

A BRIEF MEMOIR of the LIFE AND CHARACTER of WILLIAM BAKER, F. G. S.,
PREPARED PRINCIPALLY FROM HIS DIARY AND CORRESPONDENCE.
BY JOHN BOWEN
1854

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A BRIEF MEMOIR

of the

LIFE AND
CHARACTER

of

WILLIAM BAKER, F. G. S.,

*Secretary to the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural
History Society;
and Vice-President of the Bridgwater Literary
and Scientific Institution.*

PREPARED PRINCIPALLY FROM HIS DIARY AND
CORRESPONDENCE.

BY JOHN BOWEN

“And is then example nothing? It is everything. Example is
the school of
mankind, and they will learn at no other.”
EDMUND BURKE

TAUNTON:
FREDERICK MAY, HIGH STREET.
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1854



ADDRESS

TO THE GENERAL READER.

THE FOLLOWING BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR, was prepared at the request of the authorities referred to at its commencement, and was read in part at their December Meeting. It is evidently too long for entire reading at such a Meeting, or for extended publication in the Annual Report of a Society formed for other purposes. It is equally evident that a Memoir to be in harmony with the avowed objects of

such a Society, and compressible within the time and space which could be fairly assigned to it, without trespassing on the just expectations of other contributors, could scarcely comprise anything beyond a meagre notice of the deceased in connection with his contributions to that Society. This would leave the main events of a most instructive life shrouded from the contemplation of those who are more immediately interested in the example.

Such a notice, so contracted in its object, would not have satisfied the reasonable expectations of the family of the deceased, who supplied the materials for this Memoir, and certainly would not have obtained the co-operation of the present compiler. He considered the love of Natural History as one element in the character of his departed friend; but he likewise considered that any attempt to confine his observations to that one element, would cripple if not destroy the moral effect of an example, such as but seldom occurs, and which is at this time specially needed.

To exhibit this example in detail, in its progress, and in its results, is to exhibit a proof that persons without education, without influential connexions, without any extrinsic advantage, may obtain reputation and distinction; that they may, without the least sacrifice of manly independence, obtain an equal footing with persons born under more favourable circumstances of fortune, and that while they are in their leisure hours, discreetly improving their understanding and their taste by elevating pursuits, they are rendering themselves more capable of judging soundly on, and conducting successfully, the common concerns and daily duties of life.

The practical example here contemplated, is not to be found in the contributions of William Baker to any Society, or his success in any particular pursuit; but it exists distinctly embodied in his life, considered as a whole. There the laborious Mechanic and the humble Tradesman, may learn the reasonable results of temperance, industry, and emulous perseverance in elevating pursuits;—there too they may obtain a glimpse of the still higher prospects which await a disciplined rectitude of feeling and a well-spent life.

If only one person of the class to which the compiler belongs, learns this lesson, out of the many thousands who may learn it, he will not have expended a fragment of his little remaining strength in vain. Under this hope, he has consented, at the

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request of the family of the deceased, to revise, for publication, the Memoir originally prepared for the Society referred to.

Should an objection be taken to such a publication, on the ground of the subject being deficient in striking events and vicissitudes, he may admit such a deficiency, while he questions the soundness of the objection founded on it, replying to the objectors in the words of Edmund Burke: "And is then example nothing? It is everything. Example is the school of mankind, and they will learn at no other."

J.B.

Bridgwater, January 1854

TO THE
PRESIDENT, VICE-PRESIDENT,
AND MEMBERS
OF THE

Somersetshire Archæological and Natural History Society

HAVING BEEN APPLIED TO BY YOUR SECRETARIES, acting under the direction of your Committee, to prepare a Memoir of your late Secretary, my departed friend, William Baker, who is referred to in that application as "one great support of our Society, and an honour to the County of Somerset," I enter most reluctantly on a task which, although totally unprepared for, and most distressing in itself it might have appeared moody or discourteous to decline.

An unclouded friendship of more than half a century with the deceased, had never until very lately suggested to me the possibility of his leaving me behind in this drama of life. Even but four years since, when after a severe fit of illness, I had a gloomy satisfaction in preparing my own vault, and, unknown to him, provided an adjoining resting-place for his mortal remains, where they are now deposited, my daily visits of inspection were always associated with the idea of his joining me in this narrow house, not of his preceding me thither. This is no otherwise relevant, than as it accounts in some degree for my not having in my own possession, a fragment to assist my recollection of a friend so long

cherished and esteemed. I never contemplated such an undertaking as the present, and therefore could never have prepared for it.

Being thrown entirely on my memory, with the exception of such aid as may be furnished by the miscellaneous papers of the deceased, and by his estimable family, I require a liberal consideration for errors or omissions, which under such circumstances are inevitable.

I had proceeded thus far, when I most unexpectedly discovered that my friend had, in a series of letters, written to his daughter, Mrs Chilcot, in London, detailed with considerable minuteness many of the circumstances of his early life.¹

A collection from these documents, and some others placed at my disposal, will clearly trace his progress up to that period of life, which materially influences the habits, pursuits and principles of after days. But before I enter on that selection, I would observe, that such a man cannot be understood by a mere catalogue of his qualities, or even of his actions, without a patient estimate of the circumstances under which he was placed, and the moral as well as physical atmosphere by which he was surrounded. To afford the means of such an estimate will be the main object of this Paper; an object which cannot be attained by treating the subject in dry detail, as the Fungi or Amphibia of Somerset may be treated; but as a Somersetshire man, without school education or influential family connection, brought into extensive communication with his countrymen, owing much to their early discrimination of his worth, and in his turn, reflecting credit on them, in the maturity of his virtues and his talents.

The subject of this Memoir was born in Eastover, Bridgwater, on the third day of March, 1787. His father was a butcher, in a somewhat large way of business for a country town. He partly grazed his own stock, and was sufficiently engaged in farming occupations to make the assistance of his son William useful at an early age. That son, in writing to his

¹ My being ignorant of the existence of such documents, cannot but appear strange to those who know the intimate terms on which we lived. Indeed I can only account for it myself on one supposition, which is, that being frequently pressed by him to make some notes of my own eventful life, and always treating the application as not deserving any serious consideration, he might have concluded, that that which I deemed unworthy consideration in my own case, was not very likely to find much encouragement in his.

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eldest daughter in December, 1851, thus expresses an intention of giving some account of himself:

"You are aware, my dear Ann, that persons who have had their fair share of happiness in this world, often indulge in dreamy ideas of the past, and try to live, mentally, the most interesting parts of their lives over and over again. Now I have been indulging lately a fancy, that it would be pleasant to me, and also to you and some others, if I could find time and resolution to review parts of my life, and communicate from time to time my thoughts and feelings by letter to one or other of you children.

"You know that my life has not been one of romance, but that I have, by quiet upward toil, reached a moderate and very pleasant eminence, through a path strewn here and there with difficulties, but still a happy path. I think that my progress thus far, with my pursuits, leading me to the acquaintance and friendship of eminent men, with remarks on those pursuits and distinguished persons, would furnish much interesting and useful matter. Remember, I am not contemplating a book for the public, but agreeable reminiscences for my self and pleasure for my children!"

It is here admitted that although he did not contemplate writing a book for the public, he did contemplate producing "much interesting and some useful matter," and it may be fairly concluded, from the whole tenor of his life, that he would have objected for the matter so produced to be made more generally useful than it could be if confined to his own family. On this conviction I proceed with extracts from his letters as nearly verbatim as is consistent with the consideration due to confidential family correspondence, and to the compression necessary for bringing this Paper within the limits usually assigned to such an article.

Soldiering being all the rage in his childhood and his father being a boisterous hater of the French, at the early age of nine William was appointed a Fifer in the "Bridgwater Volunteers," and I well remember the envy with which I contemplated his military equipment. At about the age of thirteen years and a half, he was apprenticed to Mr. Tuthill, a Currier, an old-fashioned Burgess of Bridgwater, who had in his turn discharged the important duties of the Mayoralty, and appeared as if he never deemed himself out of the chair. I refer to this military outburst, as being necessary to the understanding of some subsequent matter; and now proceed with his

own notes.

"In September, 1800, I was apprenticed to that business which has answered my purpose so well, and enabled me to hold up my head fairly in the world.

"I was very deficient of that education which other boys of my rank possessed, as you may suppose from the manner in which I had spent my youth up to that period. I had eagerly engaged in all the sports and games pursued by boys, and in many of them excelled, but in the very first week of my apprenticeship, I withdrew in a considerable degree from the sports of my companions, although I was sometimes tempted to continue them in my meal times, and after work hours.

"Hitherto I had lived pretty much unrestrained, and often in low company; the extent of my reading was very limited—a chapter of the Bible or Testament now and then on Sundays. The stories and lessons in common school books, and Aesop's Fables, had been the materials for my mental culture. Although my learning at this time was of this humble kind, I was not deficient of ideas, and had many in store on Natural History. These I had gathered in the neighbouring fields, where I had been much employed by my father, and in frequent visits to neighbouring villages, where I was often sent on my father's business.

"I was so well acquainted with the nests and eggs of birds, their songs, and even their call notes, that I readily recognised those of one species from another. In after life I have never improved, I think, and scarcely retained the delicacy of my ear for the ever charming music of birds. I had traced the butterfly through its changes to its beautiful winged state, I had found that the curious shell-built Cadis-house, was tenanted by the Aquatic Larva of a four-winged moth-like insect, and I knew pretty much of the development of the Amphibœa.

"My attention had also been attracted to curious stones; and flowers were great favourites. The Fables of Aesop had led me to think of animals with much interest. My mind had received a strong impulse towards the study of Natural History, which has afforded me so much enjoyment for more than half a century, and much of the happiness which I have enjoyed in the notice and society of distinguished persons.

"Notwithstanding my apprenticeship, I was allowed to retain my position in the army, which I

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had filled with credit for nearly four years. My master, whose loyalty was fully up to the standard of the national enthusiasm of the day, was proud of his young apprentice holding the rank of Fifer in the corps of which he was a private, and I was pleased with the frequent holidays, the parades, and field days afforded me.

“My dinner hours only, during the first winter, afforded me any time for the use of the pencil, I had left off drawing blue and green parrots, “with twin cherries in their beaks,” and of copying lions, tigers, horses, &c., from half-penny prints, and had produced some highly finished, I should say highly coloured, copies of shepherds, and shepherdesses, with dogs, and crooks, and sheep, in sylvan scenes and of anglers, with their accompaniments, by pleasant streams. I even aspired to draw from nature, curriers in their costume, at their characteristic employments, and of course did not consider myself altogether unsuccessful.

“Mr. Tuthill was a great bee fancier, and he soon found me a willing and steady assistant in his apiarian operations. Miss Tuthill, a maiden lady, who kept house for her brother, was fond of flowers, therefore I enjoyed many pleasant jobs in her neat and well-furnished garden, in which the bees were kept, and where many shrubs and flowers were cherished as salutary to the industrious insects, such as the favourite bee master, Keys, has recommended. Thus, you see, I had most agreeable employments, which fostered my young love for Natural History.

“Miss Tuthill had a few books, which were at my service, and amongst them “Goldsmith’s History of the Earth, and Animated Nature,” a translation of “Le Spectacle de la Nature,” &c.; these were well suited to kindle up the spark of Natural History within me.

“In my work, I had the company of a respectable young man, a fellow apprentice, who remained with me for nearly two years; during this time we were but little exposed to the pernicious influence of journeymen, who are generally a worthless set of trampers. After two years had thus passed away, I was, for five or six months, almost always alone in my work; during this time I had abundant opportunity of dwelling on my deficiency of book knowledge. I found, with concern, that several young men who had been trained at our charity schools, were far before me in education, and I resolved to make an effort to stand on even ground with them,

and to obtain the qualification of a respectable tradesman. I began to look about me for books, and to read, such as I could get, but with much loss of time, for want of a guide.

“My aunt Chapman, at this time, gave me and my brother a guinea each to purchase spoons, as tokens of her affection, but as I wanted books, I requested the good old lady to allow me to spend my money at the stationer’s, which, of course, she cheerfully did, and with much kind encouragement. I purchased Guthrie’s Geographical Grammar, and a pretty large map of the globe, with my guinea, and I can now recall the feelings of gratification and pride with which I carried my treasure to my father’s house. Oh! with what joy I anticipated storing my mind with the learning which I carried in my hand. A few other books came to my hands as purchases or as loans, but I had yet to pass through strong temptations to a careless and dissipated life.

“A journeyman came to work with me when I was about sixteen years of age, who had been for some years a tramping workman, and therefore had much to talk of, that was entertaining to me. He possessed considerable talent for spouting, and singing, and could compose volunteer, and electioneering songs, with squibs and rhyme on any passing subject. This man, Davis was his name, soon induced me to assist in getting together a party of young people, my acquaintances, to perform the play of Pizarro. I was prevailed on to learn the part of Rolla, and I pasted together large sheets of paper for scenes, and daubed them with size colours, to represent trees, rivers, mountains, &c. The play was performed to a select party, in the long room at the New Inn, the next house to my father’s. It must have been altogether a very poor affair, but as only the families and friends of the performers were present, we were encouraged by their applause, and subsequently complimented for our great abilities.

“Soon after I was thus distinguished, I became acquainted, or rather better acquainted, with John Bowen, who was then a young man of a vigorous mind, had read many books, was my senior by nearly two years, and like myself, of humble connections, and without any school education. Our intimacy steadily increased, and grew into most sincere and hearty friendship, which has continued uninterrupted to the present day. To this friendship you are well aware, my dear Ann, I am greatly indebted for much of my happiness, and of my

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agreeable position in the world, and I hope to make frequent mention of him."

I here stop the course of my extracts from Baker's notes, to observe that it may possibly be deemed obtrusive, if not something more, for me to introduce this passage and some others referring to myself; but as I certainly should have introduced such passages if they referred to any other person, it would exhibit a fastidious apprehension of censure to shrink from their introduction. It is a memoir of William Baker that I am here preparing, principally from his own record of facts and opinions. To exclude his recorded opinions of his early friends would be to divest his life of some interesting associations which he tenaciously adhered to, and delighted to cherish. The extent to which his judgment may be warped in estimating the acquirements and services of his oldest friend, may be taken in proof of the generosity of his nature. He exaggerated services which might possibly have been rendered, while he lost sight of their ample reward. — But somewhat too much of this. I return to his notes.

"The early part of our acquaintance probably received a tincture from my late theatrical display, although Bowen was not one of the audience. At all events, we were soon engaged in a stage performance, attended with the curious circumstance that the afterwards celebrated, but improvident, Edmund Kean, was actually one of the party. I must relate to you the circumstance which led to my knowledge of Kean, then called Edmund Cary.

"A rather elderly gentleman of the stage, named Kent, came to Bridgwater with two daughters, and a sick wife, to perform parts of plays, to sing, and to recite, but they could only obtain poor reward. When this little party had been before the town a week or so, matters were made worse by the arrival of an actress, under the name of Cary, with two sons, who endeavoured by similar means to charm the lovers of recitation and song. This divided interest soon brought the parties into greater difficulties than they were in before, if possible. Davis had assisted the Kents with a song or two, Bowen took an interest in the affairs of the Carys, and learning the embarrassment of both parties, proposed a union of their talents, promised to assist them, and to endeavour to prevail on one or two friends to join with him. This suggestion was cheerfully approved of, and I consented to be one of the amateur performers. It was agreed on to perform the

Merchant of Venice, and a farce.

"The arrangement and study of our parts brought us all together on evenings after the hours of business, and the talent and agreeable person and manners of the younger Cary, about sixteen years of age, (the afterwards celebrated Kean,) were very attractive. I became particularly acquainted with him, and was exceedingly partial to him.

"Our play bill came out without loss of time, announcing the union of the two small parties, and the engaged assistance of four amateur young gentlemen, some of whom were to take female parts; the performance to take place at the Town Hall, for the benefit of Mr. Kent and daughters, and Mrs. Cary and sons. This attracted three or four good houses, and afterwards all the company, but myself, performed at Cannington, Stowey, Wiveliscombe, and Crowcombe. Here, then, in barns, and village inns, were displayed the youthful talents of the future prop of Drury Lane, — the magnet of attraction, the star before whose brightness all rival influences were to become pale.

"I refused to join this rambling part of the undertaking from prudential feelings; indeed I recollect that I experienced some squeamishness about going on the stage at all at this time; but persons far above me, assisted in acting plays, even the scholars of our classical school — theirs were private performances I must confess; but to balance this, I brought into account the undoubted benevolence of our object, and the necessities of the poor bedridden lady, which almost satisfied my qualms of conscience. Here however ended my connection with the stage."

William Baker's theatrical career, thus brought to a sudden close, was too brief to afford any materials for special remark. I remember neither of us held out any very decided promise of becoming a star in that firmament. One of us indeed was said to look rather interesting under a profusion of light ringlets, and draped in clear muslin, with a sky-blue sash. Which of the two that was, may be left for the curious in such mysteries to determine.

Baker was unquestionably sincere in the friendly feeling he expressed for young Kean; but sympathy was out of the question; they were wide as the poles asunder. The one sensitive and somewhat awkwardly bashful, under the tremulous feeling of having ventured on questionable ground; the other self-assured, prompt, daring, and precocious, and as

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fitmiliar with the conventionalities of the stage as if the knowledge had been born with him. To Baker He applied, in confidential chat with me, Falstaff's remarks on Prince John: "Good faith, this same young sober-blooded boy doth not love me; nor a man cannot make him laugh;—but that's no marvel.—He takes no drink." Having thus disposed of that aberration which he has chosen to chronicle, (or I certainly should not have done so) we are now on his own authority to trace the extinction of his military aspirations.

"The year 1803 was drawing to a close; the short and delusive peace of Amiens was ended, and renewed war with France, with the threatened French invasion, agitating every mind. The warlike feelings of volunteers, which had slumbered for a short time, were again roused to duty and animated with increased ardour. Preparations were actively carried on for the marching of the Bridgwater regiment to Taunton, on what was called "permanent duty," which was one week's exercise and display in another town. These military preparations led to an undertaking, on my part, which was then of importance to me; I was allowed to contract for leather stocks for the regiment, and to prepare them after the usual hours of work. Thus was I a contractor, and a successful contractor, for military equipments, at the age of sixteen. My profit enabled me to purchase hooks, a good box of paints, and other things, besides furnishing myself with pocket money. You will remember the box of paints; it was that which all you children resorted to in your early drawing propensities.

"I accompanied the regiment to Taunton, in May, 1804, as second in the first rank of the band of fifes and drums. I shall never forget the hilarity with which we marched out of town, to the tune of 'over the hills and far away,' with the assembled crowds surrounding us, shouting farewells. The day was gloriously bright, the orchards and hedgerows full of sweet-scented blossoms of apple trees, and hawthorn, and the meadows were bright fields of gold. Whilst the men were daily under exercise in the field, I had little to do, and I sauntered about a good deal by the hedges and brooks, looking at wild flowers and insects. Here began, I think, my first entomological collecting, that pursuit which I so much enjoyed for very many years.

"Some of the beetles which I then collected, are still in my cabinet. I can recall the pleasure I felt on

finding in the blossoms of the hawthorn, species of *Cerambyx* and *Leptura*, for the first time; amongst grass and flowers, the beautiful vermilion-winged *Pyrochroa rubens*, the larger kinds of *Cantharis*, the curious little green and scarlet-winged *Cantharis amnea*, and bronzed-winged *Bipustulata*, and various species of *Elater*; and also in the water, *Notonecta* and *Dytiscus*.

"These are pleasant recollections, but this soldiering was bad schooling for youth, and it encouraged extravagance in men, who had means of spending money beyond their pay. Many of the tradesmen joined in parties, and gloried in excelling their officers in sumptuousness at mess.

"However, to me it proved a blessing, as it led to my acquaintance with Mr. Symes, afterwards my counsellor, guide, and friend, who, although my senior by two or three years only, gave a tone to my character and life.

"Not long after the volunteers had returned from permanent duty, Mr. Symes invited me to call on him at his father's house, which I gladly did without loss of time, and was introduced to his father, mother, and sister; this of itself was, of course, an important circumstance, but the consequence of my new friend's kind attention to me afterwards, I cannot estimate.

