

THE HERSCHELS AND MODERN ASTRONOMY

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The Herschels and modern astronomy by Agnes M. Clerke

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AGNES M. CLERKE

**THE HERSCHELS
AND MODERN
ASTRONOMY**

THE CENTURY SCIENCE SERIES.

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SIR WILLIAM HERSCHEL.

Engr. by

(From Abell's painting in the National Portrait Gallery.)

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AGNES M. CLERKE

AUTHOR OF

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"THE SYSTEM OF THE STARS," ETC.



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PREFACE.

THE chief authority for the Life of Sir William Herschel is Mrs. John Herschel's "Memoir of Caroline Herschel" (London, 1876). It embodies Caroline's Journals and Recollections, the accuracy of which is above suspicion. William himself, indeed, referred to her for dates connected with his early life. The collateral sources of information are few and meagre; they yield mere gleanings, yet gleanings worth collecting. Professor E. S. Holden has had recourse to many of them for his excellent little monograph entitled "Herschel, his Life and Works" (London, 1881), which is usefully supplemented by "A Synopsis of the Scientific Writings of Sir William Herschel," prepared by the same author with the aid of Professor Hastings. It made part of the Smithsonian Report for 1880, and was printed separately at Washington in 1881. But the wonderful series of papers it summarises have still to be sought, one by one, by those desiring to study them effectually, in the various volumes of the *Philosophical Transactions* in which they originally appeared. Their collection and republication is, nevertheless, a recognised desideratum, and would fill a conspicuous gap in scientific literature.

Sir John Herschel's life has yet to be written. The published materials for it are scanty, although they have been reinforced by the inclusion in the late Mr. Graves's "Life of Sir William Rowan Hamilton" (Dublin, 1882-9) of his correspondence with that remarkable man. The present writer has, however, been favoured by the late Miss Herschel, and by Sir William J. Herschel, with the perusal of a considerable number of Sir John Herschel's, as well as of Sir William's, manuscript letters. She also gratefully acknowledges the kind help afforded to her by Lady Gordon and Miss Herschel in connection with the portraits reproduced in this volume. For detailed bibliographical references, the articles on Sir John, Sir William, and Caroline Herschel, in the "Dictionary of National Biography," may be consulted.



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