VARIOUS

THE MIRROR OF LITERATURE, AMUSEMENT, AND INSTRUCTION. VOLUME 13. INDEX TO VOLUME 13

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Содержание

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PORTRAIT of the late SIR HUMPHRY DAVY, Bart.

PREFACE

We begin to think that a long Preface in this season of *ennui* would be almost as tiresome as tragedy in warm weather, and much more so than the trite three-line Prologue in Hamlet. Our materials are collected from all quarters, with but little of our own; so that we might praise all the authors without the charge of uncommon vanity; but panegyric savours much of the poppy, and we must use it accordingly.

Our thanks are first due to such Subscribers as have, by personal observation and research, enabled us to throw a light on certain obsolete customs or portions of our domestic history; for these contributions form a prominent feature of the Correspondence of THE MIRROR; it being our object, in this department, to gather facts rather than to draw only upon the invention of our friends. In support of this system we could select many specimens from the Correspondence of the present volume, the interest of which is, we hope, be equal to any of its predecessors.

The *Selector* will be found to contain many valuable extracts from New and Costly Works, in almost every class of literature; and the piquancy of the *Notes of a Reader* may be turned to as a convenient little treasury, into which readers of all tastes may dip with pleasure and advantage.

The *Sketch Book* contains rather an unusual number of Narratives, some of them of extraordinary interest, and written in the best style of the best authors.

The *Spirit of Discovery* will be considered characteristic of our times, by illustrating the real economy of science in its application to the conveniences of every-day life. As a collateral branch of this division is *The Naturalist*, under which head we have endeavoured to identify THE MIRROR with Zoology, as one of the most popular studies of the day.

The *Spirit of the Public Journals* breathes not a few of the sweetest and most recent poetical compositions from the pens of celebrated authors, some of whose names are passports to high excellence.

The *Engravings* have, probably, been criticised upon first impression; so that we can only hope they have merited the applause of our Subscribers. We may be permitted to remark that some of the illustrations relate to scenes and subjects of no ordinary attraction in Antiquarian Remains, and Architectural Improvements of yesterday; a few of these have been executed at a considerable cost to the Proprietor; for which extra exertion he has been more than requited by the increased demand.

Several current *Novelties* will be found described at length in this volume—as the circumstantial and accurate accounts of the Colosseum—and the New Swan River Settlement, the last of which is illustrated with an Engraved Chart.

Strenuous as have been our exertions for past patronage, we shall not relax in the ensuing volume. An entirely new Type has been prepared for this purpose, and we feel confident that we shall be enabled to keep pace with the increased typographical beauty of the MIRROR, as well as with the improved spirit of its Engravings.

June 27, 1829.

LIST OF ENGRAVINGS

VOL. XIII

Labyrinth at Versailles.

MEMOIR OF SIR HUMPHRY DAVY, BART

The present may be regarded as a chemical age; for so extensive, rapid, and important have been the late acquisitions in the science of chemistry, that we may almost claim it as the exclusive discovery of our own times. The popularity and high estimation in which it is held may be ascribed to three causes: 1. The satisfaction which is afforded by its results. 2. Its utility in all the arts of life. 3. The little previous preparation which an entrance on its study requires. To these may be added, the new interest conferred upon the science by the discoveries of Black, Priestly, and Lavoisier, which had already introduced into chemical science the long-neglected requisites of close investigation and logical deduction; but it was reserved for Sir HUMPHRY DAVY to demonstrate the vast superiority of modern principles, by the most brilliant career of discovery, which, since the days of Newton, have graced the annals of science.