"At this first visit, he lent me Goldsmith's *History of England*, which was to be changed for other books, at my pleasure. He soon found that, although I had read books, I was altogether ignorant of even the groundwork of the English language; I really had never read a page of grammar. Before the approach of winter, he invited me to read with him, on his leisure evenings; and thus I had the privilege of spending an hour or two twice or thrice a week, in a way likely to make up for the great neglect of my education. Finding that I was ignorant of the groundwork of our language, my friend proposed my studying Murray's *English Grammar*, by reading the rules, &c., without learning them by rote, until I could give him evidence that I clearly comprehended what I read.

"This, with the use of the exercises and key to the grammar, the reading of Goldsmith's *History of England*, some papers of the *Spectator* occasionally, and studying two or three of the first books of *Euclid*, past away the leisure of the autumn and winter of 1804-5. These new and important pursuits did not abate my love of *Natural History*, nor prevent my

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strict performance of duties as apprentice.

"The spring of 1805, found the Bridgwater Volunteers in busy preparation for a second service of permanent duty, and on the sixth of May the regiment marched to Taunton, with zeal equal to that which animated them in the preceding year, accompanied again by crowds of friends, bestowing on us their hearty good wishes. I had now attained to the honour which I had been ambitious of, I took my place at the right of the front line of our little band, and was its leader. Of course I was proud of my promotion, but it was not distinction only, but increased pay, whilst at Taunton, and handsome reward for instructing the fifers of the Langport and Somerton regiment whilst we were on duty. Mr. Symes was a volunteer in the ranks, and with us now, therefore I was fortunately much with him. My friend, of course, could have been appointed an officer, but he was too proud of being a common volunteer, at such a time of general apprehension. He did not like my position in the regiment, which I soon discovered; I believe he feared I might pride myself on a trifle, which may lead my mind from better things. Soon after our return to Bridgwater he prevailed on me to write to Colonel Allen, and resign my post, with an offer to serve in the ranks; this I did, but the Colonel requested me not to go into the ranks, if I had made up my mind to leave the band, as the example would probably be acted on by others. I therefore, at the age of eighteen, after a service of almost nine years duration, bade adieu to 'the spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife, and all the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war.'

"I was now actively engaged in my business, uninterrupted by soldiering, and steadily pursuing my studies under the advice and assistance of Mr. Symes, whose valuable personal aid I was soon to lose. This was a very active period of my life, for besides my regular employment in business from six o'clock in the morning to eight at night, (excepting an hour and half for breakfast and dinner,) and all my other pursuits, I found time to imitate Mr. Symes' kindness to me in some degree, by teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic, to two young persons, one in the house of my master, and the other a servant in my father's house.

My father's servant afterwards became a bread baker, in Bath, where he accumulated sufficient property to live on, out of business, and from whom I have had grateful acknowledgment of the

advantages which he derived from my attention to him in his youth."

William Baker's readiness to impart to others such advantages as had been considerably afforded to himself, is a point that should not be lost sight of by persons who read this memoir for other purposes than amusement. We see in such a fact not merely a trait of character, but an important reproductive element fairly in operation. Benefits received have, in this case, not only generated the power of bestowing similar kindnesses, but have strengthened, perhaps given, the disposition to do so. The will has been subdued to a yearning after an interchange or circulation of good offices, stimulated by a high estimate of the value of that which has been received.

This is a feeling that can hardly ever be kindled at our charity schools, hence a general complaint of coldness and ingratitude;—but what gratitude can be expected where the recipient is cut off from all connection and sympathy with the bestower? An annual guinea, with an occasional half-crown for tea and cake, does nothing towards creating that strong personal feeling which operates on a generous mind. Baker's gratitude towards Mr. Symes continued to the end of his existence, and that of the Bath bread baker, and several others, seem to have been scarcely less enduring. In returning to his notes we enter on another example of the most considerate kindness, steadily persisted in and affectionately cherished

"About this time, I obtained the notice of Mr. Poole, of Stowey, who became my kind and good friend at once, and continued his valued friendship to me to the end of his life. To him I am chiefly indebted for my having settled in my native town, and very much for my success in business, and good position in society. Mr. Poole kindly brought me acquainted with many of his literary and philosophical friends, some of whom I shall have to mention hereafter.

"My fortunate acquaintance with Mr. Poole was thus brought about. My father, on business with him at his house, was taken into his library, and before he left the room he said, 'My son Bill would like to be amongst so many books as you have here, sir; "Mr. Poole replied, 'If you have a son fond of books, tell him I shall be glad to see him here at any time.' This was communicated to me on my father's return home; it was on a Saturday evening, and I immediately resolved to go to Stowey on the following morning, Sunday being the only day I

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could call my own for such a purpose. The circumstance was too delightful to be neglected for a single week, so I took my father's horse and rode to Stowey, before breakfast, but it was not without some trepidation that I presented myself to Mr. Poole, who received me most kindly, and did all that he could to lead me to throw off unnecessary restraint. I was soon taken into the library, whose extensive and well stored book shelves and cases, excited my admiration, and besides the large collection of books, there were a few cases of beautiful minerals and fossils, and some other objects of Natural History, which engaged much of my attention.

"I was taken to church by Mr. Poole, and placed by him in his pew; at this I was somewhat abashed, and, no doubt, somewhat proud. After dinner, he talked much to me on education, in which of course he found me very deficient, but his kind attention to me proves that he believed I had a mind capable of, and anxious for improvement. When I left him in the evening, he offered me the free use of his books, and invited me to visit him as often as I should find opportunity and inclination. I returned home with rejoicing spirits, and imparted my pleasure, and, I believe, my pride also, to my father and mother.

I mentioned this important event to Mr. Symes when I next visited him, and he congratulated me heartily on my good fortune, in acquiring the notice of a gentleman so likely to promote my successful progress in life.

"I visited Mr. Poole several times before the end of this year, and, according to his request, I used to walk to Stowey, on Saturday evening, and return on Sunday evening, or Monday morning; if on Sunday evening, I had often the pleasure of his company for two or three miles on my way. In these walks my friend generally indulged in reciting poetry, and in calling a passage or two from my ill-furnished stores; Goldsmith and Thomson were generally his favourites, or perhaps they were chosen as most likely to awaken my feelings and taste for Poetical composition, as well as for the poetry of nature.

"At this time, the celebrated S. T. Coleridge and Mrs. Coleridge visited at Mr. Poole's for some weeks, and I had the advantage of meeting them several times there. I remember I felt myself incapable of understanding Coleridge's conversation when it became metaphysical, which was the case whenever there was company, especially after dinner. Of course I could but wish that I was capable of

comprehending him clearly. When he indulged in poetry, I was delighted.

"Mrs. Coleridge was a quiet, unaffected, pleasant lady, and I believe was occasionally made uncomfortable by the habits of the man of learning, for he often sat up late, and sometimes got up after he had retired to rest, when a bright idea came to his mind.

"Mr. Savery, of Taunton a well-known constructor of machinery, and otherwise a well-informed man, was much at Stowey at that time, erecting a water-wheel and mill for Mr. Poole, and Coleridge spent much time in watching the progress of the work, and in conversation with Savery, (he also conversed much with him at the dinner table, where he was a infrequent guest,) but I recollect the plain mechanist was sometimes sadly puzzled by the poetic philosopher, in his abstruse views of mechanical science.

"In the spring of the year 1806, my friend, Mr. Symes, went to London to complete his legal education; still I diligently pursued the course of reading which I had commenced under his personal guidance. I have a scrap of a copy of a letter which I wrote to him in April, this year, to let him know how I employed my time out of the hours of business. The following extract from it will shew that idleness was not a part of my character: —

"Bridgwater, 18th April, 1806.

"Dear Sir,—As you have kindly invited me to inform you how I employ my leisure, I commence by stating that I get up before five o'clock, and read Ancient history till six, my time to go to work; at breakfast time I read the Spectator for a quarter of an hour; after dinner I have three quarters of an hour, which I employ in reading Blair's Lectures; after work I read Ancient History from eight till nine o'clock; from nine till half-past ten, or eleven, I study Euclid; and on Sundays before and after dinner I practise drawing. This I do if I meet with no interruption, but I scarcely pass two days following without losing time. I find myself greatly at a loss how to pronounce the difficult names in Rollin, without you." — This letter received a kind and valuable reply.

"I must now again revert to one of the most important circumstances of my life, — my acquaintance with Mr. Poole. My sojourns at Stowey, gave me the means of exploring the Quantock Hills; when the daylight and weather were favourable, I

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frequently walked away from my friend's house at four or five o'clock in the morning, and wandered until breakfast time, in the beautiful coombs and glens, or in ascending the lofty summits of this range of hills. Thus I became early acquainted with this charming scenery, the enduring love of which I still cherish and enjoy.

"In the last two years of my apprenticeship, I made frequent excursions to Brent, Cheddar, Wookey, and other places in and about the Mendip hills; Wells and Glastonbury came in my way on my journeys to and from Bath, where I went occasionally to visit our kind and affectionate relatives, of whom a solitary one only remains to this day. I am sometimes amazed that I am spared to reflect on the many friends and relatives of my own age, who are gone before me, and some of them very long ago. How much should I strive to make my preservation profitable for the great purposes of my existence!

"The excursions to Brent and the Mendips, I made sometimes on horseback, but generally on foot, by leaving Bridgwater on Saturday evening, and returning early on Monday morning. The grand, the sublime cliffs of Cheddar, at that period made a solemn impression on my mind, and every sight of those rocks since, has impressed me more and more with a sense of their grandeur. I must have been then an incipient geologist, for I now find in my drawers specimens of fossils, corals, shells, and stalactites and stalagmites, which I brought, in those my early days, from the rocks and caverns of Mendip.

"I sometimes rambled to Brean Down, which is an interesting spot for the Naturalist, affording some excellent views of the shores of the Bristol Channel. I also occasionally went to Weston-super-Mare, then it was only a small village, of little besides a few thatched cottages, the habitations of fishermen and farm laborers, the church and rectory being detached. My first visit to Weston, was in the spring of 1806, when I had the honor of conducting my master's sister, Miss Tuthill, there in a gig. There was not then a bridge over the Axe, between Lympsham and Bleadon, and we had to wait an hour or so at a small inn, called the Hobs Boat, until the state of the tide allowed me to drive across the river. Think of the approaches to Weston now, by railway and other good roads, and think also of the beauty and importance to which the place is now risen!

"The last two years of my apprenticeship were, on the whole, spent pleasantly and advantageously,

but my labour was very heavy during the greater part of this time, as Mr. Tuthill had very much given up the management of his business to me, and I indulged a pride in doing all the work without a journeyman, and was besides fond of being alone, to indulge in my own thoughts uninterruptedly.

"Four or five years back, I was far behind my acquaintances in mental culture; I had now got before them. For that which I acquired I am much indebted to the encouragement which I received from my good friends. Besides the books which I have before mentioned, I was pretty well acquainted with Thomson's Seasons, and Cowper's poems. I knew something of Pope and Milton, and of two or three other Poets.

"I had made numerous drawings of insects, to illustrate their natural history, and had collected many hundred specimens, and arranged them in two large cases and three or four smaller ones. Besides, I had the possession of my mother's glazed corner cupboard, which contained my books. Twelve volumes of Rollin, handsomely bound, (a present from Mr. Poole,) were a very important part of my little library. It contained also a few stuffed birds, and some minerals and fossils; these displaced sundry china, glass, and silver utensils of my mother's.

"Notwithstanding I had given my mind to many things besides my trade, I was a good workman, and felt confident that I could make my way in any first-rate shop in London. This feeling caused me to anticipate with much pleasure my intended visit to the great city, for my friend Mr. Poole had long encouraged me, not only to work in London, but to go to the best towns in different parts of the kingdom; he had himself worked in London, at the tanning trade, and he assured me that he had derived much good from the experience he then gained, and he encouraged me to believe that similar advantages were within my reach, offering to introduce me, by letters, to all his friends in town connected with the leather trade. Mr. Symes, too, had sent me several letters, encouraging me to come to London, pointing out many advantages that I should derive by living for a time in the great city, besides those which would be sure to follow the experience I should gain in my business. Thus my way for leaving home, and for seeing something of the world, was most agreeably opened to me, and I lost no time in bidding adieu to family and friends.

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"In the first week of October, 1807, I left home in company with James Chilcot, my early and present friend, now your venerable father-in-law. At Bristol I met the journeymen curriers' committee, at their club-house, where I proved myself worthy to be enrolled with that respectable body of men, and received my certificate or blank, which entitled me to all the privileges of the society of "United Journeymen Curriers" throughout the kingdom. I need not now enumerate these privileges. I left for London by Fromont's coach, a double-bodied one, for *first and second class* passengers, and arrived in London the next day at half past eleven. This coach left Bridgwater at half-past three in the morning, making the journey, including stoppages, in about thirty-two hours. This was good travelling then; how should we bear such a journey in these days, now we can fly to London in less than four hours from Bridgwater. But this rapid transit is purchased at the expense of much enjoyment. In the old stage-coach travelling, it was worth while to look about among the passengers for an agreeable companion on the way, when the acquaintance was to last for twenty or thirty hours. Besides pleasant conversation, we obtained some knowledge of most of the towns we passed through; we had time for rambling through some of the streets, perhaps to the cathedrals, churches, or other public buildings. how different to the present day!

"I left the coach at Temple Bar, and went to the New Inn, to Mr. Symes, where he had chambers, and after I had taken refreshment and opened to my friend my budget of Bridgwater news we went to Golden-square to call on Mr. Taylor, a currier, who had a considerable business in Mary-le-Bone street, and to whom I had a note from Mr. Poole. This gentleman received me very kindly, and at once appointed me a place in his manufactory.

The latter part of this eventful or memorable day, was much occupied in searching for lodgings; Mr. Symes and I examined many which were too dear for me, or not good enough to please my friend; at length we found a decent room and decent people, in Broad-court, Long-acre, and made an agreement for immediate occupation for four shillings per week. Early in the evening I left Mr. Symes, after receiving from him serious admonition and advice for my guidance in the modern Babylon. On retiring to my room, I had mixed feelings of pleasure and sadness; I was cheered with the prospect of advantage to be

derived from working a few months in London, and from a tour afterwards to the North of England, but I could not help pondering on my separation from my family and friends in the West.

"Mr. Poole gave me other notes of introduction besides that to Mr. Taylor, all unsealed, and from one that I did not deliver, and which follows, you can judge of the others

" Stowey, 7th October, 1807.

"My dear Perkins,—The bearer of this is Wm. Baker, of whom I hope to speak to you in a letter which I shall write before you receive this note.

"He wishes you to introduce him to Jackson, or any one of the chief London curriers, where he may get thee best experience and information concerning his trade.

" You will be highly pleased with this young man; few people's company gives me more pleasure. I hope you will be able to assist him to a good place of work, for he deserves anything you can do for him. You need not fear recommending him warmly, for his hands are industrious as his head and heart are good.

"Yours most truly,
"THOS. POOLE."

"I must not blush and refuse to copy my friend's words. They may induce others to endeavour to obtain such a friend.

"During the first few weeks, everything went on pleasantly with me at the shop; I did not strive hard to earn great wages, but went on easily with my work, and occasionally took holiday to see the wonders of London. The British Museum of course claimed my early attention. There was very much here to interest me deeply, but how insignificant was the collection then, compared with the present noble establishment.

"The Natural History rooms afforded the greatest attractions, but I sometimes went amongst the sculptures, where I always saw young people employed in drawing, whom I almost envied, and I felt a wish that I could try my hand amongst them, but these transient feelings did not disturb my settled purpose, to make use of my best abilities to work my way in the world as a respectable tradesman.

"The National Gallery, (then at Somerset House,) St. Paul's Cathedral, and Westminster Abbey, were places of overwhelming interest to me. St. Paul's and the Abbey always inspired me with feelings of deep solemnity.

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"I had not been long in London before I found out my friend Bowen, or at least his lodgings, for in consequence of a shipwreck, attended with great loss of life, on the Fern Islands, since rendered so celebrated by the exploits of Grace Darling, Bowen, who was employed under the Trinity House, was sent off to make the necessary arrangements for exhibiting a temporary light during the winter on these unhospitable rocks, until something permanent could be done.

"What strange scenes had he passed through, since we were amateur performers together! He had been wrecked in a man-of-war, on some rocks off the French coast, in the Bay of Biscay; had been saved and sent to Plymouth Naval Hospital, utterly disabled; was restored to tolerable health, and had by his own exertions (for he was entirely without a patron) worked himself into the service of the Corporation of Trinity House; and was now when not employed on the coast, living in London, married to the excellent Mrs. Bowen, who nursed you in your infancy, played with you in your girlhood, and was your affectionate and sincere friend to the end of her very valuable life.

"My own doings, particularly during the early part of the winter of 1807, were so humble, and my observations also, that they are not worth mentioning, except as they serve to keep before you my connection with several persons, whose friendship has given a tone and character to my life, and added greatly to its happiness.

"Mr. Symes called on me sometimes, and I almost constantly breakfasted and spent an hour or two with him on Sunday mornings. Mr. Taylor occasionally came to my place in the shop, and conversed with me. This created some jealousy in the minds of my shopmates, and they accused me of 'riding to London on the white horse,' or in other words, of bringing with me letters of introduction.

"This was a great offence to the Society of Journeymen Curriers, and which, as I found, our trade committee could take cognizance of, and punish with fine or loss of blank. I was of course an offender, but I kept my own secrets, and they could not prove anything against me, although they brought me to trial in a formal manner, according to the practice of the shops.

"Mr. Taylor's men were respectable journeymen Curriers, but they were not free from the bad habits of their fellows; they were called by the trade the

'gentlemen journeymen,' a term of some reproach, because they drest better than others, which they could do, notwithstanding they spent much money in drinking, for they earned high wages. I could earn three pounds per week when I had been in town three or four months. My lodgings being close to the theatres, nearly between Drury-lane and Covent-garden, I was pretty often induced to go at half-price to the gallery, and sometimes with friends to the pit, for the whole performance.

Mrs. Siddons, John Kemble, Charles Kemble, Cook. and other distinguished performers, then gave splendour to the stage. But I never left the theatre without sadly distressed feelings. Grimaldi made us laugh, after deep feeling had been aroused in the play. Was my sadness the effect of the foolery of the farce, or a reaction on the spirits after the excitement produced by both play and farce? Or was it a monitory notice, that theatres should not be my favourite places of amusement.

"I have told you that I breakfasted with Mr. Symes on Sundays; I generally left him in time to go to Westminster Abbey, or St. Paul's Cathedral, and afterwards to attend the morning service at some other church. The Abbey and St. Paul's were at that time places of great resort during the time of Divine service. Crowds of persons, chiefly, I believe, those who had recently come from the country, lounged about outside the screens that enclosed the worshippers. The Exchange, at hours of business, was scarcely more crowded than were these sacred edifices. I fear I was led to different places of worship more by the desire to see beautiful churches, or to hear popular preachers, than to engage in real earnest devotion. One Sunday I went to St. Stephen's, Wallbrook, I believe to see the beautiful, the universally admired, masterpiece as it is called, of Sir Christopher Wren, and the picture of the Stoning of St. Stephen. If I went uninfluenced by holy thoughts, I left the church in a truly serious state of mind. On entering at the eastern door, I read on a tablet right before me. 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ our Lord,' &c.

"My heart and mind joyfully responded to the first part, but a solemn question such as I had not felt before instantly presented itself, — Do I truly and rightly believe in Jesus Christ? This question aroused me to searching contemplation, and the feelings I then experienced have recurred to me often since that

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memorable morning.

"I was now again to enjoy the company of my friend Bowen, who had returned from the Fern Islands, after having been buffeted about among those dreary rocks for a good part of a most boisterous winter. He had thoroughly succeeded in his object, but had been half starved, from the supply boat not being able to effect a landing with provisions at the proper time.

"He can but seldom be got to recur to these things; but he has since told me, that with all his experience among broken water, he had never seen more wild, raging seas, than among the rocks of the Staples or Fern Islands.

"His evenings in London, after a hard day's work, were employed in obtaining from authors of repute such scientific information as promised to be useful to him, and in reading with his excellent wife the most distinguished productions of genius. I refer to this, because I was always a welcome guest, and enjoyed the privilege of joining in the evening employment. Even in his late tempestuous sojourn, he had not forgotten me, but had brought me some Echini, caught by himself among the rocks, and some fragments of Enchroonite, which are still in my collection.

