

CHAPTER XII.

NOTES OF LIFE FROM 1844 TO 1850.

THROUGH days of sorrow and of mirth,
 Through days of death and days of birth,
 Through every swift vicissitude
 Of changeful time, unchanged it stood,
 As if, like God, it all things saw,
 It calmly repeats those words of awe,—
 "For ever—never!
 Never—for ever!"

LONGFELLOW.

ABOUT this time it occurred to several gentlemen in Edinburgh that "there was both room and need for a Review of the highest class, the organ of no party, political or ecclesiastical, and which, instead of ignoring or affecting to disown Christianity, was imbued with its spirit."¹ The *North British Review* was therefore started in 1844, under the editorship of the Rev. Dr. Welsh. The double coincidence of this event taking place the year after the Disruption, and the Free Church principles of most of its editors, led to the erroneous impression in some quarters that it was the organ of the Free Church. It has never been a sectarian work however; contributors of all denominations were welcome, if their principles were good and their literary talent undeniable. The success of the undertaking was remarkable;—from the very first this quarterly took the high place in literature which it has ever since sustained. It has always been under most careful editorial

¹ Quoted from *Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers*, by Dr. Hanna.

superintendence of a high order—Dr. Welsh, Lord Barcaple, Dr. Hanna, Professor Fraser, Dr. Duns, Professor Blaikie, and Mr. Douglas, having successively managed it—and the interest and variety of its articles have been in proportion to the singular variety and eminence of its contributors. Up to this time Brewster had been a contributor to Professor Napier's *Edinburgh Review*, for which he wrote twenty-eight articles, but the establishment of this more congenial periodical was quite an era in his literary life. He threw himself into its interests with the most cordial energy; for upwards of twenty years he contributed an article to almost every quarterly number, and he delighted in beating up for recruits for this service among his eminently intellectual friends. Professor Fraser writes,—“I have many letters received from him during the time of our literary connection, when I was editor of the *North British Review* in 1850 and the seven following years. In that relation I always found him in the highest degree kind, cordial, and considerate. The freshness of his nature was shown in his extraordinary readiness to sympathize with the life and movement of the age. He was among the most remarkable in a band of contributors which then included the ablest men of the time in Great Britain, not only for the brilliancy and vivacity of his writings, but for the punctual regularity with which they were delivered. He contributed an article to each number during the time I was editor, and in each instance, after we had agreed together about the subject, the manuscript made its appearance on the appointed day with punctual regularity, and its successive instalments were placed by him in the editor's hands with mechanical precision. Some of

the articles were the subject of interesting correspondence between us ; and I recollect in particular the ardour with which he addressed himself to the thoughtful and very suggestive essay on the *Plurality of Worlds*, which I had asked him to review, in an article since expanded into his *More Worlds than One*." Professor Blaikie, who edited the *Review* from 1860 to 1863, writes,—“ Sir David Brewster was ever remarkable for the carefulness of his work, the punctuality with which it was delivered—never behind time, never needing to write to the editor for more time or more space : a model contributor, indeed, in every way, and so full of well-put and attractive information. He was of great use in giving introductions to eminent men, his name being a guarantee that the channel in which they were asked to write would not be unworthy of them.” The secret of the successful execution of this literary work was, that he spared no pains which could possibly perfect an article. Not contented with the book itself, which he had to review, and his own previous knowledge of the subject, he collected fresh information before beginning to write, from every source ; he was always specially anxious to obtain particulars of the life and career of the author, so that most of his articles possess a biographical value apart from the intrinsic interest of the subject. The variety is indeed most curious, as is best seen from the four thick volumes which I have before me, in which are collected all these contributions. Dr. J. H. Gladstone, Ph.D., F.R.S., gave the following graphic description of some of these in his obituary notice before the Royal Society of London :—“ The first number of the *North British* commences with an article by him, on Flourens's *Eloge Historique de*

