire  
whether his knowledge of you  
is strictly personal in short  
the matter rests entirely between  
him & yourself as his signature  
will be sufficient for all purposes

I am

Dear Sir

Yours obdly

John Williams

Rev W. O. Williams