"We occasionally attended lectures, especially on the proposed introduction of hydrogen gas, for street illumination. One set of lecturers shewed us how the national debt could be paid off by the different products of coal when distilled for gas; while another prognosticated every possible evil from explosions and poisonous exhalations. In proof of this, birds, rabbits, and other animals, (alas for cockney sparrows and pigeons,) were exhibited to audiences under bell glasses, and an atmosphere of the gas admitted to the luckless prisoners in their confined cells, and, as foretold, death of course speedily followed. To show the danger of explosion, small wooden houses, with their parts holding slightly together, were filled with the explosive air, and a light applied within the fragile house, which instantly produced the shattering anti burning prognosticated by the philosopher. Surely the nerves of London audiences, or any nerves, must have been excited to fearful apprehension, by such sights and such warnings!

"You will be amused to learn that my friend Bowen and I attended a part of a course of these lectures at the Lyceum, in the Strand. The childish

display of danger tickled us at the time, and supplied us with subjects for occasional conversation for years afterwards; my friend having from that time contracted an aversion to lectures and lecturers, with but few exceptions.

"During the gloomy season, from the middle of October to March, I had been confined to London, and when a brisk air in the early spring dispelled the fog of the city, and admitted a little cheering sunshine into the streets, my heart yearned for a sight of the country, and I several times ascended to the highest part of Mr. Taylor's premises, and lifted the tiles of the roof, to try for a glimpse of the distant hills; I at length obtained a sight of those in the neighbourhood of Greenwich, when the sun lighted them up most charmingly. I can even now recall the sensation this peep afforded me. But a circumstance soon occurred which gratified me with the view of green fields, and hills, and valleys, over a considerable extent of country.

"A prospect appeared to open for my going into business in the country, and I hastened to see how far it was likely to be within my reach. I pass over the main part of the journey, the latter part of which I walked. When I reached a high point of the Polden hills, the well-known rich and extensive landscape opened to my view, with Bridgwater eight or nine miles off, veiled in a light blue cloud of smoke, and the old familiar spire peering above; then my heart bounded with joy, and I could no longer hesitate between home and any other place. Away I went in full anticipation of the pleasure of meeting all I most dearly loved in the world, now veiled in the light blue cloud in the distance before me. As I moved onward, the glorious landscape expanded more and more, until at my right the Mendips stretched in view from Wells to Uphill, with the Welsh hills, and the Welsh coast of the channel extending beyond, as far as the eye could reach; across the channel the lofty Dunkery, and the fore land at Minehead, with the Quantocks in front, extending from the sea to Monkton, near Taunton; the Black Down range forming the horizon in the south, from beyond Wellington to Chard, whence varied beautiful hills make up the background on the left to Castle Cary; the country I had left in time morning, the beautiful slopes of the Polden, the rich alluvial vales, with their numerous village towers, and other well known objects, all in the soft light of sunset, combined to increase my admiration and love of my native scenes.

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Two hours after day I was at my father's house, with the family, in the full enjoyment of my anticipated pleasures.

"My mother was somewhat overcome at first, from not expecting me, but we all spent two or three happy hours together before we retired to rest. The subject of my journey was slightly mentioned, and put off until the morning.

"It is sufficient to say that the object of my enquiry was not within the reach of my parents, and after a most affectionate reunion with my family and friends, I returned to my work in town, and to preparations for a journey to the north, to obtain further experience in my business. On my arrival I found I was again to lose my friend Bowen. The East India Company having determined to establish some lighthouses in India, had applied to the Trinity House to recommend them to some trustworthy man, who was competent to the superintendence of such works. Captain Cotton, the master of Trinity House, who was likewise a director of the East India Company, suggested Bowen as being in all respects a suitable person. An application was made to him, which he accepted, and was then under engagement to proceed to India."

I am obliged materially to curtail Wm. Baker's account of such matters, as being mostly irrelevant. That which has been admitted, is merely intended to show that the friend with whom he was so long and so intimately connected, was not an erratic adventurer running about the world in search of nuggets; but a self-educated, laborious mechanic, who had devoted himself to the exigencies of a difficult service, and strenuously endeavoured to prepare himself for the trust.

I cannot but distinctly remember that on the day we were to bid adieu in London, an appointment was made to meet me, on my return from the Trinity house, under the dome of St. Paul's. And there under that glorious dome, surrounded by monuments erected to commemorate wisdom, valour and worth, we mutually whispered,

"This above all, — To thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

We then parted for years; I to my course among the swamps and jungle of the Sunderbunds; he to a more beaten path, beset by very different perils, to

which he refers as follows:

"In the beautiful months of spring, I found opportunities to visit many interesting places in the vicinity of London; still I worked hard to save some money to help me on my intended tour. My expences of living, properly speaking, were exceedingly moderate, but the expences incident to my connection with journeymen carriers were very extravagant. Every excuse for drinking in the shop, and shop-score public-house, was made use of. A journeyman calling from another shop, or a tramp to see an old shopmate, the occurrence of a shop-mate's birthday, were always available for the purpose. The marriage of a shopmate, the birth of a shopmate's child, the coming of a new hand, or the going away of an old one, were prime reasons for a fuddle; and the celebration of these events were sometimes very expensive. I recollect tavern bills which amounted to ten and even fifteen shillings each man, for a single occasion.

"For some time I tried to escape these bouts, but I found that I could not get on without joining the men, even if I allowed my purse to be drawn on for my share of the expense. I am ashamed to look at my cash account for that time, the amount for drink being so large a part of my whole expenditure.

"Mr. Taylor had been long preparing to remove his business from London to Northampton, and to join in partnership a Mr. Payne, a banker of that town. Northampton was then, and is now, a chief place for the manufacture of boots and shoes for the army, and for the great depots in London, and other large towns. Extensive premises had been built at Northampton for the partnership, and as Mr. Taylor was aware that I intended to leave London for my northern tour, early in June, he kindly proposed to me that I should work two or three weeks at his new manufactory, at the commencement of my journey. This was very agreeable to me, as I should be the first of his London men to enter on his new business.

"Having taken leave of Mr. Symes, and other friends, I left my lodgings on the 7th of June, and went with my travelling luggage to the Angel, in the city, to be ready for the coach next morning. Sleep scarcely sealed my eyelids that night; the strange bed, and the thoughts of the journey, prevented repose.

"At five in the morning of the 8th June, I left the Angel by coach for St. Albans, Woburn, Newport Pagnall, Hackleton, to Northampton. We stopped some time at Woburn, and arrived at Northampton at

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three in the afternoon. I was most kindly received by Mr. Payne, and began to work on the same afternoon, so as to prepare for a good day on the morrow.

“My short sojourn at Northampton was delightful. I had lodgings with very agreeable people, and everything was agreeable at the workshop.

“The season of the year gave me abundant opportunities to see the town and the neighbouring villages, before and after work hours. The neighbouring country reminded me of that about Bridgwater; a little southward of the town is a range of pleasant hills, resembling Halswell Hills, as seen from the western side of our town. For further particulars of my pleasant visit to Northampton, I will copy for you, my dear Ann, entries from my pocket book”

The diary thus referred to, contains notes of his proceedings from this period up to the time of his returning to Bridgwater. Every day is accounted for, and every shilling he earned regularly entered, with his expenditure of the same. At Northampton, Nottingham, Hull, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Kirkcaldy, and Glasgow, he worked as a journeyman, generally tramping on from town to town, with the most flattering testimonials and introductions from his employers, and frequent offers of pecuniary assistance to carry out his object if he should require it; but these (always gratefully acknowledged) were never accepted. The labour of his hands supplied his wants, and at the end of 1808, I find this enviable entry in his diminutive ledger, “*In cash*, fourteen shillings and twopence!” How would the then Chancellor of the Exchequer have congratulated the nation on such a balance? I proceed to extract a few entries from his diary and letters, which exhibit the character and habits of the man more truthfully than any elaborate description would do.

The letters addressed to his “beloved father and mother, were models of dutiful affection, warmly but simply expressed. Knowing the interest his mother took in every little matter connected with this, the first absence of any of her children, he enters into such details as the following: “I have changed my system of living; instead of taking my breakfast at six o’clock, I go to work then, and return at nine, when I have my tea made comfortably for me. It takes me an hour to go to my breakfast and return again, yet I contrive to save time by not breakfasting before I go to work, for I have left off taking luncheon at eleven o’clock. When first I came to London I told you, I

recollect, that I should hardly know one season from another; that spring would bloom in vain for me; but now I have the pleasure to tell you that the season smiles in all its luxuriant beauty, in almost all our squares. I go through Leicester-square two or three times a day, and every time the opening buds of the poplar, lilac, &c., gave some new pleasure, till they came into full leaf and bloom, and now they give complete gratification!”

After informing his parents that he would wish to travel northward, for experience, and asking their consent, he says: “You will not consider this a giddy inclination I am sure, and from my conduct since I left you, you cannot be afraid of my turning out wild. I shall not be exposed to more temptation than I have encountered here. I shall not be at much expense, because I shall travel on the footing of a tramping currier; however, I shall have money to command for making myself comfortable. You will, I hope, give your consent, and will not fail in sending it soon, for I am now getting my equipage ready for the tour.”

From Northampton he writes, —

“June 11th.

Spent some time this afternoon in the upper room of the workshop; it commands a charming view of the surrounding country. The meadows about the town are subject to inundation, and are very fertile; the river Nene winds through them; about a mile’s distance four fertile hills begin to ascend. In the evening I had a quiet walk by the river. — 12th, Sunday. Got up before five, and took a country walk; on my return I made a sketch of the Infirmary. In the day, I went to St. Giles’ and All Saints Churches. — 15th. Took a walk this evening with two shopmates, to Darlington, a pretty secluded village. I gave my companions a few tunes from my flute, on our walk. — 16th. Bathed in the Nene, this evening. Went to Hardington, the birth-place of Hervey, the author of the ‘Meditations,’ thence to Queen’s Cross, one of the numerous monuments erected by Edward I, to the memory of his Queen, Eleanor.”

The sketch of the Infirmary referred to, is still in the old pocket-book, and, with many others, attest the facility and correctness which he had acquired in this art.

Of Nottingham he states: “The town is exceedingly populous, and so many people swarmed about the fields in the evening, that I could not enjoy many solitary walks; if I fancied myself away from intrusion, and took a book from my pocket, I was

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sure not to keep it open above a minute or two before a fond couple from the town, or labourers going to it, came in the way and obliged me to hide it; however, I strolled by the hedges, and gathered wild roses, and adorned every spare cup in my lodgings with a nosegay, as I used to do at home." Thus we see the love of quiet walks, of the wild flowers, and the fields, still predominating. The mind that could receive "complete gratification" from the foliage of Leicester-square, could not be otherwise than fascinated with the neighbourhood of Nottingham.

A letter from Hull, commences thus: "I hope the dreadful storms, which have done so much damage at Ashcott and the vicinity, did not reach Bridgwater; I read the account in a newspaper; it was shocking to me, fearing some of my friends would be sufferers. I hope our hay is taken well in. I suppose the three excessively hot days, which we had about three weeks ago, were felt as painfully, or more so, in your parts, as they were hereabouts. At that time I was working at Nottingham, and I was the only one of the shop who could stay at work. When I was on tramp, last week, I heard repeated accounts of men and cattle that had died of the heat. I was told that honeycomb melted in the hives, and drowned the bees, and that birds dropped down dead as they flew over the streets of Hull."²

"Before I left this place, I received the following letter from my highly valued friend, Mr. Symes, whose commendations I will earnestly endeavour to deserve:

"Thanet Place, 20th August, 1808.

"Dear William,—I have been obliged to delay answering your letter so long, that I have now scarcely time enough to tell you how delighted I was with it; such a letter is worthy, in point of diction, a person who has had infinitely greater advantages than yourself; and if I have been at all instrumental in your improvement, I am very proud of my pupil. There is one thing, however, which I would by all means have you attend to, and that is, to be particular in spelling; I have no doubt of your being correct also in this respect, after a little more practice; and you will find it a good plan to transcribe and compare the orthography afterwards.

"You pay me the compliment of asking my advice upon your present tour. Really, William, I am quite incapable to offer you any, and you stand in so little need of it, that I am sure you cannot act better than from your own judgment. If you feel diffident as to what plan you should pursue, consult those gentlemen whose kindness you have already experienced, and let them determine for you; their pursuits were similar to yours, and therefore they can best advise you.

"I quite envy you the pleasures of your journey; it will not only afford you the gratification of curiosity, but will make you acquainted with the different manners and customs of our nation: it will expand your mind, and give you a decided superiority over those who have not had courage to adopt so judicious a plan. Taking it in any point of view, you must reap great benefits from it, and as the present is the only time of your life, which will ever admit of your visiting any place distant from that which you may settle in, a few months absence from your relations should not be considered objectionable by you.

"What difficulty could you suppose that I should have in telling Mr. — I had heard from you? So far from objecting to any person's knowing that you had written to me, or that I have answered your letter, I exult in corresponding with you, who deserve so much attention; true merit must have its reward, and as you have hitherto met with every encouragement, so you will ensure success in all your undertakings by the same line of good conduct which you have hitherto pursued.

"I hope you will write to me as often as your engagements will allow. If you go into Westmoreland and Cumberland, you must not omit seeing the Lakes; indeed I think you should make a point of seeing them, even if you make a digression from your regular route, on purpose.

"Do bear in mind that I am very anxious to hear how you go on; amid believe me, that no one feels more interested about you, than

"Your sincere friend,

"JOHN COLES SYMES.' "

"Being thus encouraged to gratify my curiosity, by so discreet a friend as Mr. Symes, I allowed myself two or three days holiday, to see the curiosities of Derbyshire. The wonderful caverns, and wild romantic scenery of the high Peak, delighted me uncommonly. I explored a very wonderful and

² On referring to the meteorological records of that period, it will be seen that the heat of the summer of 1803, even exceeded that of 1790. The sheltered thermometer at the northern entrance of the Royal Exchange, stood at 87°

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spacious cavern at Bradwell, and I cannot help mentioning that I was highly favoured in seeing Peak's Hole, at Castleton. I happened to go into it with Lord Digby, and some other noblemen, for whom it was highly illuminated, and many things were done for their amusement, more than would have been done for ordinary visitors.

"My father, in almost every letter, begs me not to stint myself for money; but I trust, if I continue to enjoy my present state of health, I shall not want to trouble any of my friends for pecuniary assistance. I find nothing yet in travelling to discourage me. At present I have plenty of money left, though my expenses are great. Wages are not so good in Yorkshire as I have hitherto found them; I get one pound per week, and some of the men in the shop have no more than fifteen shillings. Though my wages are low, I think I shall save money, and live well."

Of Newcastle he thus writes: "The women are unnaturally laborious; they will carry to the market a quarter of beef, or two sheep at once (this I have witnessed); the men have nothing to do with this sort of labour, being, I suppose, employed at the coal works. On my entering Newcastle, I was surprised to see girls ascend scaffolds, with great loads of bricks and mortar, to masons, but I was afterwards so accustomed to the sight, as to be almost insensible of its indecency. I left this place with less regret than any place which I had staid at, as the people with whom I lodged were almost every night intoxicated."

"Kirkcaldy, Oct. 3rd. — I left Newcastle the beginning of last week, and had a very pleasant journey hither. I travelled by coach, and walked alternately. In the north of Northumberland, there was pretty much corn out. I was kindly detained at Berwick, for a day and a night, by a master currier of that place. The country between that town and Dunbar, is exceedingly wild; being fond of such scenery, I enjoyed the walking of that stage very much, though it was twenty-seven miles. I arrived in Edinburgh last Thursday morning, but could not get work there, as the masters are expecting an appeal from the journeymen, for better wages. In that capital I spent four days, in order to see as much of it as I could.

"The robins are come into the gardens, singing their plaintive songs; I know from this that the beauty of your garden is fading. When I was at home, the withering flowers and the robin's song used to

make me sweetly melancholy. I am surprised to see the swallow flying about in this part yet. I have not forgotten my collection of insects since I have been out, for I have caught several moths and butterflies, which I have preserved in Thomson's Seasons."

His introduction to the principal currier of Glasgow, is characteristic of the writer and the subject:

"Hull, 8th.

"Respd. Friend,— The bearer hereof, Wm. Baker, has been in my employ a few weeks, and is now leaving me, with a view of coming into your quarter to spend a little time; he is a respectable young man, and a fair workman. If thou wilt make it convenient to give him a job, we should esteem ourselves obliged, and be glad to make a similar return, if opportunity offers.

"We are respectfully thy friends,
"RHEAN AND PRIESTMAN."

He immediately obtained employment in Glasgow, and during his residence there, his diary was regularly kept, offering some characteristic passages, but generally descriptive of the city, and the manners of the people. "Christmas-day," he says, "is but little observed in Scotland; I am happy it falls on a Sunday, this year, for I should feel uncomfortable to see business going on the same as it does on other days."

The severe frost appears to have materially curtailed his opportunities for observation on his favourite subject; but on the 12th of February, he was enabled to write thus: "I took a walk to a little village, about a mile from the town, whence I had a good view of the hills, which we see southward from the green, and though they looked from thence quite barren, I find there is a good deal of fine tilled land. The country adjoining Glasgow, in every direction, consists of little mounds or hillocks. The gentle influence of the sun was very enlivening; I felt my spirits serenely cheerful, and even the sweet little birds seemed to sing their gratitude for so charming a day, forgetful of the late severe weather. The robin and the lark were time little songsters; the larks on every hand were ascending, but their song was short, and I observed they did not go high, as if they felt the air pinching; they soon alighted, with fainter notes. I saw gnats, and other small insects, fluttering in the sun."

Soon after this he was summoned home, on a prospect of getting into business in a small way for

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himself. On the 23rd of February, he left Glasgow, by mail, for Edinburgh, and pursued his journey night and day, with nothing but the usual stagecoach adventures of those days, unless it be the following: "At Penkridge, in Staffordshire, while they changed horses, we went to see the little church, which is near the inn. My agreeable Caledonian fellow passenger walked in, without moving his hat. I observed to him that we were now out of Scotland, and that we should here shew some respect to consecrated places; he considered it a strange ceremony to take off our hats in a place of worship when no divine service is performing; however, he readily complied, and was glad that he had not made the blunder before a concourse of people." This would doubtless be a lesson to the Caledonian for life; and thus we may, without offence, in our every day course, do something towards eradicating culpable habits, and maturing others of an opposite description.

On the 27th of February, 1809, he reached home, travel-worn and giddy, from the want of rest on so long a journey; and here ends the "pocket-book diary," kept by a journeyman currier! who was now enabled by the aid of his friends to become a master, but under circumstances which, in addition to some anxiety, required as much personal toil, or even more, than he had hitherto encountered.

We are now to enter on a new phase of his existence; but previously to so doing, it is desirable to consider the qualifications he had evinced for future progress. That portion of his life has been minutely detailed which gave the tone and character to his subsequent career. We have seen that he was, as an apprentice, of indefatigable industry, even more than realizing the rectitude and devoted attachment to his master's interest, of Hogarth's "Industrious Apprentice." As a journeyman, he was of proved discretion, resisting the example and temptations of his shopmates; of steady application, of manly independence, and of that temperate, cheerful disposition, which, under hard labour, can cultivate rigid economy, without descending to meanness. His mind had been stored, according to his opportunities, with selections from distinguished authors; and although his reading was too miscellaneous to be critical, he had, as it were, an intuitive faculty of seizing on that which most deserved attention. He had, too, an eye for all the beauties of nature, a mind capacious and discriminative, exercising his reason under a decided sense of Christian responsibility.

Such was William Baker, when at twenty-two years of age he commenced business, by setting up a small currier's shop, in the Fore-street of Bridgwater.

His progress from this time does not admit of being dealt with in detail. Of his course as a tradesman, it is perhaps sufficient to say, that he passed forty years at his counter, indefatigable, attentive, conciliatory; watching over the interests of his workmen and his poor customers, with almost a parental eye; and forgiving not only seven times, but seventy times seven, if due opportunities occurred. Fortunately too, he was enabled, for many years, to make his principal purchases of stock-in-trade of a kindred spirit, Mr. Ward, of Stowey. These two able and honest men retained to the last, a perfect friendship and respect for each other. Equally despising the little arts too generally resorted to in trade, they would mutually determine the value of several hundred pounds worth of goods in three minutes. I have frequently attended him to the tannery, at Stowey, on these purchases, and I never knew which most to admire, the buyer or the seller. The very spirit of truth and good sense seemed to have adopted their frames jointly as a suitable tenement.

