

J. ALFRED HARDCASTLE.

Deep regret was expressed by his many friends in Crowthorne when it became known that our good friend Mr. J. A. Hardcastle had passed away on November 10th. He had entered into our Parochial Life at so many points that there must have been but few who had not come across him at one time or another, and valued the friendship and experience which such contact brought to them. Ever ready to make himself useful, he found abundant scope for his energies in many directions; as a Manager of the Schools he showed a most lively interest in child welfare from every point of view; his work among the C.E.M.S. members has long been held in grateful memory; the time and labour he expended on the Sailors and Soldiers Families Association, and the many series of Lectures on Astronomy, couched in popular language, understood by all, may be mentioned as outstanding amidst other work less conspicuous, perhaps, but marked, as it always was, by reality and thoroughness.

Of the beautiful Home Life—the deep religious spirit which pervaded it—the affection existing between each member of the Family, of this we refrain from speaking. A good man has passed from us; we shall treasure his memory and the consistent example he ever set before us: while our prayers will not be wanting for those dearest to him who are left to fight out life's battle to final victory, "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

A short sketch of Mr. Hardcastle's career might be of interest to many who only knew him during the years of his residence in Crowthorne. Born in 1868, he was educated at Harrow, where he won the Gold Medal for Mathematics in 1887, and further distinguished himself as a school-boy, by passing the very stiff examination for the Indian Civil Service. He Matriculated at Cambridge the same year, but owing to family reasons had to go down the following year, and start in business. Ill health set in about 1890 and he had to spend many winters abroad in Egypt (where he worked in a Bank at Alexandria), Switzerland, and the South of France and Italy. Astronomy was always his hobby during the years he was in business, and after his marriage in 1899, when he gave up business entirely, he made Astronomy his Profession. In 1897 he had gone back to Cambridge in hopes of taking his Degree; but ill-health again compelled him to leave the University without a Degree:—it was a great tribute to his powers and ability that he was placed on the Staff of the Oxford University Extension Delegacy, without having a Degree either in Arts or Science. Devoted as he was to Research Work, he always said that he preferred the Lecturing work, because it brought him into touch with human beings, and was the means both of bringing into the lives of others an absorbing interest, as well as of creating lasting friendships between himself and many of his students. The sorest and hardest trial of his life was the gradual loss of the power to work; it was characteristic of him to say, shortly before his death, that he hoped God would give him work to do, as the fact of not being able to work for months past had been his greatest deprivation. His health had apparently so much improved last year that he felt justified in accepting the post of Astronomer of the Observatory at Armagh—an ideal appointment for him, involving Research Work, with Books and Instruments ready to hand—to say nothing of a beautiful Home: the preliminary visit there in March was one of the greatest pleasures he ever enjoyed.

When just on the point of starting for Ireland to begin work, on May 16th, he was taken ill and was obliged to go to his Father's home in Surrey, where he never left his bed, bearing his long and trying illness with the utmost patience, fortitude, and cheerfulness. He was laid to rest in the Churchyard at Oxted, on November 13th: that most appropriate Psalm, the XIXth, and a Hymn, sung at his wedding, being added to the Service.

We like to think that it was during his sojourn at Crowthorne that a very special and important piece of Astronomical work was carried out by him—namely, a series of measurements of the moon, in conjunction with his friend, Mr. S. A. Saunder, who had something more than an European reputation for his knowledge of the moon: these measurements, (over 2,000 in number, we have been told) involving perfect accuracy, were a source of immense interest to him, and of the greatest value to Astronomers.