

In 1839, when he was eight years old, his mother left her only living child, to go to the heavenly home. But her sanguine, active, loving temperament had found means of blessing her boy. She was proud of his inquisitiveness and acquisitiveness, and stored his mind with Divine truths, so that his knowledge of Scripture from earliest boyhood was remarkably extensive and minute. The Book of Psalms he knew so thoroughly that he could tell the place of almost any verse quoted ; the 119th he could repeat from memory. He was also very familiar with Milton.

Thenceforth it became the chief pleasure of his widowed father's life to explain any mechanism or natural object to his son ; until in after years the son took hardly less delight in explaining nature's mechanics to the father. For the unfettered freedom of country life afforded them both ample scope for activity and enterprise, and for observing nature in varied moods. So James found companions in the "child of the mossy pool," in dog and pony, and in children younger than himself, exhibiting those characteristics which proved permanent,—of power over animals and perception of their ways, and of kindness towards all.

After a while came change : he went to Edinburgh. The house of Mrs. Wedderburn, his father's sister, and a frequent visitor at Glenlair, was his home for the eight or nine years during which he was pursuing his studies in the Academy. Unfortunately, his residence here involved some separation from his father, because the laird personally superintended the improvements of his estate in spring and summer. Their letters to each other, however, were frequent ; and when the days shortened, Mr. Maxwell returned to the fireside in Heriot Row. Through all the school years—in fact, through life—they were more like elder and younger brother than father and son. In the formative period of life the father consequently greatly influenced the son, impressed his characteristics on the boy's habits of thought and action, and showed such interest in all his studies and researches as to win recompense of fullest confidence in the after years of success and fame.