About two years after commencing business, he married, which he thus refers to in his notes to his daughter Ann: "I now entered on the most important event of my life, namely, my blest connection with Elizabeth Criddle, of Monksilver, who has for such a long course of years proved your, and your brothers' and sisters' very affectionate parent." In his wife he found an admirable helpmate for a striving tradesman, ready to assist him in his shop, and in his accounts, and trade correspondence. I can testify to her anxiety to afford him occasional runs into the country, on every opportunity, and of her readiness to aid in those pursuits which were his only relaxation, and which were never suffered by him to break in on the daily requirements of business.

A question here naturally obtrudes itself: How came this laborious, prudent uneducated tradesman, possessed of the technical knowledge necessary for making any progress in Natural History? Here I was somewhat at a loss, having been for some years absent from England, and not being able to find any notes among his papers to elucidate his progress in this regard. But I recollected that our mutual friend, Mr Thomas Clark, of Bridgwater, was an early associate of his, in his field pursuits, and have

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requested that gentleman to furnish me with his recollections of their first connections, and of the steps by which William Baker acquired his knowledge of scientific terms and arrangement. In reply, Mr Clark obligingly furnished me with the following:

"I first became acquainted with our friend in the year 1810. We accidentally met in a stationer's shop, where I went to purchase some drawing materials he appeared to be there for the same purpose. This led to a conversation, and to his inviting me to his house — an invitation which I gladly accepted. Here he showed me some drawings of his own. I think they were those which he made whilst on his 'tramp,' as he used to call it, in the North of England and in Scotland. Whether our conversation at this time was on any other subject than that of drawing, I do not now remember; but I well remember the pleasure that conversation gave me, the high estimate I formed of his character, and the strong attachment I at once felt towards him; and I remember the gladness with which, afterwards, I returned home and told my brother of the acquisition I had made. Before this time I had not, that I know of, even heard of his name, having but recently come to reside at Bridgwater. We soon met again, and met frequently, and we frequently took walks together, not in general with any very definite object, but sometimes to make landscape sketches, or to draw some building that interested us.

"My friend had already commenced the collection of insects, which gradually became, in subsequent years, so extensive; and our rambles seldom failed making some addition to it.

He soon interested me in his pursuits; and I should perhaps have pursued it with something of the ardour that he did, had not the wild flowers of our neighbourhood attracted my attention, as to some extent they did his; and without either of us ceasing to be interested in both these pursuits, it became a sort of understanding between us, that he should attend to insects and I to plants.

"He was very early a naturalist, and, in the strictest sense of the term, a 'field naturalist.' His accurate knowledge of birds, and of their distinctive notes, was acquired in his boyhood; and he has frequently remarked to me, when I have complained of being unable to distinguish some bird by its note, that unless this knowledge be acquired in early life, it is rarely acquired at all. I do not know at what time

he first began to notice and to collect insects. It was probably when, in his Seventeenth year, he volunteered frequently to attend through the night, a sick relation. At these times he used, as he has told me, to watch and to feed the crickets as they came out on the hearth-stone. This led him to notice other insects, to study their varied forms and instincts, and to preserve and arrange such as fell in his way. The arrangement, however, was entirely his own.

"It was some time after this commencement, before he had heard even of the term "Entomology," or imagined that the study of insects had been exalted into a science, or that any one but himself had thought them worthy of the notice that he had given them. I am not sure that he had then ever heard of Linnæus; most probably he had not, or at least, that he had not known any of his writings, for if he had it is hardly likely that he should not have known him as an entomologist. It was at a visit we made to James Jennings, at Huntspill, that he was first enlightened on the subject.

"Jennings spoke of Linnæus, and of his system of Natural History, and it soon led to Wm. Baker's procuring some work on insects, I believe a compilation from Linnæus, in which the Linnæan classification is given. In acquainting himself with this classification, he found, as he told me, that he had already, from his own unassisted study, arranged his insects in groups scarcely differing from those of Linnæus. His acquiring their Latin names afterwards, never seemed a work of any difficulty."

We can readily perceive him, under the circumstances detailed by Mr. Clark, proceeding patiently step by step, aiding his memory by associating the specific character of the object before him with its scientific appellation. His progress in this course was rapid and well sustained.

In 1813, I returned to England, for a short time, and then found him referring readily to Linnæus, and devouring Donovan, whose expensive work, in ten volumes, he had just purchased.

He had not then quite given up either Rollin or Euclid, but he was now recommended to throw Rollin overboard, and put Euclid behind the books on the upper shelf, as the little time which he could command, after twelve or fourteen hours attention to business, could be better employed than in looking after the Assyrians and Babylonians; and as for Euclid, the smattering of geometry that might be picked up in stray minutes, piece-meal, could

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scarcely be of any use in itself, and was not likely to amalgamate readily with any future acquisition or pursuit.

I soon found that he almost exclusively employed his leisure on Natural History; and that he highly appreciated all the advantages of a relaxation, which exercised his mind without fatiguing it, which could be taken up for a few minutes at any time without preparation, and laid down with equal facility, without any train of thought or course of enquiry being materially disturbed by the interruption. his purchase of Donovan was a considerable effort in itself for a frugal tradesman to make, who was not overburdened with worldly goods, but his general economy and discretion justified the expenditure, and he was as perfectly satisfied with the acquisition, as his friends were with the result.

Before I again left England, I had the high gratification of finding that he had made an infinitely more important acquisition than books or specimens, in obtaining the confidence and friendship of our distinguished townsman, the late Mr. Anstice. To have the privilege of unreserved communication with a man whose extensive information, and solid understanding, united with ardent piety, and the most unaffected benignity and humility of mind, was indeed an inestimable advantage. In addition to these general excellencies, Mr. Anstice pursued the intricacies of every branch of Natural History with an unwearied zeal. He was the valued correspondent of most of the scientific celebrities of the age, and enjoyed the friendship of Colonel Montague and De Luc, of Buckland and Conybeare, and of others equally distinguished, who frequently, in their respective works, referred to his labours, and fortified themselves with his authority.

To this gentleman, so eminent for knowledge and for worth, William Baker had at all times, from their first acquaintance, a ready access, and nothing further was necessary than for him to avail himself of the facilities thus afforded; and that he did so avail himself, is in proof, not only by his actual progress, but by a thick volume of correspondence which passed between them on innumerable subjects connected with their pursuits, illustrated, whenever it was necessary, by drawings, and by references to established authority.

It was not only to professional naturalists that Mr. Anstice and his pupil were known; every

fisherman and wild fowl shooter in the neighbourhood readily brought to them any of their spoils, which they deemed curious. Of course the contributors were frequently mistaken on this point, but sometimes their zeal was rewarded by meeting with some rare specimens, and occasionally with unique ones. In this way, the celebrated black stork, in the British Museum, which is referred to in "Yarrell's History of British Birds," came into Mr. Anstice's possession, who presented it to Colonel Montague, but not before it had been accurately drawn, in its characteristic position, by Baker.³

It was not only on such occasions that his talent for correct delineation was employed; his pencil was always ready to embody his conceptions, and those discoveries which minute attention, together with singular penetration, enabled him to make. The forms of British insects, in their various states, accurately drawn and beautifully coloured; the anatomy of fishes, with their internal organization; the correct representation of recent, and of fossil shells, with sketches of every geological formation which was within his reach, all attested the facility which he had acquired, and the firm grasp of his subject which he had taken.

A descriptive catalogue of these productions would in itself occupy more space than is usually assigned to such a memoir; but any further notice on this point is unnecessary, as the family of the deceased have consented to have a selection from these drawings placed on the table of the Society. I cannot however dismiss this subject, without observing that, although in the early part of his

³ "Black Stork, — *Ciconia Nigra*.

"The first occurrence of the Black Stork, in this kingdom, in a wild state, was made known by Colonel Montague, in his paper read before the Linnean Society, on the 2nd May, 1815. This bird was captured, after receiving a slight shot — wound in the wing. It lived in Colonel Montague's possession more than a year, and during this time passed through considerable changes of plumage, and arrived to that of the mature bird. It was shot and captured in the West Sedgemoor, adjoining the parish of Stoke St. Gregory, on the 13th May, 1814; and what is remarkable, another rare bird, the White Spoon Bill, was shot on the same moor, by the same person, in Nov. of the preceding year. Col. Montague's specimen is still preserved, with his other birds, in the British Museum." — Abridged from 'Yarrell's History of British Birds.'

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course he alludes to his drawing on Sundays, before and after divine Service; he rigidly abstained from this practice after his return to Bridgwater, and he exacted the same abstinence from his children.

These general observations apply to a period ranging from 1813 to 1819, when, after an absence of some years, a chaise landed me at his shop-door, when he eagerly saluted me with "Here I am, you see, just as you left me. We have both been on our travels; you nearly round the world, and I round and round this counter, cutting heel-taps, weighing sparrow-bills, and counting hob-nails. We have both been labouring in our vocations."

Our former habits were almost immediately resumed, with sufficient leisure on my part to become somewhat better acquainted with the details of his pursuits, and with the progress which he had made in them. His miscellaneous collection had now considerably increased, and his drawings, descriptions and specimens for reference, far surpassed my idea of what could have been effected, occupied as he was in business. It would have appeared immense to me in a man who had nothing else to do; but for a person employed in the process of a manufacture, and the ceaseless cares of a retail shop, it seemed to approach the miraculous.

Having returned from India, suffering under the effect of a stubborn, long-protracted fever, I was in that state of body and mind which required something like repose; and this I was fortunately enabled to obtain in one of the most suitable retreats in the country — the Vicarage of Over Stowey. Here was a comfortable residence, within two hours walk of my Bridgwater friends, holding out as inducements the pure streams and matchless dells of the Quantock, — Lime-stone Quarries rich in fossils, and an unsurpassable command of profusely variegated views and atmospheric phenomena. Such were the temptations offered to Baker, when he could steal a few hours from business. How he availed himself of them, appears in a diary he then kept, but which I never saw until after his death.

A few extracts from that diary, will exhibit the man better than whole chapters of descriptive matter from another hand: — "January 10th, 1820. Went to Over Stowey, on foot. Blackbirds, thrushes, and other small birds would scarcely fly from the banks as I came up to them.

"11th. Pretty much snow fell last night. On my walk from Stowey, with Bowen, this morning, I saw

that the furze had been in blossom before the frost set in, and it began to look bright and yellow again; rosemary by a cottage, at Blackmoor, beginning to blossom.

"12th. It began to freeze by day-light, and the severity of the frost increased all day; all the streets covered with ice.

"13th. Hard frost; skating on the Cornhill, and in other streets."

"16th. Hard frost ever since the 13th. This has been a fine clear day, but little or no frost. I went to Over Stowey, in a gig, with Bowen, last evening, when the cold was very severe; but the atmosphere darkened about ten o'clock at night, and the weather became milder. Returned from Stowey in the morning, to collect subscriptions at the church for the Infirmary.

"18th. A considerable fall of snow last night; little frost. I went on the Quay, and between Church and Bridge, last evening and this morning, with Messrs. R. Anstice, J. Thompson, and C. Axford, to collect subscriptions for the poor. The river filled with ice, the country covered with snow, and the atmosphere dark and heavy. Everything called loudly for the compassion of the affluent, and those of easy circumstances towards their suffering fellow creatures; and the call was not in vain, for more than three hundred pounds was subscribed by the inhabitants and the friends of the town.

"19th. An unusually rapid thaw, last night; wind this morning brisk from the south-west. The rapid thaw, aided by the rain and a strong tide, broke up the ice in the river, which had not been navigable, except for a day or two. since Christmas. At daylight, scarcely any snow on the fields. The day has been clear, and there are now, ten o'clock at night, some symptoms of frost. The masses of ice piled up along the sides of the river at high water mark, and the floating sheets, gave this scenery an interesting, though a winterly and dreary effect, during the whole of this day. Coal 2s. 6d. per bag!

"March 9th. Hard frost, such a day as yesterday; walked to Mount Radford, with Mr. Anstice, to examine the white-washed apple trees in Mrs. Anstice's orchard. White-washing trees does not entirely prevent insects from hibernating in their bark, but it certainly does in a great degree. The trunk and branches which are washed, are cleared from moss and lichens, which must harbour many insects, injurious to the blossom and young fruit. Mr.

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Anstice thinks, and I cannot but agree with him, that it would be a great improvement if the trees were cleared of the loose cuticle before the lime be put on.

“19th. Cloudy and cold. Drove Betsy (Mrs. Baker) to Over Stowey. Primroses, violets, furze, opening plentifully. Bowen informed me that bees, *Apis Mellifica*, appeared in his garden on the 14th. One came first, searching among his crocuses, and flew off; very soon afterwards numbers of them came, even five or six invading one blossom at a time. He often cracks his jokes on me for watching, so attentively as I do, the *insignificant* parts of the creation, as he is sometimes pleased to call my favourites; but he is scarcely behind my friend Thos. Clark, in entering into my pursuits, and making interesting remarks for me.

“25th. Morning tolerably mild and bright. I walked to Over Stowey, to examine, with Mr. Anstice, who was on a visit to our friend, the quarries in that neighbourhood. On my way, I saw a great many of the *Apis*.

“April 22nd. Walked to Over Stowey with Mr. James Pyke; we rambled with Bowen for an hour or two, in the middle of the day, in the fields about Over Stowey. The fine extensive landscapes which we command there are delicately tinted with the fresh green of the opening foliage, and though they are not yet enriched with the strength of light and shade of the more advanced seasons, they are uncommonly beautiful. Swallows are thoroughly settled at Bowen’s, and have been for four or five days; nightingales, he says, have been singing there for nearly a fortnight. A great variety of moths in his garden, in the dusk of the evening. A woodlark sung delightfully, near the garden, at nine at night. The hedges and banks are now covered with a profusion of flowers; they are sufficiently clothed in many places, particularly where hawthorn abounds, to present agreeable lights and shades of foliage, and the black thorn intermingles its silvery patches. The chestnut has its branches nearly concealed by its fine large expanded buds. The pear, plum, and cherry, are in bloom. This has been a most charming week for the lovers of the country. The employments of the botanist and entomologist are now overpowering; they can no longer contemplate each subject as the fine weather calls it forth, but must pass by the most familiar, to save time for the more rare. It is pleasant to mark the harmony of nature. The same temperature which expands the buds of shrubs and

trees, and germinates the seeds of plants, calls forth, from their winter retreats, the various testaceous animals, and larvae, and insects, which feed on them. In a few days, when the rooks are generally hatched, they will be covered by the foliage of the trees, and protected from the sun, wind and rain, and be supplied by their favourite food, the cockchafer.

“23rd. When I went to bed last night, the room assigned me having an eastern aspect, I drew back my bedroom curtains to enjoy the early beams of the rising sun, which roused me from a good night’s sleep, about five o’clock. I got up at half-past five, and walked away from my friend Bowen’s, for Bridgwater; there never was a more heavenly morning. I was cheered on my way by the cuckoo, the skylark, the woodlark, the nightingale, and all our other pretty sylvan songsters. What a blessed world we live in! What a pity that man’s passions and worldly interests should disorganize his mind and make it unfit for the enjoyment of this heaven below. In the afternoon, I went to walk with Betsy and the children. I rejoice to see the little ones enjoy the fields, even little Jack toddles about to pick daisies and cowslips.”

In these extracts, we see the man under the influence of sympathies, which include an active interest in the concerns of the Infirmary and the poor. It was thus that he enjoyed this “blessed world we live in,” by expanding his mind to the whole range of animated nature. From these bursts in his diary, I proceed to his correspondence with naturalists, which about this period was inconsiderable, when compared with what it subsequently became.

With Dr. Leach, the Curator of the British Museum, he was in occasional communication, submitting to his inspection drawings and specimens, which the doctor encouraged in a friendly spirit, in such letters as the following:

“I have taken the liberty of noting in your drawings, the modern names of the insects (so beautifully figured) as far as I could from recollection, not being, at this time, enabled to have access to my cabinet, which contains about 8000 British species of insects. When I have been unacquainted with the names of the species I have only put the generic name.

“With the drawings you will receive two little dissertations, written by myself some years since on the Linnæan classification of insects. These tracts, although but outlines, may prove slightly useful, as

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far as the general distribution of insects is concerned.

“If I can be of the least use to you, either in naming insects, or by supplying duplicates, you may command the services of your obedient servant, in haste,

British Museum. “W. E. LEACH.”

A single example from Baker’s numerous letters, in acknowledging such attentions, may be referred to, as exhibiting the style of composition, and command of matter which he had acquired at that period.

“Bridgwater, Oct. 4th, 1818.

“Dear Sir, —It was more than a year and half ago when I had the pleasure of looking over your collection of insects, at the British Museum. I then promised myself much enjoyment in endeavouring to increase the catalogue of British insects, by examining the district in which I live with more attention than has been hitherto bestowed on it by any entomologist, but my hopes have been frustrated by business.

“I now, however, send you a box of insects, which I hope contains a few worth your acceptance. I have no doubt that it contains so many well known to every collector, that nothing but the disadvantages under which I collect can apologize for my ignorance. I promise myself more leisure in future, and hope that I shall be able soon to accomplish that which I had anticipated when I was with you. Most of the insects which I now send you were put aside for you many months ago, but I waited from week to week hoping for an opportunity to find out and remove those which are common and to add a few new and rare ones, but in both respects I am disappointed.

“I thank you heartily for the box of Coleoptera which you so kindly sent me last year. In your letter, which accompanied it, you mentioned a present of a treatise of yours on Hippobosca, but it was not enclosed; pardon this hint.

“I have made a few hasty journeys through the country in our neighbourhood, this summer, and I have been surprised to see the frequency of *Colias Hyale*, and *Vanessa Cardui*, the former of these has not appeared near our town during the last four years, and the latter I scarcely ever saw here before.

“WM. BAKER.”

The foregoing being copied verbatim, may be considered a fair specimen of his correspondence, when confined to his favourite pursuit; but one of his principal correspondents for some time, curiously

jumbled up Natural History with trade. Mr. John Samuel Miller, the distinguished author of “*A History of the Crinœidea or Lily-shaped Zoophytes*,” before he was appointed curator of the Bristol Institution, acted as a kind of general broker, executing little commissions in Bristol for country tradesmen. In this capacity he was frequently applied to by Baker, to purchase for him on commission, some of the materials required in his business. The factor’s letters were curiously compounded of such heterogeneous matter as the following:

“16 February, 1819. Above I hand you invoice of two casks of cod oil, per Harmony, which I hope will prove to your satisfaction. I purchased them at a price below that of other houses, and as you allowed me the terms of credit, was the better able to do so, by consenting to three months, against the expiration of which time I shall feel obliged by your remitting amount. I had the pleasure of shewing a few of my specimens to your friend Mr. Clark, who probably before now has brought you a verbal reply to your esteemed favor of the 8th instant Lamarck, whose mode of writing I most approve, has unfortunately only commenced the article Shells; I hope, however, that he will finish it in a short time. I, therefore, should advise you to purchase ‘*De Lamarck Histoire Naturelle des Animaux sans Vertèbres*,’ five volumes. It contains a great deal of information on all the animals without vertebrae, thence including corals, insects, &c. ‘*Dillwyn’s Descriptive Catalogue of Recent Shells*,’ in two volumes, you also will find a very useful book Oil continues still depressed, which is also the case with hides; almost every other article greatly on the advance, from ill-timed speculations and from a scarcity of money. A very large stock of hides has remained unsold, and purchases might be effected at low prices, considerably under those advised by leather factors to their country customers. I return you the shells you sent, named, and have added a few, some of which I hope may prove new to you. I also have to thank you for the minerals, per Mr. Clark, among which I notice Strontian, from Kilve, and also the Crystallization, from Blue Anchor, which I believe contains Aragonite. I have to acknowledge your esteemed of the 12th instant, and hand you above, an invoice of goods ordered, and shipped per Taunton, of which I hope you will find the quality satisfactory.

“You stated once to me that the Pholas occurred

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in plenty near your coast; if so I shall thank you to procure me a few good specimens at convenience. I also believe you mentioned once you had some friends on the Devon coast; if so it would be well to urge them to procure sea shells, in which case I should be glad of a few. . . . The insects you sent, per Mr. Clark's parcel, were all broken to pieces; from the fragments, I judge them *Chrysomela Banksii*, and *Calathus (Carabus) Cisteloides*. The shell No. 15, is a variety of *Turbo Nautilus*, and No. 16, the young of a *Madiolus*. — *Our markets very dull*. — I have seen Samouelle's book, and think it useful as an introduction to entomology. I perfectly agree with you regarding the necessity of giving up science for more profitable pursuits, tending to the comforts of one's family, or at least pursuing it with great moderation.