Cuvier; and further on in the same part he discusses the *Lettres Provinciales* and other writings of Blaise Pascal. In the second number he describes the Earl of Rosse's great reflecting telescope; and shortly we find him engaged with such serious works as Humboldt's *Cosmos* or Murchison's *Siluria*; the rival claimants for the honour of having discovered Neptune divide his attention with Macaulay's *History of England*, or the *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*. With Layard he takes his readers to Nineveh, with Lyell he visits North America, and with Richardson he searches the Polar Seas. The Exhibition of 1851, the Peace Congress, and the British Association, come in turn under his descriptive notice; or, turning from large assemblies to individual philosophers, he sketches Arago, Young, or Dalton. In one number we have 'The Weather and its Prognostics,' and 'The Microscope and its Revelations;' elsewhere he describes the Atlantic Telegraph, whilst in a single article he groups together 'The Life-boat, the Lightning-conductor, and the Lighthouse.' He reviews in turn Mary Somerville's *Physical Geography*, and Keith Johnston's *Physical Atlas*; the History of Photography engages him at one time, and at another Weld's History of our Society. Under the guidance of Sir Henry Holland he investigates the curious mental phenomena of mesmerism and electrobiology, and under that of George Wilson he inquires into colour-blindness. He criticises Goethe's scientific works, expounds De la Rive's *Treatise on Electricity*, and Arago's on Comets; or, turning from these severer studies, he allows Humboldt to exhibit the 'Aspects of Nature' in different lands to the multifarious readers of the *Review*."

His review of the *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* is one of the most remarkable, and I have heard that it was bound up with the book itself as an antidote, and thus sold in America.

It was one of my father's greatest literary pleasures to peruse carefully each number of the *Review* as it came out. For many years he had sent to him regularly, by the editors, a list of the authors of the different essays, delighting to copy and enclose it to friends at a distance, who he knew were readers of the work.

An incident connected with the *North British Review* caused my father so much interest, pride, and pleasure, that I cannot forbear mentioning it. The St. Andrews students had been left very much to their own devices for a good many years, and a state of things had set in which did not accord with the views of a new Principal of reforming tendencies. I believe that the breaches of discipline were not of serious importance, but quite sufficient to bring the University and its authority into some disrepute. Disorderly bands of red-gowned students patrolling the streets, too lengthened "gaudeamuses," unnecessary appeals to door-bells and knockers in the midst of the night, apparitions of tall, bearded guisards¹ into quiet families, and such like, were the principal offences, and with characteristic activity the perpetrators were brought before the Senatus, rebuked, and punished, so that a very different state of things soon came about, and St. Andrews students became as orderly as most of their class. A good many years afterwards my father read an article in the *North*

¹ A Scottish word borrowed, like many others, from the French, for children who go about masked, at Christmas and New Year, and sometimes act little childish scenes.

British, so fresh, so full of vigour and interest, that he at once wrote to Professor Fraser inquiring the name of the author. His delight was extreme—indeed, I scarcely remember his ever showing more complete satisfaction—when he found that it was written by one of his old students of that somewhat stormy period, of whom he had never since heard. He at once wrote him a letter of congratulation on that happy beginning of a now long successful authorship, for the writer of the article was the Rev. John Tulloch, then minister of Kettins, but afterwards Principal of the Divinity College at St. Andrews, and author of *The Leaders of the Reformation, English Puritanism*, etc. The friendship between the young man and the old was ever after most cordial, especially during the years when they were contemporary Principals in the same University.

Sir David's interest in all his students was very great, and he was popular and accessible among them, having them at breakfast and tea as often as his busy mornings and experimenting evenings would allow of the interruption. This accessibility to young men, even though not his own students, was very marked. A friend writes,—“My personal recollections of Sir David are all of the most pleasant kind, and I gratefully remember his kindness to me as a student; he was ever ready to see me, and not only converse about my studies, but to tell me of his, showing me the nature of his discoveries, and performing some of his experiments. A more gentle and accommodating spirit to the young never glowed in a human bosom.”

In the spring of 1845, in the company of the Rev. Dr. Taylor, my father paid one of his frequent visits to London, and we still find the habit carried on of

frequent communication to his wife of all that he thought could interest her, although the extreme bustle of his London life renders his letters, written almost daily, difficult to make extracts from. The following are interesting :—

“LONDON, 1845.

