

**MEMOIRS OF THE DISTINGUISHED
MEN OF SCIENCE OF
GREAT BRITAIN LIVING IN THE
YEARS 1807-8, AND APPENDIX**

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Memoirs of the distinguished men of science of Great Britain living in the years 1807-8, and appendix by William Walker

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WILLIAM WALKER

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MEMOIRS
OF THE
DISTINGUISHED MEN OF SCIENCE
OF GREAT BRITAIN
LIVING IN THE YEARS 1807-8.
AND APPENDIX.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
ROBERT HUNT, F.R.S., &c.
COMPILED AND ARRANGED BY
WILLIAM WALKER, JUNIOR.

Second Edition.

"The evil, that men do, lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones."
SHAKESPEARE.

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1864.

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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

THE following brief memoirs were originally compiled for the purpose of accompanying the Engraving of "The Distinguished Men of Science of Great Britain living in 1807-8, assembled at the Royal Institution." As, however, "The Memoirs" were found to have a considerable sale, independent of the Engraving, it has been found necessary to produce a second edition. All the lives have been carefully revised, and considerable additions made, while, in order to render the present book a more complete compendium of the great men of that period, an Appendix has been added, containing the Memoirs of Black, Cort, Ivory, and Priestly, who unfortunately were, from different reasons, unable to be included in the group in the Engraving.

With the exception of the notices of Trevithick, Tenant, Maudslay, Francis Ronalds, and one or two more, these memoirs necessarily contain little information which has not been previously published in some shape or other. The authorities from which the present particulars have been taken are given at the end of each memoir; and the writer claims no further merit than that of having compiled and arranged the works of others, whose language, in most cases, it would indeed be presumption in him to alter, further than was necessary to present to the public in a clear, brief, and (it is hoped) readable form, the doings of men who must ever be held in the grateful remembrance of their country.

INTRODUCTION.

THE influences of human thought on the physical forces which regulate the great phenomena of the universe,—and the operation of the powers of mind, on the material constituents of the planet, which is man's abiding place, form subjects for studies which have a most exalting tendency. Thought has made the subtle element of the thunderstorm man's most obedient messenger. Thought has solicited the sunbeam to betray its secrets; and an invisible agent, controlled by light, delineates external nature at man's request. Thought has subdued the wild impulses of fire, and heat is made the willing power to propel our trains of carriages with a bird-like speed, and to urge—in proud independence of winds or tides—our noble ships from shore to shore. Thought has penetrated the arcana of nature, and, by learning her laws, has imitated her works. Thus, Chemistry takes a crude mass, —rejected as unworthy and offensive,—it recombines its constituent parts, and gives us, the grateful odours of the sweetest flowers, and tinctures which rival nature in the intensity and the beauty of its dyes.

No truth was ever developed to man, in answer to his laborious toils, which did not sooner or later benefit the race. Every such development has been the result of the continuous efforts of an individual mind; therefore it is that we desire to possess some memorial of the men to whom we are indebted.

We have advanced to our present position in the scale of nations by the efforts of a few chosen minds. Every branch of human industry has been benefited by the discoveries of science. The discoverers are therefore deserving of that hero-worship which, sooner or later, they receive from all.

The following pages are intended to convey to the general reader a brief but correct account of the illustrious dead, whose names are for ever associated with one of the most brilliant eras in British science. It will be remembered that, in the earliest years of the present century, the world witnessed the control and application of steam by Watt, Symington and Trevithick; the great discoveries in physics and chemistry by Dalton, Cavendish, Wollaston and Davy,—in astronomy by Herschel, Maskelyne and Baily; the inventions of the spinning-mule and power-loom by Crompton and Cartwright; the introduction of machinery into the manufacture of paper, by Bryan Donkin and others; the improvements in the printing-press, and invention of stereotype printing, by Charles Earl Stanhope; the discovery of vaccination by Jenner; the introduction of gas into general use by Murdock; and the construction (in a great measure) of the present system of canal communication by Jessop, Chapman, Telford and Rennie. During the same period of time were likewise living Count Rumford; Robert Brown, the botanist; William Smith, "The Father of English Geology;" Thomas Young, the natural philosopher; Brunel; Bentham; Maudslay; and Francis Ronalds, who, by securing perfect insulation, was the first to demonstrate the practicability of passing an electric

message through a lengthened space; together with many others, the fruits of whose labours we are now reaping.

The following pages briefly record the births, deaths, and more striking incidents in the lives of those benefactors to mankind.

"Lives of great men all remind us we may make our lives sublime."—The truth of this is strongly enforced in the brief memoirs which are included in this volume. They teach us that mental power, used judiciously and applied with industry, is capable of producing vast changes in the crude productions of Nature. Beyond this, they instruct us that men, who fulfil the commands of the Creator and employ their minds, in unwearying efforts to subdue the Earth, are rarely unrewarded. They aid in the march of civilization, and they ameliorate the conditions of humanity. They win a place amongst the great names which we reverence, and each one

" becomes like a star

" From the abodes where the Eternals are."

ROBERT HUNT.