"Last week, the Revd. Mr. Buckland was at my house; also, Dillwyn, from Swansea, the author of the 'Catalogue of Recent Shells;' he is a polite man, and pressed me much to spend a week at his house with Samouelle and Gray, whom I expect here shortly.

"Agreeable to your wishes, I send, per Taunton, two hogsheads of cod oil, at 2s. per gallon, a penny less than your limits, and not liable to a commission. I hope its quality will fully please you. I really fear that this oil may still drop more in price; it is even now much below import cost, and, I should think, must ere long offer a favourable opportunity to speculate.

"The Dean of Bristol lent me Grenough's new Geological Map of England, published at eight guineas; it is very well executed. The scientific enthusiasm of Messrs. Grenough and Warburton may be estimated by the pecuniary contributions of these gentlemen; each of them gave £1,000 to the undertaking.

"The *Proteosaurus*, figured in *Phil. Trans.*, No. 57, offered for sale in London, was bought in at £142. Dr. Leach did bid as high as £75 for Cuvier, and Mr. Kid £120 for the Imperial Austrian Museum."⁴

⁴ This distinguished Naturalist died in May, 1830. Two years after the publication of his great work. In order to further the attainment of that knowledge, to the acquirement of which he had devoted his life, Mr. Miller visited Oxford, During his residence in that city, he assisted Professor Buckland in arranging the valuable collection of organic remains, belonging to the Ashmolean Museum. In reference to his labours at the Bristol Institution, the Rev. W. D. Conybeare has remarked, "It

Such extracts may be multiplied to a considerable extent; one more, however, is all that I will venture on, and that, as referring to a valued correspondent of Wm. Baker: "I regret to tell you that our friend Dr. Leach is very unwell, his head having suffered by too close application, so that he is now under the care of Mr. Abernethy."

However incongruous such communications may appear, they occasioned no confusion in Baker's intellect. His mind was concentrated on his duties, to a degree not to be exceeded by the merest counter drudge in the kingdom. It may scarcely seem possible to those who know the extent of his labours, but is nevertheless strictly true, that he never suffered his favourite pursuits to interfere with the every-day concerns of life. They were carried on early and late, in his hours of necessary relaxation; and he has often told me that he obtained more relief from care and labour by turning to these pursuits, than he could have done by absolute repose. But he was a wonderful economist of time, which his established character for inflexible integrity materially aided him in.

No one supposed they would have their time wasted, or their temper ruffled, by applying to William Baker, who in addition to his other qualifications, was recognised by his townsmen as a discreet adviser, and an equitable arbitrator, in those differences between man and man, which are too frequently jangled over in our courts of law.

It could hardly be otherwise than that such a course, unostentatiously pursued, under the influence of a conciliatory and cheerful temper, should bring its daily consolation and its eventual reward. His business had gone on steadily increasing, until it had entirely outgrown the accommodation afforded by the premises he rented. His family too had outgrown his house, in at least an equal proportion, The manner in which he received this latter accession, is well portrayed in the following note, which, after his death, I found in his pocket-book:

"1823. Monday morning, four o'clock, January 27th. The cries of our sixth child have just reached

may be safely affirmed that the history of similar collections does not present another instance in which so rapid a progress has been made in accumulating the varied stores connected with such undertakings."

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my ears. God bless it and its mother, and God grant that it may be a blessing to us both.”⁵

Being thus squeezed perforce out of his narrow nestling-place in the Fore-street, he was enabled to purchase the very extensive premises in St. Mary-street, where he passed the remainder of his life. Having ample space there, with every requisite convenience for the preparation of goods, his business was managed less expensively, and with infinitely less of that turmoil and confusion which are inseparable from confined premises. It was with an honest manly appreciation of his position, he would say, that travelling agents in the leather trade, who were well acquainted with the business, pronounced his premises to be at least equal to any currier’s in the West of England.

His collection was no longer confined to corner cupboards, and gloomy hiding places. He had now a room of his own, with an adjoining court and spacious loft, where the Boa Constrictor could stretch its vast length along, and the Solan Goose and the Swan expand their wings unchecked. His insects, now amounting to several thousands, could be here consigned to their respective divisions without confusion; while the walls afforded space for a series of careful drawings of that interesting coast which lies between the estuary of the Parret and Minehead. Submarine forests, bone beds, and strata rich in Saurian remains, all explored and drawn by himself, were so arranged as to enable him in the most effective manner to assist the enquirers who so frequently applied to him for information on such subjects.

His collection was not confined to matters of local interest; it included a fair sprinkling of what are termed the curiosities of other countries. It was not however as mere curiosities that these were estimated. They were frequently valued by him as mementos of friendship, or gratitude, or both. The heart, as well as the eye, were interested in this portion of his wealth, which represented no expenditure of cash, but marked a cherished remembrance of sympathies and kindnesses. In this way he had laid most parts of the world under contribution. A connection of his friend Mr. Poole, who commanded a ship trading between Bristol and the west coast of Africa, never returned from a

voyage without adding to that motley store, which was open for everything, from the head of an Alligator, to the egg of a Humming-bird. Some old friends at Demerara, were equally profuse in their contributions; while a poor, grateful, parish apprentice, who had worked his way to Australia, (before the nugget days,) took frequent opportunities, by a succession of birds, reptiles, and insects, of testifying his gratitude to that kind master who had educated him, taught him a trade, and enabled him to attain a somewhat distinguished position in the other hemisphere.

One of his contributors, an early friend, who had been actively employed in different parts of the world, always contrived to find opportunities for adding to the Bridgwater Cabinet. This person could never be induced to preserve anything curious for himself, but was a voracious collector and careful preserver for his friends. Amongst other things, he added several hundred specimens of foreign insects to the collection.

Baker’s room being thus tolerably well-furnished by his own untiring industry, and by the contribution of his friends, became as rich in subjects for recollection as in specimens. Indeed many of the latter were associated with past ideas, to such an extent as to render them materials of moral philosophy as well as of natural, to those who knew their history, and were more disposed to revel mentally in the recollection than to analyze the specimens. His room thus became a speaking gallery of mementos, where his acquisitions and his friendships were classed around him under a vivid principle of association, affording materials for employing the mind, exercising the memory and expanding the heart.

This was his earthly Paradise, and if it had not occasionally smelt too strong of camphor and tobacco smoke, it might in some degree have been mine too; although there was only one specimen in it that I took any very decided interest in.⁶

⁶ This room afforded an occasional subject for a little good humoured badinage. One of Baker’s old friends complained that general literature did not receive its due share of attention there, and affected to charge the assumed neglect on the glass of ale, with which my abstemious friend moistened his evening pipe. On this assumption, the following was sent to him anonymously, the original of which I have lately found carefully preserved amongst his choicest scraps:

⁵ That sixth child was Eliza, the present Mrs. Knowles, who has so amply realised her father’s prayer.

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Here for nearly thirty years he sedulously pursued a course of collecting, examining, and classifying, which placed him high amongst the most distinguished men of the age in these pursuits. To follow him in detail within the limits of such a paper would be difficult; and in the present advanced state of science unnecessary, as the career of a successful Naturalist, is not likely to afford any striking results. The course of such a man may be likened to the steady progress of a powerful locomotive engine up an inclined plane. Step by step is made good;— nothing to excite a thrilling interest, or to illumine an imposing spectacle. But let the power fail, or the mass pass the culminating point, and come down by the run, and then what a theme! William Baker, however, never afforded such an exhibition to test the descriptive talents of a biographer. He undertook no ascent which overtaxed his power. Thus he has left but little to chronicle on these subjects, beyond a vast accumulation of facts, which in the aggregate attest the successful labours of a discriminative, indefatigable, humble-minded Naturalist.

NEW SONG,

*Composed for a select bevy of Philosophers, who meet to
fingate recent Animal Remains, and dilute Fossil Saurians,
with bitter ale.*

“Don’t believe those who say,

Venus sprung from the lea,
As brilliant in beauty, as beauty could be;
But think of the rapture the mind might inspire,
Would she spring from a hogshead of foaming entire.

“’Tis said that one Homer, whom Sophs call
divine,
Decimated his water, with a measure of wine;
Could he taste our infusion of barley and hops,
’Twould make the old Heathen ashamed of his
slops.

“But what care we for Homer’s rhapsodical tones?
Although one may covet a mass of his bones;
For where’s the Collector who would not be gratified,
- With the Bard, or his Iliad and Odyssey—stratified ?

“Some drinkers that followed, lived hard by the Tiber;
One Horace, their Laureat, was a mortal imbiber;
And well might he laud their Falernian, when stale,
For strike off the F, ’tis dog-latin for ale.

“Let dreamers, like Shakespeare, their nostrums exalt
What ‘s his ‘good sherries sack,’ to a sack of good malt?
On your outlandish trash, why should genius be spent?
Fat Jack should have glorified Burton-on-Trent.

“Then quaff, brother students, we’ll lecture,—not joke,
Till our heads are as clear as a bottle of smoke;
And Professors might envy, amidst their regalia,
Our fountain of wisdom, our native cask alia.

“ x. x”

That a detail of these facts is not admissible in such a memoir is the less to be regretted, as a brief notice of his connections and correspondence will afford a more satisfactory proof of the position he eventually occupied; but before we again recur to his connection with Naturalists, it would be unpardonable to overlook the enduring friendship of his early friend and instructor, Mr. John Coles Symes.

A most extensive series of letters from this gentleman, down to 1852, attest the deep interest he took in the temporal success and spiritual concerns of his early pupil. A spirit of earnest persuasive piety pervades the whole mass, which could not be otherwise than most welcome to that facile and grateful mind to which it was addressed.

In a similar spirit his communication with another most valued friend was kept up; but in this case was constantly blended with his favourite pursuits. In Natural History, as a study on any principle of established classification beyond that referred to by Mr. Clark, already quoted, we must consider his connection with Mr. Anstice, as the determining event. Although living within a few doors of each other, so many notes, queries, and extracts passed between them, on their favourite pursuits, that these notes, with the necessary references, form a moderately thick quarto volume.

In this correspondence, a constant interchange of those nameless attentions, which exhibit the amenities of life, were blended with interesting facts in Natural History. Even a present of a pot of honey from Baker, is made the medium for conveying an instructive fact on one of his favourite subjects,—the management of bees.

“My dear Sir,—I beg you to accept a little honey. If you like honey at all, you will relish this the more because the industrious collectors of it were not murdered when I took their treasure from them, and indeed they yield it to me out of the abundance of their riches without suffering any inconvenience.”

To this note I find the following characteristic reply:

“My dear Mr. Baker,—I cannot defer the expression of my best thanks for your repeated kindness, too liberally bestowed, for though I often take the advantage and benefit of your last supply of the luscious gathering of your interesting little labourers, it is not yet exhausted. It is indeed a gratifying recollection that you have found the means of repaying yourself for the care in their

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accommodation without destroying or injuring those industrious little creatures, it has and will give an additional relish to their delicious produce 'We have a lamprey, of about two feet, about to be prepared for table; have you any wish to examine it in that process or any other.'

It was not always that the invitation referred to a subject which could be fairly associated with the dinner table. Sometimes it was to dissect a friend's dead monkey, or a hooping swan, "rather too high to keep any longer." But these were mere exceptions, the general subjects were such knotty points in classification and physiology, as they could occasionally assist each other in.

These communications afforded Baker the advantage of being placed on an easy footing with the distinguished men from every part of the kingdom, who occasionally visited Mr. Anstice. In his room, so well known to Naturalists, Baker first became acquainted with Professor Buckland, and the Revd. W. D. Conybeare, and this first meeting was marked by an event which then excited considerable interest amongst Geologists and Professors of comparative Anatomy.

An ill-looking mass of stone, which had been picked up by Mr. Clark in a quarry at Street, was deposited with Mr. Anstice, on the belief that it might possibly turn out something rare. My worthy friends would have it, that they could discover teeth in it, and some indication of cervical vertebrae, but I had not sufficient discernment or faith to see anything of the kind, for which defect two of the best tempered men in the world were occasionally half disposed to be angry with me; but even this penalty in no wise improved my vision. The practised eye of Conybeare, however, at half a glance, recognised not only a head in this crushed, shapeless mass of stone, but the very head which he and De la Beche had been so long looking after. The Philosopher of Syracuse could not have shouted Eureka! in a more triumphant tone than that in which this able expounder of nature's mysteries hailed the most hideous of all fragments, as the veritable head of the Plesiosaurus. Its identity being fully established, it was borne off in triumph, and, as I have heard, handed over to Chantry to be relieved of some of its incrustations.⁷

⁷ In Additional Notices on the Fossil Genera, Ichthyosaurus and Plesiosaurus, by the Rev. William D. Conybeare, M.G.S., &c., [from transactions of the

With the advantage of such introductions, occasionally marked by events referred to in the scientific publications of the day, Baker soon became extensively known among those whose voice is fame, in connection with the pursuits he had adopted; but this, although drawing largely on his ⁸time, did not interfere with his paying occasional visits to his early friend, Mr. Poole, at Stowey, where he was always a welcome guest. There he had the privilege of meeting Robert Southey, and, on another occasion, one who subscribed himself as Mr. Poole's "grateful, sincere and affectionate friend, Humphry Davey."

This was Sir Humphry's last visit to Stowey, when he termed himself "a mere ruin of what he was," and requested that "nobody should be asked to meet him." Mr. Poole's account of Baker's introduction under such circumstances, is thus given by Dr. Paris in his life of Davey: "In the evening, Mr. and Mrs. Ward, the former of whom he had long known, frequently came to make a rubber of whist. He was averse to seeing strangers; but on being shewn the drawings of Natural History, of a friend of mine of great talent, Mr. Baker, of Bridgwater, he was anxious to know him, and was much pleased with his company. He suggested to him various subjects for his investigation, concerning insects and fish, particularly the Eel."

Among Baker's notes, I found the following on this subject: "Sir Humphry believed that the Eel and Conger were specifically the same fish, and that they were both hermaphrodite, and these opinions, he said, were held by Sir Everard Home, who had adopted them after careful anatomical investigation. I doubted the correctness of this conclusion, and respectfully expressed my doubts, promising to commence a series of investigations on these subjects, and to communicate the results to Sir Humphry as

Geological Society, vol. vi.]; it is stated, under the head Plesiosaurus:

"The researches of Mr. De la Beche, during the past year, have not been crowned with the success of meeting an entire skeleton of this new genus; but many important parts have been brought to light. — Of the head, only a single specimen approaching to completeness has yet occurred, which was discovered by Mr. Thos. Clark, in the Lias of Street, near Glastonbury. It is represented in plate xix. This specimen is unfortunately much crushed, but is nevertheless sufficiently perfect to exhibit its most essential osteological characters."

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early as possible."

This conversation appears to have been strongly impressed on Sir Humphry, as, in a letter to Mr. Poole in the following year, he refers to Mr. Baker three or four times, concluding with, "Sir Everard Home is firmly convinced that the eel is hermaphrodite, and impregnates itself; this, though possible, appears to me very strange in so large an animal. If Mr. Baker will determine this point, I can promise him an immortality amongst our philosophical anglers and natural historians." This communication being forwarded to Baker by Mr. Poole, called forth the following reply, which will be read with more interest than a mere dissertation on eel's eggs.

"Bridgwater, January 13th, 1828.

"Dear Sir,—When I received your very gratifying letter of the 4th January, containing a communication from Sir Humphry Davey, I promised myself the pleasure of giving you further information relative to my investigation of the eels, in a very short time, but I have been prevented by illness from bestowing one hour's attention to Natural History during the last fortnight; I hope to be able to resume my researches next week, but I find these common, well known creatures extremely puzzling. I fear that my delay has given you cause to think that I do not value the attention which Sir Humphry Davey was pleased to shew me, when I had the happiness of meeting him at your house, and that I am inattentive to his remarks on those opinions of mine, which you have been pleased to send him since he left England, but be assured, my dear sir, that few circumstances of my life have given me so much pleasure as my interview with the illustrious philosopher, together with the knowledge that my observations are considered worthy of his attention.

"I am truly sensible of your kindness in bringing me acquainted with him, but this kindness is only a continuation of that friendship which has contributed so much to my success in life, and to my substantial happiness.

"If you should write to Sir H. Davey before I have done anything further worth communicating to him, please to say that I will follow those subjects to which he has called my attention, as steadily as my every day employment will allow; that I expect to furnish some strong and decisive character of specific distinction in the *Muraena Conger*, and *M. Anguilla*, very soon; and that I will do my best to improve my

knowledge of their mode of reproduction. I do not promise myself complete success in this part of the enquiry, since the subject has been attempted for so many ages by Naturalists of the greatest ability.

"As the spring advances I will also do what I can to increase our store of information on the Natural History of the *Phrygania Ephemera*, and other insects imitated by fly fishers.

"I remain, my dear Sir,

"Your very faithful and obliged friend,

"WM. BAKER."

To Thomas Poole, Esq., Stowey.

A subsequent letter, from Sir Humphry Davey, dated Park Street, March 26th, 1828, begins thus:

"My dear Poole,—Your letter has given me great pleasure; first, because you, who are an enlightened judge in such matters, approve of my humble contribution to agriculture; and, secondly, because it makes me acquainted with your kind feelings, health, and Mr. Baker's interesting pursuits.

"Mr. Baker appears to me to have distinctly established the point that the eel and conger are of different species; and from his zeal and activity I hope the curious problem of the generation of these animals will be solved. I shall expect with impatience the results of his inquiries."

Even in the Eternal City the idea seems fresh on his mind. In one of his last letters to Mr. Poole, he says: "I hope you got a copy of my little trifle, 'Salmonia.' I ordered copies to be sent to you, to Mr. Ward, and to Mr. Baker. I have no doubt Mr. Baker is right about the distinction between the conger and the common eel. Pray tell me particularly what he has done; this is a favourite subject with me, and you can give me no news so interesting."

This subject on which Sir Humphry Davey expresses himself so earnestly, was patiently pursued, and, after innumerable dissections and extensive inquiries, the point which had remained a mystery from the days of Aristotle, was satisfactorily cleared up. A short note to Mr. Anstice may be an appropriate close to this subject:

"Feb. 5th, 1829.

"Dear Sir,—I have now so thoroughly succeeded in proving that the Eel and Conger are distinct species, and that both are analagous, in their mode of breeding, to other fishes, that I intend at once to write to Sir Humphry Davey, to inform him of the success of my investigations, which I have carried on for more than a year.

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"The whole of the Viscera of the Conger and common Eel, differ in a most striking manner, when the eye becomes acquainted with them, and strange to say (perhaps I have mentioned it to you before), the Conger has 30 more vertebrae than the Eel, and the ova are visible to the naked eye for a month before exclusion, in both species, especially in the Conger.

"I am, dear Sir, Yours faithfully,
Robert Anstice, Esq. WM. BAKER."
Amongst his memoranda I find the following:

"My investigation of Eels led me to dissect many small animals, amongst them were nearly all our Reptiles and Amphibia, and I made drawings of many of their internals; most of those of the Mammalia, are in 'Bell's Quadrupeds,' and of the Reptiles, &c., in 'Bell's Reptiles,' those of the Fishes are in 'Yarrell's British Fishes.'⁹

The drawings and papers connected with these matters, and of an inquiry into the genus *Salmo*, are, with the permission of the family, placed on the table of the Society. In quitting this division of his labours, which cannot be satisfactorily dealt with, without drawings and references, I pass on to some notes in his journal which refer to living subjects, requiring no artistic aid.

"May 20th, 1832. A swarm of bees left my hive on the 18th instant, about eleven in the morning; they

settled well in my garden and I hived them well. Between three and four in the afternoon they left their hive, and after flying over the garden in the usual manner, they flew away and settled on a currant bush, in Mr. Wride's garden, where they rested about half an hour before I could go to them. I was induced to take them home without hiving them. They were nearly all on one branch, which I easily cut off and I carried them through my neighbour's house and home to my own garden, suspended from my hand. No bees could behave better, for although they ran about my naked hand as I carried them through the streets, and although I had handled them a great deal before in the day, I was not stung once. These bees are descendants of the swarm which I induced to settle on a branch which I carried in my hand about seven years ago in the street near the church. A second swarm left the old hive this morning, and after flying about as usual returned home.