“MY DEAREST JULIET,—We have gained our cause on the question of Tests,¹ by the Government allowing Mr. Rutherford to bring in his bill, as you will see in the *Times*. Sir Robert Peel, attended by Sir James Graham, the Lord Advocate, and Sir George Clerk, received the deputation in his own house yesterday at twelve o'clock; and though Sir J. Graham had the night before told Mr. Rutherford that the Government was to *oppose* the bringing in of his bill, yet the arguments and facts of the deputation, many of which I stated, from sitting next to Sir Robert, together with the eloquent and powerful speech of Mr. Rutherford in the House last night, prevailed, and the repeal of the Tests is now certain. From the House I went to the great meeting of the Protestant Delegates in Exeter Hall, where I found Guthrie on his legs electrifying a small audience of about 6000 persons! He was followed by Baptist Noel, a most elegant and interesting-looking man, whose eloquence, chaste yet powerful, kept up the impression produced by Mr. Guthrie. We attended this morning a great public breakfast in the London Tavern, on the subject of the Maynooth Grant, which I think we shall yet defeat.”

“LONDON, May 1, 1845.

“I have just time to give you my *Wellingtoniana*,

¹ The Scottish University Tests were not done away till 1853.

which are rather interesting. . . . After a nice dinner-party at Lord Rosse's yesterday, during and after which I had to fight the anti-Maynooth battle, as well as that of the Free Church, I hurried to the Archbishop of York's without joining the ladies. I found the Great Duke seated beside Miss Georgina Harcourt on a double couch. As her object was to let me have some conversation with him, she soon summoned me to the empty side of the couch, and during nearly an hour I had the most unreserved conversation with the Duke and her. He speaks with a certain degree of difficulty, as if there had been a paralytic affection; but not very perceptibly so. He amused us with his account of an American who wrote to him that he had come all the way from the United States to see him; he did not, however, send him his address, for he said that if he showed himself in this way to one person he must do it to everybody, and this was impossible, unless he could be in more places than one at the same time. As Lord-Lieutenant of Hampshire, the British Association had asked him to be President at Southampton in 1846. Having seen his reply, I mentioned how much the Council regretted it, which led him to give us an account of the way in which all his time was employed throughout the year. From February till August he was obliged to attend the House of Lords, and never accepted an invitation on the days when the House sat. He often went home at twelve and one o'clock, and never got any dinner at all. His servant always asked him if he would have it, but at such late hours he preferred going to bed.' From August till November he is obliged to live at the Cinque Ports, and, besides his military duties, he had occasionally to attend upon Her Majesty.

For that reason he could not undertake the duties of President. We urged that attendance for one day would be sufficient, and that Lord Francis Egerton had done this at Manchester. This he could not do, as he would not undertake any duty without doing it completely.

“ We then talked of Wheatstone and the electro-magnetic telegraph, and the conduct of the French in trying to introduce Wheatstone’s inventions as a French system of telegraphs. He told me how the Duke of Buccleuch had, at the birth of Prince Alfred, got to Windsor before all the other ministers, from the accident of his servant having seen the telegraph at work. We talked much of Lord Rosse’s telescope, the size of which he knew well; and upon telling him that the transit of Mercury was to take place to-morrow, and that a party was going to Sir James South’s to see it, he said he would go, as he knew Sir James. We then talked of the new method of extinguishing fires by the sudden production of a great quantity of carbonic acid from charcoal, and of the Exhibition, which he had not seen, not having been able to go to the Royal Academy dinner. I mentioned the finest pictures, viz., Mr. F. Grant’s picture of a Miss Singleton, and Sir W. Allan’s *Nelson boarding the San Nicolas*, which he was to go and see some morning very early, to avoid the crowd.”

“ LONDON, *May 9, 1845.*

“ We had a very singular scene at Sir James South’s yesterday, where eight or ten telescopes were erected on his beautiful lawn at Camden Hill, to view the transit of Mercury over the sun’s disc. The day was not good, but at four o’clock the clouds so far cleared away as to

enable almost every person in the large party of fifty or sixty people to see the planet, like a round black patch, pass over the sun's face. The Duke of Wellington did not come, as he intended, being prevented by the dampness of the day, as he told Miss Harcourt, who was there."

