

JAMES CLERK MAXWELL.

Is it possible for a man of high scientific attainments to retain his faith in the fundamental truths of Christianity? Can a man who is thoroughly acquainted with the intricate relations of matter and the far-reaching influence of physical forces allow that there is any sphere for spiritual agency? Is there not antagonism between the knowledge of nature and the inductions of philosophy on the one hand, and the affirmations and claims of revelation on the other? Let the answer to these questions be found in this sketch of the life of one who was remarkable alike for physical and philosophical research, for humility and diligence in the study of the Bible, and for fervent and practical piety.

Glenlair was the early home of James Clerk Maxwell; not his birthplace, which was Edinburgh; but the country house built by his father, the laird, on the small family estate seven miles from Castle Douglas. The laird planned the house and superintended its erection, being of a very practical turn of mind, doing things with *judiciousness* (as his son said), and always considering what was useful. James inherited this quality, and, when the house was being built (himself not three years old), showed his inquiring disposition by asking for explanation here and there as to "how it doos?" He watched the row of bells in the kitchen, and made a servant ring each one in turn, while his father showed the holes through which the wires went. How the water flowed from the pond, past bridge and smithy, on till it reached the sea where the ships sailed by, was a wonder and a study of his early childhood. His frequent question was, "What's the go o' that—the *particular* go?" The father was, of course, delighted. When six years old, at a harvest home, he watched the bow of the violin rather than the footing of the dancers, as if wanting to make out the "go o' that" in producing sounds. But better still than questioning, he liked to do or make, and soon showed signs of inventive genius.