"The hive swarmed again to day and settled on the same bush which the first swarm chose. I hived them well, and about three hours after I went to examine them, and, to my great surprise, I observed a queen walking leisurely away from the mouth of the hive. I caught her and confined her in a small gauze bag, and placed her at the old stock, and the new one, and took her from the bag and held her in my fingers amongst the bees of both, but no one took the least notice of her. I put her in a box with a few drones and common bees, still no attention was paid her. I offered her a little moistened sugar, which she sucked a short time, but she died in a few hours. Thus much for royalty, even amongst these loyal creatures we see that it sometimes suffers the same miserable fate as occasionally befalls the mighty sovereigns of the world. Perhaps I should not consider this female bee a queen but a princess, who, with another royal one, attended the people on their emigration, but was expelled on the formation of the new colony. She was wounded, and her wings were slightly mutilated before she was driven out. One of the antennae was off and the other injured. This probably was occasioned by a royal combat, as a queen was left, which is proved by the well doing of the bees.

"June 1st, 1833, My boys, I find, are obliged to keep their old pet, the brown owl, in close confinement at nights to save the remains of their little menagerie.

⁹ This subject is somewhat playfully referred to in the following letter to Miller: "I have a splendid specimen of a Fox, stuffed, and just dry, and I am preparing the bones for a skeleton. Can you procure for me a pair of eyes, to make the fellow look well, or can you inform our friend, T. Clark, where he can procure them. Ever since I have had the pleasure of knowing you, I have talked of the great things which I intend doing in the way of Natural History, looking forward to a period of greater leisure, but I find myself every year more and more engaged in business. Therefore, in order to be doing something becoming a Naturalist, or a Natural perhaps my friends say, I have, during the last year and a half, frequently made my eating subservient to this purpose. I have fed much on fish since you sent me S. E. Home's paper on Eels, and I have preserved the bones in excellent order, so that I can now shew you, when, you come this way, the skeleton of most of the species, I mean British, of *Muraena Phironectes*, *Gadus*, *Clupea*, *Salma*, &c., &c. I think I have made some discoveries in this way, but I keep them to myself, not from selfishness, but from want. of time to communicate them to others."

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“It is interesting to see how beautifully discipline will subdue and change the habits of animals, and at the same time to know that natural habits, which have been for a long time subdued or changed, if once more returned to are likely to prevail on all occasions favourable for indulgence.

“The boys had trained the following company to live together in complete harmony, Brown Owl, *Strix Stridula*; White Owl, *Aluco Flamens*; Kestrel, *Falco Tinnunculus*; Domestic Pigeons; Bantam cock and hens; Domestic Cat; and sometimes young Rabbits. These were all at large in a spacious room, and the boys had also a Magpie, which was not allowed to keep this society, because when he had been admitted once or twice his playful, mischievous tricks were very troublesome, both in word and deed, to the quiet steady family. He was allowed to wander all about the premises, he knew the hours of meals, and how to procure his share on those occasions, he was admitted into the parlour as well as to the kitchen, and would visit all the bed-rooms at his pleasure. He was in the habit of washing every morning in my wash hand bason as soon as I had left it, and he amused himself afterwards before the looking glass; on one occasion, he threw down a drinking glass, and broke it, for which offence he was ordered into confinement, and the boys put him in with their other pets. He was seen during the day, twitching the tail of the brown owl, and disturbing his quiet by chattering noise. No mischief was apprehended, but on the morning following poor mag was found dead, and the object of his yesterday’s sport feasting on his body. No precaution was taken to prevent the owl from committing other murderous deeds, and on the third night after he killed a pigeon and feasted on it. He was then confined, but in a few nights after he got loose and killed the white owl.”

This detail having been given to a gentleman who was a distinguished Phrenologist, he was desirous of applying it to illustrate the object of his pursuit, but I am not aware whether the intention expressed in the following note was carried out or not. “The account you gave me of the destruction of your tame birds by the brown owl, would make an interesting Phrenological paper, illustrative of the organ of destructiveness in a state of excitement, after having laid latent for so long a period, if you could find time to communicate the circumstances attending it, I could read it to the Edinburgh

Phrenological Society; I shall be in that city for some months.”

I am not aware that the destructive propensities of the owl were ever made subservient to Baker’s pursuits; he however succeeded in availing himself of the voracity of some of the beetle tribe, for preparing skeletons of small animals. These destructive gourmands (the “*Vermestes Larderenses*,”) certainly effected the operation assigned to them, with a dexterity and neatness which has never been equalled by any other process. As the perfection of the skeletons so prepared, occasioned astonishment and inquiry, perhaps the best mode of referring to the same, will be by a brief extract from some of the correspondence which took place on the subject.

“Dear Sir,—The Dean desires me to thank you very much for your kind present of the skeletons, which are beautifully prepared. I have, to-day, taken them to St. George’s Hospital, and shewn them to several of our medical men, and I assure you they caused no little admiration, both for their perfection and cleanness. If you will kindly send me, at Westminster, some of the little beasts, I shall be very much obliged, for it is a new process, and I believe, as yet, not known in London.”

This request was complied with, accompanied by the following instructions:

“I have now the pleasure of sending you some of my little anatomists, agreeably to my promise. I have given them some work to do on their way to town, on two specimens of an undisplayed *Crothus Scorpio*, believing that they will be all the better for being agreeably employed on their journey. You must not expect them to do much for you this summer, but if you will procure them a small bird, an old one is best, or a small fish or so, you will probably have them cleaned well whilst the warm weather continues. You will assist the little workmen if you will have the specimens of a bird, drawn, skinned, and fixed, with a few pins, in any position you like, on a piece of wood; if fish, the side which is to be cleaned is to be cut away carefully close to the pins without injuring the bones, the head carefully cut in two, and the specimen placed out on a smooth piece of -wood, with the fins displayed by means of a few pins.

“You will not require a larger box for some time
‘For rats and mice and such small gear,
This box will last for many a year.’

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"The box will not require cleaning, and you will see without instruction how to clear off any dust from your specimens when you wish to remove them, but you must be careful to brush off any of the insects with a feather, or camel hair pencil, and place them back in your box."

"Dear Mr. Baker,—Your little beasts have arrived quite safe and in excellent condition. They are very lively and seem to have been hard at work all the way here, for one of the fish is already nearly clean. I assure you they are a most valuable present to me, and I hope when you come again to be able to show you some of their deeds. I understand your kind instructions very well, but if I ever am in doubt I shall take the liberty of applying to you As the skeletons you gave me have been very much admired, I am particularly anxious to make some more for the College of Surgeons."

This mode of obtaining the skeletons of small animals, is well worth the attention of the curious Collector for its extreme simplicity, nothing further being required than enclosing the subjects to be operated on in a box with a number of the beetles; they will then speedily perform their work, leaving the skeletons clean, and the articulations in a perfect state.

I perhaps ought, at an earlier period of this Memoir, to have referred to Baker's intercourse with Professor Buckland, but a melancholy circumstance has rendered such a reference a painful one; nevertheless it cannot be altogether dispensed with.

As Sir Humphry Davey, through Mr. Poole, engaged Baker to enter on a certain field of inquiry; so Dr. Buckland, through Mr. Anstice, applied for similar assistance. This request is thus referred to by Baker, in a communication to Mr. Anstice:

"I am grateful and indeed proud that your kindness towards me led you to introduce me to Professor Buckland in your own good company; and I assure you, my dear Sir, it gives me very great pleasure to be considered worthy of going hand in hand with you in Natural History pursuits, indeed to be identified with you in anything.

"I thank you heartily for your extract from the Professor's letter, and I will use every endeavour, without delay, to assist in answering some or all of his queries."

The queries, then forwarded, referred principally to the Coprolitic Breccia, in which the learned Doctor took so much interest, and which

Baker had found near the mouth of our river. Other inquiries extended to innumerable points connected with the sectional structure of the district. The correspondence, continued as it was for several years, is too voluminous to admit even of an abstract; it embraces a vast variety of subjects from the component parts of various rocks, to the chemistry of milk. A few extracts will clearly exhibit the position Baker occupied in reference to Dr. Buckland and his friends.

"Bridgwater, Nov. 11th, 1841.

"I am glad of this opportunity of writing to you as I am anxious to inform you that it will be found that the Cannington Park Lime Stone is composed like the chalk of minute organic bodies. I send a few small pieces which I have 'soaked in acids; a lens of low power will shew; in a good light, the organic composition of the specimens. These were not selected from any particular part of the hill; the rock seems to be almost wholly composed of these minute bodies. I have seen the article, 'Organic Composition of Chalk, &c.,' in the Annals and Magazine of Natural History, and, of course, the report of your remarks on this subject, at the conclusion of the number for July last. This is an overwhelmingly wonderful subject!

"Your kind invitation to visit you, at Oxford, is very gratifying to me, and few circumstances would give me so much pleasure as the treat you offer me, but I am so tied to Bridgwater that I fear I shall not be able to leave it, even for two or three days, for some months. Our dear friend, Mr. Anstice, was delighted to hear of you, and that you had been to Madely Wood; he is quite well, and his mind is as active as ever it was. He desires me to mention his kind regards to you."

"Oxford, 25th August, 1842.

"My dear Sir,—Professor Liebig and his translator, Mr. Playfair, are here, and will be with Dr. Daubeny, at Bristol, Sunday. On Monday, I join them, at Bristol, by London mail train, and go with them to Bridgwater, to arrive at 12.10. These great chemists have two objects; first to see Mr. Crosse, secondly, to see the making of Cheddar or Bridgwater cheese. I have written to Mr. Crosse, proposing to visit him on Monday afternoon, about three, p.m. I shall be happy if you can go with us.

"Will you oblige me with a line, stating whether you can do so, and whether it will not be better for us all to go by rail to Taunton, and thence take a

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carriage to Broomfield, the other road is so bad, but this you know best; from Broomfield we must return to sleep at Taunton, or Bridgwater, as may best accord with the following scheme:

"We crave your aid to arrange with some maker of good Cheddar, or Bridgwater cheese, to admit us to see the whole process, Tuesday morning, no matter how early; any place accessible from Taunton or Bridgwater will do, for we could go ever so early in the morning, or Monday evening, from Mr. Crosse's house. Tuesday evening we return to Bristol.

"Believe me very truly yours,

"W. BUCKLAND."

Baker did attend this galaxy, who were accompanied by some additional stars. The manner in which they appreciated his assistance, appears in subsequent communications.

"Primrose, near Blackburn,

"Lancashire, 4th October, 1842.

"My dear Sir,—You were so good as to proffer me further assistance in my investigations in your interesting part of the country. I now trespass on your time by enclosing a series of questions, which you would oblige me very much by getting answered. Mr. Norris who so obligingly shewed us his dairy might be inclined to do so, but if it would not trouble you too much, I should like very much to have it answered by two or three of your principal men, in order that evidence may be compared. As I have no copy of the questions, you will perhaps return them with the answers. *Liebig and I have visited all England and Scotland since we saw you, but have not, during our whole journey, passed such an instructive day as that which we did in your company.* I trust that you will not repent your proffers of assistance, on finding the trouble which I now give you.

"I am, dear Sir,"

Yours very sincerely,

"Wm. Baker, Esq.

"LYON PLAYFAIR."

"Primrose, 24th October, 1842.

My dear Sir,—On my return from Drayton Manor, yesterday evening, I received your letter containing the answers to the queries which I forwarded to you. I am exceedingly obliged by the courteous manner in which you have assisted me with this subject, and even more so for the very valuable information which I have thus acquired. The queries were answered to my great satisfaction, and pray thank your friends in my name for their

kindness. I am sure, however, that they would find beans excellent for cheese, although all three have answered "no," to the question. Again allow me to thank you for your kind attention to my troublesome queries, and to hope you will not repent of your offer of assistance should I again have occasion to task your good nature.

"I am, my dear Sir,

"Yours very faithfully,

"Wm. Baker, Esq.

"LYON PLAYFAIR."

"Salopian Hotel, November 4th, 1842.

My dear Sir,—I am beyond measure vexed that my recent locomotions have caused your last letter to me to be mislaid, so that I could not answer it in time to invite you to dine at the Geological Society Club, the 2nd November, on which day I had the satisfaction to hear your name read, as a candidate recommended for election as a member of the Society, which I hope will take place on the 30th November. Meantime, I hope your visit to London may be so arranged as to allow me the pleasure of your company at the said Club, on Wednesday, 16th November, at the Crown and Anchor, at six precisely. We adjourn to the meeting at eight, at Somerset House. I enclose a note to Mr. Jordan, at the Museum of Economic Geology, who I am sure will have very great pleasure in showing you the contents of that establishment. Dr. Playfair, as well as myself, will, I am surer duly appreciate your kindness in making further inquiries for him relating to the chemistry of milk, and its very important products. You will be glad to hear that he has prepared a new manure (Galaxoid), containing all the elements of milk in their natural proportions, which he thinks can be sold at 16 or 18 shillings a cwt., and this sufficient to manure an acre; he will read an essay on the fattening of cattle, at the next Smithfield Christmas meeting.

"Dr. Liebig spoke much of your kindness to him, and was highly gratified by his visit to Bridgwater and Broomfield. Mr. Crosse has informed me of the errors of your police, in mistaking us occasionally half disposed to be angry with me; but even this penalty in no wise improved my vision. The practised eye of Canybeare, however, at half a glance, recognised not only a head in this crushed, shapeless mass of stone, but the very head which he and De la Beche had been so long looking after. The Philosopher of Syracuse could not have shouted Eureka! in a more triumphant tone than that in which this able expounder of nature's mysteries hailed the

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most hideous of all fragments, as the veritable head of the Plesiosaurus. Its identity being fully established, it was borne off in triumph, and, as I have heard, handed over to Chantry to be relieved of some of its incrustations.¹⁰ With the advantage of such introductions, occasionally marked by events referred to in the scientific publications of the day, Baker soon became extensively known among those whose voice is fame, in connection with the pursuits he had adopted; but this, although drawing largely on his time, did not interfere with his paying occasional visits to his early friend, Mr. Poole, at Stowey, where he was always a welcome guest. There he had the privilege of meeting Robert Southey, and, on another occasion, one who subscribed himself as Mr. Poole's "grateful, sincere and affectionate friend, Sir Humphry Davey."

This was Sir Humphry's last visit to Stowey, when he termed himself "a mere ruin of what he was," and requested that "nobody should be asked to meet him." Mr. Poole's account of Baker's introduction under such circumstances, is thus given by Dr. Paris in his life of Davey: "In the evening, Mr. and Mrs. Ward, the former of whom lie had long known, frequently came to make a rubber of whist. lie was averse to seeing strangers; but on being shewn the drawings of Natural History, of a friend of mine of great talent, Mr. Baker, of Bridgwater, he was anxious to know him, and was much pleased with his company. He suggested to him various subjects for his investigation, concerning insects and fish, particularly the Eel."

Among Baker's notes, I found the following on this subject: "Sir Humphry believed that the Eel and Conger were specifically the same fish, and that they were both hermaphrodite, and these opinions, lie said, were held by Sir Everard Home, who had adopted them after careful anatomical investigation. I doubted the correctness of this

¹⁰ "The researches of Mr. De la Beche, during the past year, have not been crowned with the success of meeting an entire skeleton of this new genus; but many important parts have been brought to light. —. Of the head, only a single specimen approaching to completeness has yet occurred, which was discovered by Mr. Thos. Clark, in the Lias of Street, near Glastonhury. It is represented in plate xix. This specimen is unfortunately much crushed, but is nevertheless sufficiently perfect to exhibit its most essential osteological characters."

conclusion, and respectfully expressed my doubts, promising to commence a series of investigations on these subjects, and to communicate the results to Sir Humphry as early as possible."

This conversation appears to have been strongly impressed on Sir Humphry, as, in a letter to Mr. Poole in the following year, he refers to Mr. Baker three or four times, concluding with, "Sir Everard Home is firmly convinced that the eel is hermaphrodite, and impregnates itself; this, though possible, appears to me very strange in so large an animal. If Mr. Baker will determine this point, I can promise him an immortality amongst our philosophical anglers and natural historians." This communication being forwarded to Baker by Mr. Poole, called forth the following reply, which will be read with more interest than a mere dissertation on eel's eggs.

"Bridgwater, January 13th, 1828.

"Dear Sir,—When I received your very gratifying letter of the 4th January, containing a communication from Sir Humphry Davey, I promised myself the pleasure of giving you further information relative to my investigation of the eels, in a very short time, but I have been prevented by illness from bestowing one hour's attention to Natural History during the last fortnight; I hope to be able to resume my researches next week, but I find these common, well known creatures extremely puzzling. I fear that my delay has given you cause to think that I do not value the attention which Sir Humphry Davey was pleased to shew me, when I had the happiness of meeting him at your house, and that I am inattentive to his remarks on those opinions of mine, which you have been pleased to send him since he left England, but be assured, my dear sir, that few circumstances of my life have given me so much pleasure as my interview with the illustrious philosopher, together with the knowledge that my observations are considered worthy of his attention.

I am truly sensible of your kindness in bringing me acquainted with him, but this kindness is only a continuation of that friendship which has contributed so much to my success in life, and to my substantial happiness.

"If you should write to Sir H. Davey before I have done anything further worth communicating to him, please to say that I will follow those subjects to which he has called my attention, as steadily as my every day employment will allow; that I expect to

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furnish some strong and decisive character of specific distinction in the *Muraena Conger*, and *M. Anguilla*, very soon; and that I will do my best to improve my knowledge of their mode of reproduction. I do not promise myself complete success in this part of the enquiry, since the subject has been attempted for so many ages by Naturalists of the greatest ability.

“As the spring advances I will also do what I can to increase our store of information on the Natural History of the *Phrygania Ephemera*, and other insects imitated by fly fishers.

“I remain, my dear Sir,
Your very faithful and obliged friend,
“WM. BAKER.”

“To Thomas Poole, Esq., Stowey.

A subsequent letter, from Sir Humphry Davey, dated Park Street, March 26th, 1828, begins thus:

“My dear Poole,—Your letter has given me great pleasure; first, because you, who are an enlightened judge in such matters, approve of my humble contribution to agriculture; and, secondly, because it makes me acquainted with your kind feelings, health, and Mr. Baker’s interesting pursuits.

“Mr. Baker appears to me to have distinctly established the point that the eel and conger are of different species; and from his zeal and activity I hope the curious problem of the generation of these animals will be solved. I shall expect with impatience the results of his inquiries.”

Even in the Eternal City the idea seems fresh on his mind. In one of his last letters to Mr. Poole, he says: “I hope you got a copy of my little trifle, ‘*Salmonia*.’ I ordered copies to be sent to you, to Mr. Ward, and to Mr. Baker. I have no doubt Mr. Baker is right about the distinction between the conger and the common eel. Pray tell me particularly what he has done; this is a favourite subject with me, and you can give me no news so interesting.”

This subject on which Sir Humphry Davey expresses himself so earnestly, was patiently pursued, and, after innumerable dissections and extensive inquiries, the point which had remained a mystery from the days of Aristotle, was satisfactorily cleared up. A short note to Mr. Anstice may be an appropriate close to this subject:

“Feb. 5th, 1829.

Dear Sir,—I have now so thoroughly succeeded in proving that the Eel and Conger are distinct species, and that both are analogous, in their mode of breeding, to other fishes, that I intend at once to write

to Sir Humphry Davey, to inform him of the success of my investigations, which I have carried on for more than a year.

“The whole of the Viscera of the Conger and common Eel, differ in a most striking manner, when the eye becomes acquainted with them, and strange to say (perhaps I have mentioned it to you before), the Conger has 30 more vertebra than the Eel, and the ova are visible to the naked eye for a month before exclusion, in both species, especially in the

Conger. “I am, dear Sir,

“Yours faithfully,

Robert Anstice, Esq. “WM. BAKER.”

Amongst his memoranda I find the following:

“My investigation of Eels led me to dissect many small animals, amongst them were nearly all our Reptiles and Amphibia, and I made drawings of many of their internals; most of those of the Mammalia, are in ‘Bell’s Quadrupeds,’ and of the Reptiles, &c., in ‘Bell’s Reptiles,’ those of the Fishes are in ‘Yarrell’s British Fishes.’¹¹

“The drawings and papers connected with these matters, and of an inquiry into the genus *Sahno*, are, with the permission of the family, placed on the table of the Society. In quitting this division of his labours, which cannot be satisfactorily dealt with, without drawings and references, I pass on to some notes in his journal which refer to living subjects, requiring no

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artistic aid.

