

and unique species in all the different forms of life, which make, in fact, a *tropical outlier*, just as the tops of the mountains, 10,000 feet high, supply us in their botany with boreal outliers. Not the least interesting fact ascertained is the peculiar character of the fishes of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan, many of which are peculiar, some Nilotic; but whether peculiar or African, exhibiting remarkable affinities with the African forms of the entire and central lakes as far south as the Nyanza and the Zambesi river; and pointing to a time, perhaps at the close of the Miocene period, when this depression formed the northernmost of a long chain of fresh-water lakes, extending as far as south-east Africa.

The following Gentlemen were elected Fellows of the Society:—

J. W. LAIDLAW, Esq.

W. WILLIAMS, Esq.

*Monday, 17th February 1868.*

PROFESSOR PLAYFAIR, C.B., Vice-President, in the  
Chair.

The Chairman said—Gentlemen, before beginning the business of this meeting, I wish to refer to the lamented death of two of the office-bearers of this Society. Dr Burt, a member of our Council, was well known as a public-spirited citizen, who had long usefully devoted himself to the development of our institutions, and who, by his genial disposition and honesty of character, endeared himself to all those who enjoyed his acquaintance. The other loss has had a more marked relation to us, because in the death of Sir David Brewster this Society has lost its President, and this country one of her most distinguished philosophers. This is not the time to refer to the benefits which Sir David Brewster has bestowed upon science. These have been so numerous and important that we may expect a special evening to be devoted to this consideration. If Professor Tait, who is so capable to do justice to the merits of his deceased friend, were to undertake this subject, I am sure the Royal Society would hail with pleasure the announcement

of his intention. Such a record of the achievements of a great philosopher has a much higher purpose than that of an *éloge*, for while they become landmarks in the progress of science over new and untrodden paths, they indicate the methods by which further progress is to be attained. Sir David Brewster entered this Society so long ago as 1808, and has been a constant contributor to its Transactions. It is worthy of notice that in the year 1808 the three candidates who became Fellows of the Society were, James Wardrop, surgeon, now in London, David Brewster, and Humphry Davy. In announcing to us at the opening of the session the death of Faraday, Sir David said that there was only one person living who had, like Faraday, taken all the medals of the Royal Society of London—the Copley, Rumford, and Royal medals. There is no one living now to claim this high honour, for the “one” so modestly hinted at was himself. In Brewster and Faraday the nation has suffered a heavy loss. Both were great philosophers and ardent Christians. We point to them as conclusive proofs that science and infidelity are not akin. I dare not trust myself to speak of the last days of Brewster. The perfect calmness and kindly consideration with which he wrote farewell letters to the public bodies which had honoured themselves by honouring him during life, were perhaps to have been looked for in one who viewed death as a means of attaining a higher and purer knowledge of God and of His works. But it is given to few men to possess their mental faculties unclouded to the last. A week before his death I had a long letter in his own handwriting, showing the liveliest interest in the affairs of the University, and in some optical discoveries regarding which he frequently corresponded with me. A few days after, while his mind was still clear, but his bodily frame weaker, he dictated a letter to the Council of this Society, in which he took a touching leave of his old associates and of the Society itself, and left to it, as a precious legacy, a research, nearly completed, which formed the death-bed study of the old philosopher. I am sure that the Society would not have wished to commence the business of this evening without some allusion to the death of their venerable President, and without some expression of sympathy with his widow and family. I therefore invite, from the body of the Society, a resolution which will

record the sense of our own sorrow, and of our strong sympathy with that deeper personal affliction which is felt by the widow and children of so great and good a man.

Professor Sir James Y. Simpson moved the following resolution, which was seconded by Thomas Stevenson, Esq., and unanimously adopted:—

“The Royal Society of Edinburgh hereby record their deep sense of the great loss which the Society have sustained by the death of their late venerable and esteemed President, Sir David Brewster.

“Early in life an earnest worker and a happy discoverer in some of the most recondite fields of physical knowledge, Sir David Brewster has, during the last sixty and more years, continued with ceaseless energy to pour into the contemporary stream of science and literature a series of contributions of rare excellence and originality. At last he has passed from among us, as ripe in fame as in years; for he has reaped all the highest academic and other distinctions, both domestic and foreign, which a British philosopher can possibly win, and in his chosen departments of research he has left behind him no name more illustrious than his own.

“The Society further resolve to send a copy of this minute to Lady Brewster and the other members of Sir David Brewster’s family, at the same time expressing their sincere sympathy with them in their late bereavement.”

The following Communications were read:—

1. Observations relative to the Desireableness of Transporting from Alexandria to Britain the prostrate Obelisk presented to George IV. by Mahomed Ali Pacha. By Colonel Sir J. E. Alexander, K.C.L.S.

In the month of September last (1867), when visiting the Great Exhibition in Paris, I was particularly struck with the fine appearance of the obelisk of Luxor in the Place de la Concorde, and I thought that as the French had taken the trouble and gone to the expense of moving this highly interesting monolith, it was a reflection on our nation and on the engineering skill of Britain that the prostrate obelisk at Alexandria (one of Cleopatra’s needles, as it