Although undated, the following letter was written about this period :—

"MY DEAREST MARIA,—Upon coming here from the House of Commons (where we have just lost our University Test Bill by a majority of fifteen in a very full house), I have found your letter and its enclosures. We would not have lost it had it not been from the supineness of the Free Church and the citizens of Edinburgh, who sent up no deputation, and even no individual to enlighten and collect friendly and liberal members.

"Believing that the debate was to come on in the evening of to-day (Wednesday), I would have been able to do nothing in the matter, and not even to be present at the debate, had I not accidentally met with Sir Edward Colebrooke, who told me that the debate was to begin at twelve. I therefore hurried to the late Lord Advocate, Mr. Moncreiff, to put him up to several facts. I got one petition unkennelled from its place in the House, to which Mr. Ireland had improperly addressed it to Mr. Ellice, so that it was read before the debate. I conversed with a number of friendly M.P.'s in the Members' Gallery, Mr. Dennison, Mr. Philip Pusey, etc. etc., and prevailed upon them to stay to the vote.

"Don't be alarmed when I tell you that I was taken *prisoner in the House* by the Serjeant-at-Arms, Lord W. Russell, and *released* by order of the Speaker! A divi-

sion was announced, and strangers ordered to withdraw. I obeyed, went out of the House, but stood in a corner of the stair, in place of going to the lobby, not knowing the right thing to do. When the division was over I was taken prisoner, being found among the members. The Serjeant-at-Arms was puzzled, but having got authority to release me, he called out through a little window in the door that *his prisoner* was released, and I emerged, to the amusement and amazement of a number of members whom I knew, waiting outside for admission.—I am, my dearest Maria, your affectionate father,

D. BREWSTER.

“ATHENÆUM CLUB,
Wednesday, 5 o'clock.”

For two years, James, his eldest son, had been at home on furlough from his duties in the Bengal Civil Service, and on the 18th of February 1845 his marriage took place—an event which brought into the family a peculiarly gentle and lovely daughter, for whom my father ever felt the tenderest affection.¹ During the remainder of their time in this country, before returning to India, the newly married couple resided at Barham Lodge, within a drive of St. Leonard's, which, with a large and pleasant circle of new connections, added much to his social enjoyments. St. Andrews itself contained much excellent and intelligent society, in which, as well as in that of a well populated country neighbourhood, he found that pleasant social relaxation which he always needed from study. His scientific lectures, though delivered in the College, were thrown open and made most attractive,—a task for

¹ Catherine Maitland, fourth daughter of James Maitland Heriot, Esq. of Ramornie, Fife.

which he was peculiarly qualified,—to crowded audiences of strangers and casual visitors, as well as friends, acquaintances, and students. About this time Dr. Merle d'Aubigné, the eminent historian of the Reformation, paid a visit to St. Leonard's College, which was long remembered with the greatest interest. Many foreigners brought letters of introduction, one of the most interesting of whom was M. Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot; there were also Count Krasinski, Prince Adam de Sapiéha, and several younger branches of the Genevese families whose acquaintance Brewster had made in 1814.

In the spring of 1846 he went with his wife and daughter to Rothesay for the mild climate and shelter from east winds—enjoying keenly, as was his custom, the new route, the lovely sea and island views, and pleasant new acquaintances, and returning homewards in time for the General Assembly of May, which was marked by the laying of the foundation-stone of the Free Church College, a ceremony which he attended with much interest. The breakfast party connected with this event, and a long friendly visit just afterwards, were the last occasions on which Brewster and Chalmers met on earth. One year after, in 1847, the former took part in that mournful but noble procession which bore Dr. Chalmers to his rest in the new Grange Cemetery,

“Where thronging multitudes beside thee tread,
And severed creeds are meeting round thy bed.”