"May 20th, 1832. A swarm of bees left my hive on the 18th instant, about eleven in the morning; they settled well in my garden and I hived them well. Between three and four in the afternoon they left their hive, and after flying over the garden in the usual manner, they flew away and settled on a currant bush, in Mr. Wride's garden, where they rested about half an hour before I could go to them. I was induced to take them home without hiving them. They were nearly all on one branch, which I easily cut off and I carried them through my neighbour's house and home to my own garden, suspended from my hand. No bees could behave better, for although they ran about my naked hand as I carried them through the streets, and although I had handled them a great deal before in the day, I was not stung once. These bees are descendants of the swarm which I induced to settle on a branch which I carried in my hand about seven years ago in the street near the church. A second swarm left the old hive this morning, and after flying about as usual returned home.

"The hive swarmed again to day and settled on the same bush which the first swarm chose. I hived them well, and about three hours after I went to examine them, and, to my great surprise, I observed a queen walking leisurely away from the mouth of the hive. I caught her and confined her in a small gauze bag, and placed her at the old stock, and the new one, and took her from the bag and held her in my fingers amongst the bees of both, but no one took the least notice of her. I put her in a box with a few drones and common bees, still no attention was paid her. I offered her a little moistened sugar, which she sucked a short time, but she died in a few hours. Thus much for royalty, even amongst these loyal creatures we see that it sometimes suffers the same miserable fate as occasionally befalls the mighty sovereigns of the world. Perhaps I should not consider this female bee a queen but a princess, who, with another royal one, attended the people on their emigration, but was expelled on the formation of the new colony. She was wounded, and her wings were slightly mutilated before she was driven out. One of the antenna was off and the other injured. This probably was occasioned by a royal combat, as a queen was left, which is proved by the well doing of the bees.

"June 1st, 1833, My boys, I find, are obliged to keep their old pet, the brown owl, in close confinement at nights to save the remains of their little menagerie.

"It is interesting to see how beautifully discipline will subdue and change the habits of animals, and at the same time to know that natural habits, which have been for a long time subdued or changed, if once more returned to are likely to prevail on all occasions favourable for indulgence. "The boys had trained the following company to live together in complete harmony, Brown Owl, Strix Stridilla; White Owl, Aluco Flamens; Kestrel, Falco Tinnunculus; Domestic Pigeons; Bantam cock and hens; Domestic Cat; and sometimes young Rabbits. These were all at large in a spacious room, and the boys had also a Magpie, which was not allowed to keep this society, because when he had been admitted once or twice his playful, mischievous tricks were very troublesome, both in word and deed, to the quiet steady family. He was allowed to wander all about the premises, he knew the hours of meals, and how to procure his share on those occasions, he was admitted into the parlour as well as to the kitchen, and would visit all the bed-rooms at his pleasure. He was in the habit of washing every morning in my wash hand bason as soon as I had left it, and he amused himself afterwards before the looking glass; on one occasion, he threw down a drinking glass, and broke it, for which offence he was ordered into confinement, and the boys put him in with their other pets. He was seen during the day, twitching the tail of the brown owl, and disturbing his quiet by chattering noise. No mischief was apprehended, but on the morning following poor mag was found dead, and the object of his yesterday's sport feasting on his body. No precaution was taken to prevent the owl from committing other murderous deeds, and on the third night after he killed a pigeon and feasted on it. He was then confined, but in a few nights after he got loose and killed the white owl."

This detail having been given to a gentleman who was a distinguished Phrenologist, he was desirous of applying it to illustrate the object of his pursuit, but I am not aware whether the intention expressed in the following note was carried out or not. "The account you gave me of the destruction of your tame birds by the brown owl, would make an interesting Phrenological paper, illustrative of the

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organ of destructiveness in a state of excitement, after having laid latent for so long a period, if you could find time to communicate the circumstances attending it, I could read it to the Edinburgh Phrenological Society; I shall be in that city for some months."

I am not aware that the destructive propensities of the owl were ever made subservient to Baker's pursuits; he however succeeded in availing himself of the voracity of some of the beetle tribe, for preparing skeletons of small animals. These destructive gourmands (the "*Vermestes Larderenses*,") certainly effected the operation assigned to them, with a dexterity and neatness which has never been equalled by any other process. As the perfection of the skeletons so prepared, occasioned astonishment and inquiry, perhaps the best mode of referring to the same, will be by a brief extract from some of the correspondence which took place on the subject.

"Dear Sir,—The Dean desires me to thank you very much for your kind present of the skeletons, which are beautifully prepared. I have, to-day, taken them to St. George's Hospital, and shewn them to several of our medical men, and I assure you they caused no little admiration, both for their perfection and cleanness. If you will kindly send me, at Westminster, some of the little beasts, I shall be very much obliged, for it is a new process, and I believe, as yet, not known in London."

This request was complied with, accompanied by the following instructions:

"I have now the pleasure of sending you some of my little anatomists, agreeably to my promise. I have given them some work to do on their way to town, on two specimens of an undisplayed *Crothus Scorpio*, believing that they will be all the better for being agreeably employed on their journey. You must not expect them to do much for you this summer, but if you will procure them a small bird, an old one is best, or a small fish or so, you will probably have them cleaned well whilst the warm weather continues. You will assist the little workmen if you will have the specimens of a bird, drawn, skinned, and fixed, with a few pins, in any position you like, on a piece of wood; if fish, the side which is to be cleaned is to be cut away carefully close to the pins without injuring the bones, the head carefully cut in two, and the specimen placed out on a smooth piece of -wood, with the fins displayed by means of a

few pins.

"You will not require a larger box for some time

'For rats and mice and such small gear,

This box will last for many a year.'

"The box will not require cleaning, and you will see without instruction how to clear off any dust from your specimens when you wish to remove them, but you must be careful to brush off any of the insects with a feather, or camel hair pencil, and place them back in your box."

"Dear Mr. Baker,—Your little beasts have arrived quite safe and in excellent condition. They are very lively and seem to have been hard at work all the way here, for one of the fish is already nearly clean. I assure you they are a most valuable present to me, and I hope when you come again to be able to show you some of their deeds. I understand your kind instructions very well, but if I ever am in doubt I shall take the liberty of applying to you as the skeletons you gave me have been very much admired, I am particularly anxious to make some more for the College of Surgeons."

This mode of obtaining the skeletons of small animals, is well worth the attention of the curious Collector for its extreme simplicity, nothing further being required than enclosing the subjects to be operated on in a box with a number of the beetles; they will then speedily perform their work, leaving the skeletons clean, and the articulations in a perfect state.

I perhaps ought, at an earlier period of this Memoir, to have referred to Baker's intercourse with Professor Buckland, but a melancholy circumstance has rendered such a reference a painful one; nevertheless it cannot be altogether dispensed with.

As Sir Humphry Davey, through Mr. Poole, engaged Baker to enter on a certain field of inquiry; so Dr. Buckland, through Mr. Anstice, applied for similar assistance. This request is thus referred to by Baker, in a communication to Mr. Anstice:

"I am grateful and indeed proud that your kindness towards me led you to introduce me to Professor Buckland in your own good company; and I assure you, my dear Sir, it gives me very great pleasure to be considered worthy of going hand in hand with you in Natural History pursuits, indeed to be identified with you in anything.

"I thank you heartily for your extract from the Professor's letter, and I will use every endeavour, without delay, to assist in answering some or all of

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his queries."

The queries, then forwarded, referred principally to the Coprolitic Breccia, in which the learned Doctor took so much interest, and which Baker had found near the mouth of our river. Other inquiries extended to innumerable points connected with the sectional structure of the district. The correspondence, continued as it was for several years, is too voluminous to admit even of an abstract; it embraces a vast variety of subjects from the component parts of various rocks, to the chemistry of milk. A few extracts will clearly exhibit the position Baker occupied in reference to Dr. Buckland and his friends.

"Bridgwater, Nov. 12th, 1841.

"I am glad of this opportunity of writing to you as I am anxious to inform you that it will be found that the Cannington Park Lime Stone is composed like the chalk of minute organic bodies. I send a few small pieces which I have 'soaked in acids; a lens of low power will shew; in a good light, the organic composition of the specimens. These were not selected from any particular part of the hill; the rock seems to be almost wholly composed of these minute bodies. I have seen the article, 'Organic Composition of Chalk, &c.,' in the Annals and Magazine of Natural History, and, of course, the report of your remarks on this subject, at the conclusion of the number for July last. This is an overwhelmingly wonderful subject!

"Your kind invitation to visit you, at Oxford, is very gratifying to me, and few circumstances would give me so much pleasure as the treat you offer me, but I am so tied to Bridgwater that I fear I shall not be able to leave it, even for two or three days, for some months. Our dear friend, Mr. Anstice, was delighted to hear of you, and that you had been to Madely Wood; he is quite well, and his mind is as active as ever it was. He desires me to mention his kind regards to you."

"Oxford, 25th August, 1842.

"My dear Sir,—Professor Liebig and his translator, Mr. Playfair, are here, and will be with Dr. Daubeny, at Bristol, Sunday. On Monday, I join them, at Bristol, by London mail train, and go with them to Bridgwater, to arrive at 12.10. These great chemists have two objects; first to see Mr. Crosse, secondly, to see the making of Cheddar or Bridgwater cheese. I have written to Mr. Crosse, proposing to visit him on Monday afternoon, about three, p.m. I shall be happy

if you can go with us.

"Will you oblige me with a line, stating whether you can do so, and whether it will not be better for us all to go by rail to Taunton, and thence take a carriage to Broomfield, the other road is so bad, but this you know best; from Broomfield we must return to sleep at Taunton, or Bridgwater, as may best accord with the following scheme:

"We crave your aid to arrange with some maker of good Cheddar, or Bridgwater cheese, to admit us to see the whole process, Tuesday morning, no matter how early; any place accessible from Taunton or Bridgwater will do, for we could go ever so early in the morning, or Monday evening, from Mr. Crosse's house. Tuesday evening we return to Bristol.

"Believe me very truly yours,

"W. BUCKLAND."

Baker did attend this galaxy, who were accompanied by some additional stars. The manner in which they appreciated his assistance, appears in subsequent communications.

"Primrose, near Blackburn,

"Lancashire, 4th October, 1842.

"My dear Sir,— You were so good as to proffer me further assistance in my investigations in your interesting part of the country. I now trespass on your time by enclosing a series of questions, which you would oblige me very much by getting answered. Mr. Norris who so obligingly shewed us his dairy might be inclined to do so, but if it would not trouble you too much, I should like very much to have it answered by two or three of your principal men, in order that evidence may be compared. As I have no copy of the questions, you will perhaps return them with the answers. Liebig and I have visited all England and Scotland since we saw you, but have not, during our whole journey, passed such an instructive day as that which we did in your company. I trust that you will not repent your proffers of assistance, on finding the trouble which I now give you.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Yours very sincerely,

"Wm. Baker, Esq. "LYON PLAYFAIR."

"Primrose, 24th October, 1842.

"My dear Sir,— On my return from Drayton Manor, yesterday evening, I received your letter containing the answers to the queries which I forwarded to you. I am exceedingly obliged by the courteous manner in which you have assisted me

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with this subject, and even more so for the very valuable information which I have thus acquired. The queries were answered to my great satisfaction, and pray thank your friends in my name for their kindness. I am sure, however, that they would find beans excellent for cheese, although all three have answered "no," to the question. Again allow me to thank you for your kind attention to my troublesome queries, and to hope you will not repent of your offer of assistance should I again have occasion to task your good nature.

"I am, my dear Sir,

"Yours very faithfully,

"Wm. Baker, Esq.

"LYON PLAYFAIR."

"Salopian Hotel, November 4th, 1842.

My dear Sir,—I am beyond measure vexed that my recent locomotions have caused your last letter to me to be mislaid, so that I could not answer it in time to invite you to dine at the Geological Society Club, the 2nd November, on which day I had the satisfaction to hear your name read, as a candidate ~commended for election as a member of the Society, which I hope will take place on the 30th November. Meantime, I hope your visit to London may be so arranged as to allow me the pleasure of your company at the said Club, on Wednesday, 16th November, at the Crown and Anchor, at six precisely. We adjourn to the meeting at eight, at Somerset House. I enclose a note to Mr. Jordan, at the Museum of Economic Geology, who I am sure will have very great pleasure in showing you the contents of that establishment. Dr. Playfair, as well as myself, will, I am surer duly appreciate your kindness in making further inquiries for him relating to the chemistry of milk, and its very important products. You will be glad to hear that he has prepared a new manure (Galaxoid), containing all the elements of milk in their natural proportions, which he thinks can be sold at 16 or 18 shillings a cwt., and this sufficient to manure an acre; he will read an essay or the fatting of cattle, at the next Smithfield Christmas meeting.

"Dr. Liebig spoke much of your kindness to him, and was highly gratified by his visit to Bridgwater and Broomfield. Mr. Crosse has informed me of the errors of your police, in mistaking us for chartist propagandists, &c. At Leeds, you may have seen we attended, with our host, Earl Fitzwilliam, a meeting of teetotallers, having first dined at an agricultural meeting, at Wakefield. Hoping soon to meet you in London.

"I remain, yours very sincerely,

"WM. BUCKLAND."

After the deliberate testimony of such men, it would be superfluous to cite any more examples in detail of the honourable position which the former fife-boy had attained, while labouring for his 'daily bread, unless it be thought worth observing, that in November, 1842, he was, on the nomination of Dr. Buckland, elected a member of the Royal Geological Society. The following short note and answer, should not however, be excluded from a paper drawn up for the Somersetshire Arch~ological and Natural history Society.

"Bridgwater, May 1st, 1845.

"My dear Sir,—Our dear friend Mr. Anstice, left this world yesterday morning about nine o'clock. his end was calm and easy, the lamp of life in him burned bright and clear, almost to the very last.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Yours sincerely,

"To Dr. Buckland.

"WM. BAKER."

Oxford, 3rd May, 1845.

"My dear Sir,—I thank you for your kind attention, in informing me of the decease of our much lamented friend and fellow labourer, Mr. Anstice '*whose like we shall not look upon again,*'"

In this conclusion I cordially concur, after having been honoured with the confidence and friendship of this eminent man for more than a quarter of a century.

" His life was gentle and the elements

So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up

And say, to all the world, "This was a man!"

Another departed friend, Sir John Trevelyan, seldom lost an opportunity of testifying his high estimation of Baker, with a kind consideration of his position. Whenever any persons who were distinguished for similar pursuits were at Nettlecombe, Baker was invited to meet them. I remember this included, amongst several others, Professor Buckland, Dean Conybeare, and Lord Northampton. The friendly feeling, and frank bearing of this fine old English gentleman, were highly appreciated by his guest, who was feelingly alive to being cordially treated, without being in any degree overborne by formal attention. His visits to Nettlecombe were remembered as bright days in his life, which I believe I enjoyed as much in his warm, grateful description, as he did in the reality. Among

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his notes I find the following:

"April 26th, 1844.

On my way to Nettlecombe, this morning, I called on Boyes, of Putsham; he shewed me a large piece of elephant's, or mammoth's tusk, which he found on the beach, at Lilstock; he told me that he had that morning seen a Waxen Chatterer not far from the village. Reached Nettlecombe soon after ten.

"Miss Trevelyan shewed us about the gardens, which are in great beauty. Sir John took us in his four-wheel to the Brendon Hills, through his noble oak woods; the various views from the road, called Stickle-path, and the upper part of the Brendon hills, are exceedingly fine, especially where the channel comes in view.

"At Treborough, Sir John is repairing the church, or rather, rebuilding it. Mr. Babbage, who was with us, took us a little from the road, and shewed us some bog, near the source of the Tone, which they are now draining. Trenches are cut to the depth of seven or eight feet down to the rock. At the bottom of the trenches, in the deepest parts, are large blocks of loose quartz." These noble oak woods, which awakened his admiration, were thus referred to by Dr. Buckland in his address, on the opening of your institution:

"The summits of Quantock and Exmoor, being blue slate, were sterile; but the moment they came to Dunster Castle, and Nettlecombe, where the soil was red and the climate mild, they found the finest oaks in England, oaks which were sent for from Liverpool, to make the stern posts of the largest vessels, and purchased at immense prices, for they must have them. It was a geological cause which made these oaks worth 100 guineas each. They could not get such timber on the blue slate."

This reference to Dr. Buckland's address, naturally brings me to the fact that, on the formation of your Society, William Baker was unanimously looked up to, not only as the person best qualified to perform the duties of Secretary in the Natural History department of the Institution, but as one from whom the most essential assistance could be obtained in that extensive department which he had made his particular study. How far he justified this favourable estimate of his abilities and his zeal, it is unnecessary to state. The various papers which he read at the meetings of the Society,¹² and the general

assistance he afforded to the Natural History division of the museum, speak for themselves. They attest beyond any laboured panegyric his efficiency and his zeal; while his general accessibility and unwearied readiness to afford every possible information to those who applied for his aid, require no comment. Indeed, the capacious recesses of his mind seemed to form a harbour of refuge for baffled Naturalists, from most parts of her Majesty's dominions.

It seems that somewhat about this time, he contemplated the publication of a work, which he thus refers to in a note, intended for his daughter Ann:

"Really I do not see why you and I should not publish a small work on Natural History, illustrated with plates, if I could save myself from loss, after getting something for the drawings. I have lots of subjects both for letter press, and illustrations, and if I should have my health a little longer, it would be a very agreeable amusement, particularly if I disengaged myself from public affairs."

If I mistake not this is his first recorded notice of his engagements on public affairs, a point which should not be altogether passed over, although the public concerns of a little borough town, are not very agreeable subjects to enlarge on. It is, however, evident that the public business must be done by some persons, and that if well-intentioned honorable men shrink from office, it will eagerly be caught up by others. William Baker felt this, and acted on it. The influence which he had established in his private capacity, he was ever ready to exert for the benefit of that community of which he was so important a member.

He accepted in turn almost every unpaid parochial and municipal office, from the lowest up to the Magistracy, and was not unfrequently selected as a forlorn hope, when persons of an opposite character had brought the concerns of a party or a parish into a labyrinth of confusion. Under these circumstances it cannot be deemed strange that employment accumulated on him, until his contemplated work on Natural History was contingent on his "disengaging himself from public

these papers, but it has been since understood that such an abstract, with some specific details, will be prepared for the next annual Report of the institution, where such matter can be more satisfactorily dealt with than in "a Memoir of the Life and Character of William Baker."

¹² It was at first intended to append a short abstract of

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affairs."

In this letter to his daughter Ann, which was dated April 2nd, 1851, he says: "For the last week I have had threatenings of my usual spring cough; it was much better last night, and I think it will pass lightly off." It was soon after this period that I became, for the first time, painfully impressed by his appearance.

He had become somewhat restless and anxious, bearing unequivocal marks of being overtoiled, and instead of "disengaging himself from public affairs," he suffered them to accumulate on him. His cough was intense. He occasionally complained of violent palpitation, and altogether struck me as realizing the description of Dryden;

"A fervid Soul, which working out its way,
Hasten'd the wasting body to decay,
And o'er informed the tenement of clay."

I felt this so strongly, that although I had cautiously refrained from obtruding any advice upon him, which he did not specially apply for, I now made some efforts to impress on him the necessity of refraining from all exciting and disturbing subjects, and of moderating his exertions generally, and as I had a decided objection to the tedious reiteration of this, I determined (although quite out of my way), to address him in verse as being more familiar and less obtrusive than a formal prose appeal would be. My reason for referring to this, will appear in the sequel.

So far from the earnest wishes of those who loved him, having the effect of disentangling him from his harassing engagements, they decidedly increased on him. he even permitted himself to be drawn into the turmoil of a general election, by seconding on the hustings, the nomination of a candidate, Unfortunately too, a new field of exertion was opened out for him. Mr. Hepworth Dixon, who was preparing a life of our renowned townsman, Admiral Blake, applied for his assistance in procuring information. He was soon engaged in an extensive correspondence on this subject, and to a general ransacking of muniments and parish registers. Mr. Dixon acknowledges his obligation to the "Baker papers," and a manuscript volume of inquiries, genealogies, and abstracts, attest the earnestness with which this pursuit was adopted.

In this multifarious course of voluntary harassing engagements, month after month passed on without any cessation from excitement and

labour, or any material alleviation of the violent palpitation and distressing cough, which heralded the approaching event. On the 3rd of March last, he thus writes:

"I have entered on my 67th year; you see my dear Ann, I am approaching near the age of man. I sometimes fear that I have not a due feeling of the awfulness of the approaching change. I have little dread of it, and sometimes I think of it almost with pleasure. My reliance is in the atonement."