Sir Humphry Davy was born December 17, 1779, at Penzance, in Cornwall. His family was ancient, and above the middle class; his paternal great grandfather had considerable landed property in the parish of Budgwin, and his father possessed a small paternal estate opposite St. Michael's Mount, called Farfal, on which he died in 1795, after having injured his fortune by expending considerable sums in attempting agricultural improvements. Sir Humphry received the first rudiments of his education at the grammar-schools of Penzance and Truro: at the former place, he resided with Mr. John Tomkin, surgeon, a benevolent and intelligent man, who had been intimately connected with his maternal grandfather, and treated him with a degree of kindness little less than paternal. His genius was originally inclined to poetry; and there are many natives of Penzance who remember his poems and verses, written at the early age of nine years. He cultivated this bias till his fifteenth year, when he became the pupil of Mr. (since Dr.) Borlase, of Penzance, an ingenious surgeon, intending to prepare himself for graduating as a physician at Edinburgh. As a proof of his uncommon mind, at this early age, it is worthy of mention, that Mr. Davy laid down for himself a plan of education, which embraced the circle of the sciences. By his eighteenth year he had acquired the rudiments of botany, anatomy, and physiology, the simpler mathematics, metaphysics, natural philosophy, and chemistry. But chemistry soon arrested his whole attention. Having made some experiments on the air disengaged by sea-weeds from the water of the ocean, which convinced him that these vegetables performed the same part in purifying the air dissolved in water which land-vegetables act in the atmosphere; he communicated them to Dr. Beddoes, who had at that time circulated proposals for publishing a journal of philosophical contributions from the West of England. This produced a correspondence between Dr. Beddoes and Mr. Davy, in which the Doctor proposed, that Mr. Davy, who was at this time only nineteen years of age, should suspend his plan of going to Edinburgh, and take a part in experiments which were then about to be instituted at Bristol, for investigating the medical powers of factitious airs; to this proposal Mr. Davy consented, on condition that he should have the uncontrolled superintendence of the expements. About this time he became acquainted with Davies Gilbert, Esq. M.P. a gentleman of high scientific attainments, (now President of the Royal Society), with whom he formed a friendship which has always continued; and to Mr. Gilbert's judicious advice may be attributed Mr. Davy's adoption of and perseverance in the study of chemistry. With Dr. Beddoes, Mr. Davy resided for a considerable time, and was constantly occupied in new chemical investigations. Here, he discovered the respirability of nitrous oxide, and made a number of laborious experiments on gaseous bodies, which he afterwards published in "Researches Chemical and Philosophical," a work that was universally well received by the chemical world, and created a high reputation for its author, at that time only twenty-one years of age. This led to his introduction to Count Rumford, and to his being elected Professor of Chemistry to the Royal Institution in Albemarle-street. On obtaining this appointment Mr. Davy gave up all his views of the medical profession, and devoted himself entirely to chemistry.

Mr. Davy's first experiments as Professor of Chemistry in the Royal Institution, were made on the substance employed in the process of tanning, with others to which similar properties were ascribed, in consequence of the discovery made by M. Seguier, of Paris, of the peculiar vegetable matter, now called tannin. He was, during the same period, frequently occupied in experiments on galvanism.

To the agriculturist, chemistry is of the first consideration. The dependence of agriculture upon chemical causes had been previously noticed, but it was first completely demonstrated in a course of lectures before the Board of Agriculture, which Mr. Davy commenced in the year 1802, and continued for ten years. This series of lectures contained much popular and practical information, and belongs to the most useful of Mr. Davy's scientific labours; for the application of chemistry to agriculture is one of its most important results; and so rapid were the discoveries of the author, that in preparing these discourses for publication, a few years afterwards, he was under the necessity of making several alterations, to adapt them to the improved state of chemical knowledge, which his own labours had, in that short time, produced.

In 1803, he was chosen a fellow of the Royal Society, and in 1805, a member of the Royal Irish Academy. He now enjoyed the friendship of most of the distinguished literary men and philosophers of the metropolis, and enumerated among his intimate friends, Sir Joseph Banks, Cavendish, Hatchett, Wollaston, Children, Tennant, and other eminent men. At the same time he corresponded with the principal chemists of every part of Europe. In 1806, he was appointed to deliver, before the Royal Society, the Bakerian lecture, in which he displayed some very interesting new agencies of electricity, by means of the celebrated galvanic apparatus [1] Soon afterwards, he made one of the most brilliant discoveries of modern times, in the decomposition of two fixed alkalies, which, in direct refutation of the hypothesis previously adopted, were found to consist of a peculiar metallic base united with a large quantity of oxygen. These alkalies were potash and soda, and the metals thus discovered were called potassium and sodium, Mr. Davy was equally successful in the application of galvanism to the decomposition of the earths. About this time he became Secretary of the Royal Society. In 1808, Mr. Davy received a prize from the French Institute. During the greater part of 1810, he was employed on the combinations of oxymuriatic gas and oxygen; and towards the close of the same year, he delivered a course of lectures before the Dublin Society, and received from Trinity College, Dublin, the honorary degree of LL. D.

In the year 1812, Mr. Davy married his amiable lady, then Mrs. Apreece, widow of Shuckburgh Ashby Apreece, Esq. and daughter and heiress of the late Charles Kerr, of Kelso, Esq. By his union with this lady, Mr. Davy acquired not only a considerable fortune, but the inestimable treasure of an affectionate and exemplary wife, and a congenial friend and companion, capable of appreciating his character and attainments. A few days previously to his marriage, he received the honour of knighthood from his Majesty, then Prince Regent, being the first person on whom he conferred that dignity.

[1] This apparatus is of immense power, and consists of 200 separate parts, each part composed of ten double plates, and each plate containing 32 square inches. The whole number of double plates is 2,000, and the whole surface 126,000 square inches.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.