In 1847 Brewster was made a Chevalier of the Order of Merit by the King of Prussia, whose acquaintance he had before made at Taymouth Castle. In the same year he took his daughter and two friends, the Misses

Lyon, to the seventeenth meeting of the British Association, which met for the second time at Oxford, under the presidency of Sir Robert Harry Inglis, Bart., then the representative in Parliament of the University—a peculiarly interesting locality for such a meeting, which was moreover a very brilliant and valuable one in all its component parts. The twin discoverers of Neptune, Mr. Adams and M. Leverrier, were present; as usual Brewster had entered keenly into the scientific controversy which agitated French and English minds as to the priority of this important discovery, so important as to extend the Solar system one thousand millions of miles beyond its former known limits. The injustice that had been done to the young English astronomer was only beginning to be repaired at the Oxford meeting, where it was pleasant to see the two distinguished and independent discoverers meeting on equal and amicable terms. The United College of St. Andrews offered Mr. Adams their vacant chair of Natural Philosophy, a compliment which had never before been paid to any one but Dr. Chalmers, in the case of the Moral Philosophy Chair in the same College.

In Brewster's *Life of Newton*, the following passage occurs:—"The honour of having made this discovery belongs equally to Adams and Leverrier. It is the greatest intellectual achievement in the annals of astronomy, and the noblest triumph of the Newtonian Philosophy. To detect a planet by the eye, or to track it to its place by the mind, are acts as incommensurable as those of muscular and intellectual power. Recumbent on his easy-chair, the practical astronomer has but to look through the cleft in his revolving cupola, in order to trace the pilgrim star in its course; or by the

application of magnifying power, to expand its tiny disc, and thus transfer it from among its sidereal companions to the planetary domains. The physical astronomer, on the contrary, has no such auxiliaries: he calculates at noon, when the stars disappear under a meridian sun: he computes at midnight, when clouds and darkness shroud the heavens; and from within that cerebral dome, which has no opening heavenward, and no instrument but the Eye of Reason, he sees in the disturbing agencies of an unseen planet, upon a planet by him equally unseen, the existence of the disturbing agent, and from the nature and amount of its action he computes its magnitude and indicates its place. If man has ever been permitted to see otherwise than by the eye, it is when the clairvoyance of reason, piercing through screens of epidermis and walls of bone, grasps, amid the abstractions of number and of quantity, those sublime realities which have eluded the keenest touch, and evaded the sharpest eye."

From Oxford we went to Hartwell House, the fine old ancestral residence of Dr. Lee, which had been the abode of Charles X. and his family during their stay in England, after the memorable "three days" of July 1830. In this beautiful and scientific mansion were assembled a large party of the British Association, lions both home and foreign, and one of the many interests of this visit, peculiarly valued by my father, was the nightly observation of the heavens made in the noble transit-room of Hartwell.

In 1848-49 I find the following interesting notes of contemporary persons and events in home letters during his annual visits to London. The first letter refers to a period when M. Guizot, the eminent French statesman,

after the Revolution of 1848, had made many inquiries about St. Andrews as a place of residence for himself and his family. A lengthened sojourn in this country was not however found necessary for the distinguished exile, and this plan was abandoned.

“ LONDON, 1848.

“ SIR HARRY VERNEY had called upon me and requested me to go at *three* o'clock to a public breakfast to the friends of *St. John's Schools*, leaving a card of admission for two. This most interesting establishment is supported by the zeal, and, to a considerable extent, by the wealth, of Mr. Arthur Kinnaird, Lord K.'s brother, a man of true piety. After visiting the Exhibition, Dr. A. and I went to the breakfast, or rather luncheon. Lord Ashley was in the chair, and Mr. Baptist Noel, beside whom I sat (and with whom I had some delightful conversation), and the Rev. James Hamilton, were among the speakers. The subject for conversation was that of providing amusements for the lower classes, and, as ill luck would have it, Mr. Arthur Kinnaird asked me to state my opinions, which compelled me to say something, and in the course of conversation I was obliged several times to say a few words, which I did better than I thought possible. I was then introduced by Lord Ashley to Mme. Chabot, Mlle. Guizot, and her brother, a boy of about thirteen or fifteen years of age, who attended Adolphe Monod's church in Paris. Mme. Chabot is a pious woman, who has impressed her own character upon the young Guizots, and I should not wonder if, occasionally at least, they should come to our church. Mme. Chabot told me that they (M. Guizot and his family) go to St. Andrews early in August, and requested me to call upon M. Guizot at 21 Pelham

Crescent, Brompton, which I mean to do to-day, and to give him all the information he may require about our city.