He had somewhat previously to this indulged in occasional excursions; but they were few and far between. There was, however, scarcely a place of any decided geological interest in the district, which I had not, in our many years of intercourse, visited with him. As I was, unfortunately for myself, no longer capable of accompanying him, I cannot refrain from a short notice of one of these excursions of three days, which I have just found in a note addressed to Mr. Anstice:

"My dear Friend,—I should have answered your very kind notes last evening, but I did not return from a most delightful excursion with our friend Bowen, until late this evening. I hope soon to have the pleasure of talking over with you, an interesting geological phenomenon, which we observed at the railway cutting, at Uphill;—the has abutting against, and apparently running under the mountain lime stone. Is the situation of trap rock at such a junction?

"Bowen and I went to Wells, Wookey, Cheddar, Weston, left our conveyance there, and rode on donkeys to Uphill, and back to Weston. Returned by the way of Banwell, visited the Bone Cave, &c., & c."

His estimable correspondent, being no longer able to join in such explorations, enters thus warmly into the enjoyment of his friends.

"My very dear Friend,—I am more obliged than I can express by your attention to my inquiries, when you must have had so many engagements after your extensive excursion,—and what an excursion!! How should I have enjoyed being of your party, had I health and strength to have accompanied you. I shall long to talk with you on the interesting phenomenon to which you allude."

Correct drawings were made of the section referred to, which were commented on with much interest, by Professor Buckland. There was now an end to such excursions. When he did leave home it was seldom for more than a few hours, on which occasions he was usually accompanied by his son-in-

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law Mr. Knowles, the respected Actuary of the Bridgwater Savings Bank. A few lines entered in his journal recorded the miscellaneous events and impressions, as they arose. These entries, in regard to their spirit and character, may be taken promiscuously; but as it is desirable, in such extracts, to introduce somewhat of variety, I select the following, from which the general tone may be fairly inferred

“June 26th, 1851. At Weston-Super-mare, a lovely day, pretty much rain since the 19th. At Weston, I sketched the rocks at the end of the hill from Bernbeck. Met the Revd. Mr. Warre, Mr. West, Mr. Saul, and Mr. W. D. Crotch; all of us explored the fortifications on the hill. The ancient defences and places of habitation, are distinctly traceable.

“Nov. 17th. I was driven by Charlotte between 10 and 11 a.m. to Cannington. Met Lord Cavan by appointment on Cannington Park, for a diligent search for fossil shells in the lime stone. It was too cold to expose ourselves where the wind could reach us, we therefore got on the old wall of stones, on the south side of the great park, amongst the bushes, and spent three or four hours in cheerful sunshine, in a temperature like that of a mild May day. Wasps, flies, and other insects were on the wing; the stonechat and bullfinch gave their call notes; the robin and hedge sparrow sang. The air was unusually clear, and very distant hills were visible. The leaves still thick, and the landscape clothed with a rich brown and umber foliage. Very cold after sunset.

“April 7th, 1852.

Went to Durston with Mr. Knowles. In some meadows near Newton, the daffodils abundant and in great beauty; primroses in perfection, and profusion, in the road side banks of the new red sand stone. Ground ivy now bright as the blue violet, opened here and there. ‘rue blue violet nearly gone, and the dog violet opened; the large stitchwort opened in profusion in some spots, and the black thorn also. A few fading snowdrops still linger in cottage gardens; the *Pyrus japonica* in great beauty. Under a damp bank near Newton, a profusion of the common green lichen, with their capsules supported by their slender stems; in perfection just beneath them, the saxifrage or a congener displaying their yellow green tufts of blossoms. A few swallows have been seen the wryneck heard eight or ten days ago.

“May 31st, 1852. My friend William Tucker, found that a pair of magpies had a nest in a tall elm

near their house, the hen was at brood, and a few days ago, the family at Clay Hill, had their attention called by a great clatter of birds, which was occasioned by a fight between the magpies and a pair of sparrow hawks in the nest tree, after a hard struggle, the magpies flew off, leaving the hawks in possession; not long after five magpies came to the tree, and fought hard to drive the hawks away. A sixth magpie came and rendered assistance, but all could not displace the hawks, they took possession of the nest and the hen is now at brood in it.

“Nov. 27th, 1852. Rainy weather continues, floods very high. Hamp ward covered from the bridge nearly to the entrance, and from the bridge to the last cottages. The water in our meadows has not been so high in the memory of old people. Persons cannot pass to and from Weston Zoyland, except in boats. On my way to and from Taunton to-day, the water in the moor was for some distance, quite up to the railway on both sides. The first two fields south of Hamp ward, adjoining the turnpike road covered with water.¹³

¹³ In an early portion of his journal I find the following interesting statement on a result of a similar flood:

“December 29th, 1821. The moors are flooded, and there is no passing from Weston Zoyland, either in carts or on horseback. The water is still rising. — What becomes of the myriads of insects which had concealed themselves at the roots of the herbage, or burrowed in the earth, in the thousands of acres of land which are now covered with water? Do most of them die, or do they swim to some other retreats out of the reach of the flood, after they have been dislodged? These are questions which have often presented themselves to my mind during the late heavy rains, and this afternoon I went on the Weston Zoyland road, to endeavour to solve them by observation. Between the first and second bridges, a little beyond Canniford’s, the main body of water commenced in this direction, and here I began my search. Thousands of insects, particularly Coleoptera, floating in the currents, and wafting on lightly, as every breeze impelled, instantly caught my attention, and I was pleased to find that they endured this interruption of their repose without any apparent injury. Some clasped each other, and some clung to stubble, bits of stick, leaves, &c., while others sprawled about to catch at anything that might come within their reach. At the edge of the water every tuft of grass and every single blade was crowded with these little creatures, and in many places they were huddled together in considerable clusters like small swarms of bees. The different species with their variety of colours thus assembled, produced a pretty effect. Aniscus, Scolopendra, Fly, Worm, Snail, Slug, Beetle, &c,

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“March 3 1st, 1853. After the 14th, there was much frost with many bright days. East winds prevailed nearly to the end of the month, greatly to the discomfort of persons with tender lungs, I have suffered a good deal from cough.

“June 4th, 1853. Went to Durston this afternoon, with Betsy, Knowles, and Eliza, little James was with us. Apple trees are nearly out of bloom, except the hangdowns, and they are now in perfect flower. Beans, many fields in flower, and peas also at Thurloxton. Wheat plant much improved, looking a rich dark colour, barley coming on beautifully. The foliage generally free from blight, and from the effects of cold winds.

“June 23rd. Went to Durston with Knowles. The day was bright, hay carrying was pretty general. Much clover has been out for more than a fortnight, the weather has been showery, almost ever since the 12th, but there has been much sunshine. Wheat in fine ear, beans nearly out of bloom, wild roses in great beauty and profusion. Starlings by hundreds in a flock, flying about the meadows. Last Saturday the 18th, I saw large flocks in the fields. The parent birds lead out their broods and fly about the fields with them, until they can manage well for themselves, then the parents return to the towns to prepare for other families, and broods of young ones unite by hundreds, sometimes thousands, and remain in the country.

“July 12th. Went to Weston-Super-mare, and spent the morning at the end of, the hill. Flowers and insects very abundant, a most delightful day. Wales very clear. Haymaking has been much delayed by wet. Much grass yet to cut.”

On his return from Weston, he expatiated with unusual warmth on the delight he had experienced, and promised himself to visit again the precise spot, “the very bluff” on which he had sat, kindly expressing his regret that I was no longer able to accompany him; — but it was ordered otherwise.

This disciple of nature, who had so revelled in

&c, a.sso. elated in thick assembly, at the foot stalks of every tuft of grass, at the margin of the water. On examining the drift weeds, stubble, &c., which covered the water in still places, I found millions of Coleoptera, indeed I could have collected more species of this order of insects in a few minutes in this place, than I could have caught in a whole summer's day, but the wind was rough and cold, and rain came on and drove me away.”

his gaze on the ocean mid the music of birds, and the odour of flowers, with their thousand beautiful combinations of colour and form, had looked out upon that ocean, and its glorious accompaniments for the last time. He had looked out upon it with a grateful heart, full of hope, under impressions, as vivid as those which in his morning walk from Over Stowey, had led him in his early manhood to apostrophize “the blessed world we live in.”¹⁴

We have seen that the last entry in his journal, was dated July the 12th. On the following Sunday the 17th, a Charity Sermon was preached in St. Mary's Church, when he bore one of the Offertory Plates; and on returning home, was never able to leave his house afterwards. Such was the characteristic termination of his active course! Thirty-three years before he had walked from Over Stowey to perform a similar Christian duty, and during the whole intervening period, he had unostentatiously pursued the same course. He was now to seal the public exertions of a long life by a last effort, in harmonious unison with all the preceding.

During the night he was seized with violent spasms, and an aggravation of all the distressing symptoms consequent on a deranged action of the heart, or rather, on a long established disease in that organ. On the night of the 25th, he was again seized, and still more violently.

A telegraphic message was dispatched to Bristol, for Dr. Symonds who arrived early on the 26th, but nothing could be suggested beyond perfect repose, and relieving by extensive blistering and otherwise the congestion of the viscera. This course was steadily pursued (with the exception of his abstaining from conversation) and for some little time he was materially relieved. This however was only of short duration, and the approach of the final result was but too evident to those who watched him daily.

To trace the wasting progress of disease in such a Memoir would be distressing, and is unnecessary; but not so, to notice the operation, of the mind at this awful crisis. In him the ruling passion was as strong as at any other period of his life. Had he been in any undue degree a follower of pleasure or of pelf, there would doubtless have been a revulsion; but he never had been so. He was an habitual worshipper of God in his works, and in his word; and he passed through this searching period, in perfect harmony with his

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BY JOHN BOWEN
1854

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progress through life. More need not be said to those who have carefully traced him through these pages.

In the intervals of his spasmodic attacks, he engaged earnestly in his old favourite pursuits.

He derived pleasure from watching the changes taking place in several insects, kept in glass jars for his inspection; and the passion which he had always entertained for flowers seemed to strengthen upon him, rather than otherwise. Vases with fresh flowers were daily placed near him under his own direction, when he would gaze upon them as if he felt that it was a sin not to admire so much elegance and beauty, which seemed formed by a bountiful Creator to awaken admiration and gratitude.

For some time he was able to read his accustomed books, and even to draw occasionally. The very last exercise of this talent, was on the Larva of the Death's head Moth; an unusually coloured specimen of which, was sent him by his friend Mr. Richard Anstice. This was thought a new species and another drawing made and sent to Mr. Newman, the Zoologist, who found it to be only a variety of the Sphinx Atropos; differing somewhat from the usual specimen in size and colour.

When he could no longer read with ease, Mrs. Knowles, who was his constant attendant, read to him. On one of these occasions, he requested her to make an extract from Bonomi's *Nineveh*, to the effect, that besides the letters discovered on the bricks so long buried "another curious and interesting impression is observable on one of these bricks; it is that of the footsteps of a weasel, which must have sported over the recent brick before it had left the hand of the Fabricator. The little Animal and the mighty King have stamped the record of their existence on the same piece of clay."

This extract he wished placed with his papers, as he had made a similar discovery in the indurated clay found under the slime of the Parret, and had sent the result to Professor Buckland, who had replied at some length from Paris.

But the time came when even being read to on such subjects was too much for him. He then amused himself by turning over the pages of Humphry's and Westwood's *British Moths and their Transformations*; a work lately presented to him by his old and valued friend Thomas Clark. This work afforded him great pleasure, especially when he compared the groups of drawings with his own, which were nearly identical.

I revert to these interesting occupations under a

chastened feeling of satisfaction, having sat with him some part of every day but two, (when prevented by illness) from his first seizure up to within forty-eight hours of his death. When far gone in bodily decay, but with a clear head, and sound judgment, he informed me of an omission in his Will made some years since, which upon further reflection he was desirous of amending. His directions were explicitly given, and the necessary document executed with perfect self-possession. Fearing that the exertion had disturbed him I enquired how he felt. His reply was, "shattered in body, as you see, but now perfectly at rest in mind. I know that my Redeemer liveth."

He was visited by the Revd. John Poole, of Enmore, which gave him great satisfaction; he having long cultivated a warm friendship with, and respectful feeling towards, that venerable and most excellent man. Indeed he spoke of nothing during his illness with more earnestness, than of the comfort he had received from his estimable visitor.

A few days before his death, he reminded me that I had addressed some lines to him, about two years before, and as I had not preserved any copy he directed his daughter to a port-folio in his bureau, where the original could be found. He appeared to think so much of this, that I had a few copies struck off to be presented by himself to his children. This little attention afforded him much satisfaction. He expressed himself earnestly on it, we then took leave with a tremulous "God bless you," on his lips, and never saw each other afterward. Thus closed, in this world, the confidential intercourse and unclouded friendship of fifty years! What a theme! But this is intended for a Memoir;—not a Homily.

His daughter Mrs. Knowles, was at my request so good as to furnish me with the following: "After your solemn leave-taking with my dear father two days before his death, he said but little, and scarcely anything occurred out of the course which you had daily noticed, for some time, except the deep interest he took in the lines which you had given him. His impression was that they were only intended for his children, and that he was so far bound to attend to your wishes, that on being asked for a copy by his sister-in-law, he said, "I cannot tell at present, whether or not I shall be enabled to give you one."

This I believe was the last sentence he ever uttered.

"I should have mentioned that previous to this

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he had asked my sister and myself to read them to him, which at his request we did several times, especially the latter part which appeared to give him very great satisfaction and even delight, although so near his end. Indeed he might almost be said to have passed off with the sound of these concluding lines on his ear.¹⁵ Nothing could have afforded us all more consolation than the pious, humble, assured manner of his departure, which occurred about noon on Saturday, the 8th of October."

On the following Friday he was buried in the churchyard of St. John's, opposite the place to which he had been the means of giving the name of our renowned townsman, Admiral Blake. The Mayor and Corporation attended the funeral, with about eighty of the principal inhabitants of the town in procession, including persons of different religious and political principles. All seemed to feel his loss as that of an able, good, and most kind man, who in the varied path of his life had uniformly endeavoured to do his duty.

The length to which this paper has extended, renders it desirable that but little should be added to the foregoing detail. Imperative custom however, has rendered some concluding remarks indispensable; but the course which I deliberately adopted, of writing in the first person, of making my departed friend speak in his own person when practicable, and of introducing verbatim the testimony of his correspondents, relieves me in a considerable degree from the task of drawing up any formal character.

The matter which has been stated, affords the materials necessary for inferring the character of the man from his actions, his progress and his recorded opinions. Nevertheless I am bound to state, as my own conviction, that I have never known nor read of a person whose moral character was more unimpeachable; in purity of mind, in simplicity of heart, in unspotted integrity, he was not to be surpassed in any age or country.¹⁶ His sense of

¹⁵ For these "concluding lines" see note at the end.

¹⁶ Among the communications which I received on his death, was the following, from an estimable friend who had known him from his youth:

"Over Stowey, 9th October, 1853.

"Dear Bowen,— I thank you heartily for your note, received this morning announcing the death of our old and valued friend, W. Baker I heard yesterday that he could not survive through the day, and I need scarcely add that my thoughts immediately recurred to you, who from your

religion was equally firm and unassuming, testifying itself practically in all the concerns of life; but never dogmatic, never obtrusive, and therefore, operating favourably on those who, in some respects, differed with him in opinion. The intense affection borne him by his family, the devoted attachment of his friends, and the unbounded confidence reposed in his integrity by all those who knew him, attest in an unquestionable manner, the high estimate formed of his virtues and his judgment.

It having been already stated that he successively performed the duties of all the unpaid offices in our community, including the magistracy, and that he so performed them, amid all the strife of faction, as to obtain for his remains the respectful tribute of all parties, I have now only to notice the course of your departed Secretary, in reference to those pursuits, which have brought the subject before this meeting.

To the members of "the Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society," it cannot be necessary to offer any reasons for the devoted zeal which his continuous labours evinced; but those who do not equally estimate such pursuits, may be requested to remember that no object can be acquired in an eminent degree, without a

frequent intercourse with him even to the last, have been enabled to form the truest estimate of his great worth it makes me think better of myself that you know how sincerely I concur with you in your affection for one of the purest spirits which ever wafted Its course to its congenial home.

"Although to an aged man like myself the successive removal of friends, who, like Baker, commanded our entire esteem and love renders this world daily more desolate; it tends to make us think heaven still more heavenly, if we are permitted in a future state to recognize the good with whom we have been associated here, and to enjoy with them the happiness of a far more perfect state of existence. But I am wrong thus to obtrude on you my crude ideas of what may be, when the certainty will probably reach us both soon. Believe me to remain with great truth, yours ever most sincerely,

"Thos. Ward"

And the "certainty," speaking under a hopeful belief, has reached him! he, too, is gone. I dare not, I cannot, attempt to record my sense of his unsurpassable worth in all his relations to society, and in the hallowed circle of domestic life.

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devotedness and enthusiasm which may appear to others disproportioned to the end in view. Let such objectors be told that Natural History, as a science, is not to be judged by its details; but by the great aggregate of creation, which can only be brought under our notice, by the individual contributions of thousands.

To assist in discovering, in classifying, in unveiling specific mysteries, in some of their countless varieties, is to labour in the construction of an alphabet of nature. Individual results may be unappreciable, but they lead by sure steps to as comprehensive a conclusion, as our finite nature is capable of.

Such pursuits, carried on under the influence of such views, and they were so carried on by William Baker, are well adapted to kindle a generous emulation, and to refine, to simplify, to ennoble the understanding.

They are doubtless among the means provided for the conservation of our moral perception, by counteracting that pernicious tendency to the substitution of expediency for justice, which strengthens with the progress of a highly wrought state of society. Thus while the laws of man become, as they accumulate, more complex, contradictory and uncertain, the laws of nature, in their progressive development, become more obviously simple, grand and harmonious; and thus we have an ever active principle, wooing us from the paths of subtlety and evasion, into the sublime region of demonstrative truths; of truths not barren and speculative, but in their practical application, abundantly administering to the physical enjoyment and mental dignity of man.

Such were the convictions under which HE acted whose loss we deplore, and of whose varied excellencies I have ventured to become the feeble expositor; at a period and under circumstances which preclude a hope of the task being satisfactorily executed.

J. B.

THE END

As some persons may be desirous of knowing the concluding lines which are said to have occupied William Baker's last attention, I subjoin that conclusion, with as much of the commencement as seems necessary to mark the conviction under which that trifle was written, which is now invested with

such unexpected interest.

LINES ADDRESSED TO MY OLDEST FRIEND
"Friend of my Youth, my Manhood and my Age,
Let us once more, in mutual thought engage;
Come! Steal away from all contagious strife,
Come! Leave behind the "carking cares" of life;
Cast to the winds all dreams of civic toils,
Committees, Councils, Board Rooms and their
broils.
Leave too thy hoards, cull'd with such curious
care,
From rock and water, flowerets, earth and air;
Or from those caves of mumbled bones and
mud,
Which wise ones claim as charnels of the flood.
Thrust them all off to some convenient day,
For safe as Faustus, they won't run away.
Let us again explore some shady nook,
And stretch beside a gently babbling brook;
here Nature's sympathies assert their sway,
And mellow all the wrongs of life away;
Till Heaven's affinities attract us whole,
And Self's absorbed in universal soul.

* * * * *
* * * * *

Oh come; we'll cast all servile cares aside,
Vain glorious knowledge, and prostrating pride.
Spurning the trammels of this nether sphere,
We'll rise beyond the bounds of earth and air;
In blest communion with the wise and good
Anticipate a holy brotherhood:
Where Ha, our "guide, philosopher and
friend,"
Again may teach us, and again may bend,
ANSTICIAN wisdom to a vital end;
Condensing mortal worth within the span
Of fervent love to God and love to man.
Then patient, humble, trusting, and serene,
Appeal to him, the star-crowned Nazarene,
To rest us in a pure and grateful mind,
To breathe his spirit on our souls resigned;
And when earth's toys before our eyeballs swim,
Humbly to centre all our hopes in him;
Of soaring up to that mysterious shove
Where life is bliss, and death shall be no more.
"To WILLIAM BAKER, FROM J. B."
Bridgwater, April 25, 1851.

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Editorial note:

Two of William Baker's diaries mentioned by Bowen are in the collection of the Blake Museum, Bridgwater -
BWRAB : 2013/1/71 April 13 1833 - June 25 1834
BWRAB : 2013/1/72 February 1855 - May 1864

They were rescued from the Stack at Bridgwater Library, which once held the Museum's library and Archive. It is presumed that the third diary became lost whilst there.