

And again in an essay on "Decision of Character":

"It is this consciousness of aim that gives to their experience the character of self-education. While other men are drifted hither and thither by conflicting influences, their sails seem to resolve every blast in a favorable direction. To them catastrophes are lessons and mysteries illustrations. Everything and every person is estimated by its effect in accelerating personal advancement. The aims thus adopted may be different in kind and value. One may aim at effective deeds, another at completeness, a third at correctness, a fourth at dignity, while another class estimates its progress by the universality of its sentiments and the comprehensiveness of its sympathy with the varieties of the human mind. Some, in short, attend more to self-government, and some to mental expansion. When these tendencies can be combined and subordinated, there emerges the perfectly educated man, who in the rigidity of his principles, acts with decision, and in the expansibility of his sympathy tolerates all opinions."

Soon his father, to whom he had been from childhood devotedly attached, died, and the heart strings which were set in vibration by that event gave forth the following lament:

"DREAM OF DEPARTED FRIENDS."

"Yes I know the forms that meet me are but phantoms of the brain,  
For they walk in mortal bodies, and they have not ceased from pain,  
Oh those signs of human weakness, left behind for ever now,  
Dearer far to me than glories round a fancied seraph's brow.  
Oh, the old familiar voices; oh the patient waiting eyes;  
Let me live with them in dreamland, while the world in slumber lies.

For by bonds of sacred honor they guard my soul in sleep,  
From the spell of aimless fancies that around my senses creep.  
They will link the past and present into one continuous life;  
While I feel their hope, their patience, nerve me for the daily strife.

For it is not all a fancy, that our lives and theirs are one,  
And we know that all we see, is but an endless work begun.  
Part is left in Nature's keeping, part has entered into rest;  
Part remains to grow and ripen, hidden in some loving breast."

The deep harmony of spirit to which Maxwell had attained found expression in the following poem, which dates from about this time also. In form, it is constructed on an inversion of the thought of the Rhenish legend of the Lovelias. The wondrous songs of the Nymph so attracts the skipper's attention as to make him forget the rudder, and his craft strikes the ledge and sinks. Here on the contrary, a song restores the soul to harmony:

"Alone on a hillside of heather,  
I lay with dark thoughts in my mind,  
In the midst of the beautiful weather,  
I was deaf, I was dumb, I was blind.  
I knew not the glories around me,  
I thought of the world as it seems,  
Till a spirit of melody found me,  
And taught me in visions and dreams.

For the sound of a chorus of voices,  
Came gathering up from below,  
And I heard how all nature rejoices,  
And moves with a musical flow.  
O strange! we are lost in delusion,  
Our ways and doings are wrong,  
We are drowning in wilful confusion  
The notes of that wonderful song.

But listen, what harmony holy,  
Is mingling its notes with our own!  
The discord is vanishing slowly,  
And melts in that dominant tone,  
And they that have heard it can never  
Return to confusion again:  
Their voices are music forever,  
And join in the mystical strain.

No mortal can utter the beauty,  
That dwells in the song that they sing:  
They move in the pathway of duty,  
They follow the steps of their king.  
I would barter the world and its glory,  
The vision of joy to prolong,  
Or to hear and remember the story  
That lies in the heart of their song."

Maxwell now entered upon the more active portion of life. He was appointed at twenty-five Professor of Physics at Marischal College, in Aberdeen. A year later he won the Adams' Prize at Cambridge, by an original paper on the Rings of Saturn. He married happily.

At twenty-nine his professorship was suppressed owing to a fusion of colleges, and he accepted a similar chair at King's College, London. In 1861, he lectured before the Royal Institution, and undertook original researches in Electricity and Magnetism. In all his investigations he combined great ingenuity in experiment with a thorough mastery of the mathematical laws involved.

We find him about this time contributing largely to the endowment of a church and the construction of a parsonage, near his home in Scotland. He was an elder of this church for many years. In 1866 he resigned his Professorship at King's College, and retiring to Scotland, devoted himself to studies in Electricity, Heat and Magnetism. His evenings were spent with Mrs. Maxwell in reading Chaucer, Spenser, Milton and Shakespeare. On Sundays he resorted to the old divines. He was used to visiting the neighbors in sickness, and conducted family prayers extemporaneously. In 1867 he visited Italy with Mrs. Maxwell, and perfected himself in the Italian, French and German languages.

In 1871, he was unanimously elected to the new chair of Experimental Physics established at Cambridge, in connection with the new Physical Laboratory built by the Duke of Devonshire. The laboratory was designed and furnished after Maxwell's designs, and finally completed in 1874. In 1875 he declined membership in the Victoria Institute, an institution which seeks for apologetic purposes to enlist in its membership Christian scientists. In his reply, Maxwell wrote, "I think men of science as well as other men need to learn of Christ, and I think Christians whose minds are scientific, are bound to study science that their view of the glory of God may be as extensive as their being is capable of. But I think that the results which each man arrives at in his attempts to harmonize his science with his Christianity ought not to be regarded as having any significance except to the man himself, and him only for a time, and should not receive the stamp of a society." In other words, Professor Maxwell thought Christianity to be chiefly a matter of personal life, character and feeling, and as such, its relations to science were not to be treated simply as a matter of theory or opinion.