“Lord Ashley mentioned in the course of his speech, that he was that evening to open a reading-room in Westminster, for the civilisation of the ragged and thieving adults of that frightful locality. I was anxious to be present, and was appointed to meet him at the House of Commons at half-past six. Dr. A. and I went there, and were joined by the Marquis of Blandford, Lord Castlereagh, and others. We walked to the place of meeting, and first visited the Ragged School, taught by a Mr. Aitchison, from Glasgow, quite a superior man. The city missionary of the district is a Mr. Walker, the son of a grocer (as he told me), at Earlston, near Melrose, a most devoted man, and a man of great physical energy. The meeting for opening the reading-room, and a room for teaching adults, was crowded to overflowing, all the rogues of the place being either inside or at the doors and windows. Lord Castlereagh and Lord Kinnaird moved two of the resolutions, and Lord Ashley spoke repeatedly. The behaviour of the people was admirable. The meeting went off in the most gratifying manner. It was delightful to see two young nobles who are to be, the one the Duke of Marlborough and the other the Marquis of Londonderry, giving their time and their money for the amelioration of the condition of the poor. I felt self-reproached in considering how little we do in the same field of duty in our locality. After the meeting was over, and we had secured our silk handkerchiefs in our inner pockets, we went to the House of Commons, where Lord Ashley got us seats in the Speaker's Gallery to hear the discussion of the

Sugar question, which was very uninteresting. Mr. Baptist Noel and I had much conversation about Free Church matters; he also expressed an anxious desire that something should be done in St. Andrews to turn M. Guizot's mind to serious religion. He knows him well, and feels a great interest in his happiness. His misfortunes may, of themselves, turn his thoughts and affections heavenwards.

"*P.S.*—I met Dr. Somerville on the street the day of my arrival here, looking as young as when I saw him last. He and Mrs. Somerville were to set out next day for Kelso to visit his sister, Mrs. General Elliott."

The following short extract contains an interesting allusion to his early days :—

"ROSSIE PRIORY, *Jan.* 1849.

"Mr. Graham, the Established clergyman of Abernyte, dined here yesterday. He has a great passion for optics, and has made some very fine and large telescopes with his own hands. Although the day confined everybody to the house, I took a walk of two miles to pay him a visit, which was a very agreeable one. He has a nice clever wife, but no children, and his manse is one of the most charming residences I have seen. It was a great treat to me to find a young man carrying on all my early pursuits, and who had derived his practical knowledge from my own writings."

In 1849 he received a mark of distinction which he highly valued, being chosen one of the eight Foreign Associates of that French Institute which had done him honour so early in his career. He succeeded Berzelius, the celebrated Swedish chemist. Of this honour, the

greatest scientific one which France can bestow on foreign sages, and which, alike under republic and under monarchy, has been exercised with judgment and discretion, Baron Cuvier remarked that it was one "for which all the philosophers of Europe compete, and of which the list, beginning with the names of Newton, Leibnitz, and Peter the Great, has at no period degenerated from its original lustre."

In the first month of 1850, the second dark cloud of his life overshadowed my father, not bursting like a sudden thunderstorm, as on the first occasion, but creeping slowly on during years of delicate health and prostration of strength, which, although without disease, was so great, that at almost the first touch of an epidemic the enfeebled constitution succumbed, and, after a week's illness more serious than usual, the wife of his youth passed away on the 27th of January, in a quiet humble hope through that way of simple salvation which her sorrowing husband had not yet entered with his heart, though he understood it with his intellect. She was laid to rest beside her long-loved and long-mourned "Charlie," beneath the shade of the Abbey ruins of Melrose, and within the sound of the rippling river which had caused her greatest bereavement.