

Monday, 16th February 1874.

SIR W. THOMSON, President, in the Chair.

The following Obituary Notices of Deceased Fellows of the Society were read :—

1. Obituary Notice of the Very Rev. Dean Ramsay.

By the Rev. D. F. Sandford.

The Very Reverend EDWARD BANNERMAN RAMSAY, Dean of the Diocese of Edinburgh, in the Episcopal Church of Scotland, was born in Aberdeen on the 31st day of January 1793. His father was Sir Alexander Ramsay, Bart., of Balmain and Fasque. Sir Alexander was the second son of Sir Thomas Burnett, Bart., of Leys, but had assumed the name of Ramsay, and been created a Baronet, on succeeding to the estates of his maternal uncle in Forfarshire. He was by profession an advocate at the Scottish bar, and Sheriff of his native county of Kincardine. In that county the family of Burnett of Leys have held lands and a high position for many hundred years. Bishop Burnet of Salisbury, the historian of his own times, and a divine of enlarged mind and liberal views, belonged to it. The Bishop's picture, in his robes as Chancellor of the Order of the Garter, is among the family portraits at Crathes Castle, the seat of the present Sir James Burnett, Bart.

The Dean's mother was Elizabeth, eldest daughter and co-heiress of Sir Alexander Bannerman, Bart., of Elsick, a lady of considerable personal attractions and marked character. She and her husband were in Paris at the outbreak of the great French Revolution. They escaped from France under the protection of a tricolour cockade worn by the Sheriff, which Dean Ramsay presented some years ago, as an interesting relic of the time, to the Antiquarian Museum in Edinburgh. On reaching Scotland they settled at Aberdeen, and so Edward Bannerman, their fourth son, who was born soon after, first saw the light in his own ancestral country. This was always a subject of deep gratification to one whose whole heart and sympathies were so eminently Scottish. In early life Edward Ramsay was sent to reside with

his great-uncle, the then Sir Alexander Ramsay, who placed him at school in a small village near his own residence, Harlsey, in Yorkshire. The locality was a very retired one, and old customs lingered there which time had changed or obliterated in other parts of England. The Bible lay chained to the desk in the parish church, as in the days of Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth. The bodies of the deceased were carried to the quiet churchyard by those of their own sex, age, and condition. The village girls bore their companions, the boys their schoolfellows, the young men and women, the middle-aged and the old, their contemporaries and associates who had been called away. The parish curate dined with the squire every Sunday, but did not omit to drink to the health of the old butler who waited at table, as well of his host, and the other guests. The village carpenter, a strange character, forestalled Archbishop Whately's historic doubts as to the existence of Napoleon Buonaparte, and boldly declared that he did not believe there was any such person. His conviction was that the name was used to frighten children, and to terrify the British nation into keeping up the army and navy, and paying the very heavy taxes imposed upon them. From this primitive spot, where doubtless his powers of observation and his interest in local peculiarities were first awakened by the circumstances just mentioned, which he never forgot, Ramsay was transferred to the Grammar School at Durham. Here, as he often stated with regret, he was taught little and learnt less. After leaving Durham, he was a pupil for a short time of Dr Joynes, a clergyman at Sandwich in Kent, and then entered St John's College, Cambridge, where he took his degree in 1816. Although not distinguished in any remarkable way as a scholar or mathematician in the University, Mr Ramsay seems to have felt satisfied with the result of more than one of the College examinations, and he obtained during his residence at St John's a scholarship on that learned foundation. Within a very short period after taking his degree, he received a title for holy orders as curate of Rodden in Somersetshire; and was ordained by the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Deacon in December 1816, and Priest in the following year. When acting in after life as examiner of candidates for the ministry, he frequently drew a comparison between the meagre superficial examinations,

confined to a paper on the Evidences of Christianity, and a few verses of the Greek Testament, to which he was subjected, and the more thorough and searching ordeal through which aspirants to the clerical office are now required to pass. He continued at Rodden for seven years, perhaps in some respects the happiest in his life. Although his rector was non-resident, he was allowed to conjoin the care of the neighbouring parish of Buckland with that of Rodden, and to discharge also for a time the duties of evening lecturer in the parish church of Frome. This afforded to him another contrast in his own remembrance with the present requirements as to residence, experience, and work on the part of the clergy. While at Rodden, he employed his leisure time and annual holiday in the study of botany, making more than one expedition into Wales and elsewhere with this object. He also gave some time to the cultivation of music, for which he had considerable talent. And he seems also to have turned his attention to mathematics and astronomy, incited thereto by his brother, the late Admiral Sir William Ramsay, who gave him a box of instruments and a telescope, which he used in the instruction of a class of young friends and parishioners.

After declining the offer of an appointment to a chapel in his native city, Aberdeen, Mr Ramsay came to Edinburgh, at the end of 1823, as curate to Mr Shannon, the incumbent of St George's Episcopal Chapel in York Place. This change of residence introduced him to Edinburgh at a time when not only agitation for political and municipal reform, but also the awakening of religious thought and feeling to which the Clapham School had given rise in England, and which was soon to merge in the remarkable Oxford movement of 1833, were intermingling with its intellectual culture and social life. The refined, cultivated, and earnest-minded young clergyman, possessing hereditary claims to be received among the highest circle of its inhabitants, soon established also close and intimate relations with many of those who then made our city so distinguished. He became popular in the best sense of the word. His ministrations and preaching were highly appreciated. His kindly pleasing manners and unaffected genuine character won for him an influence which was soon felt for good in many quarters. After serving the curacy of St George's

for two years, Mr Ramsay was appointed incumbent and pastor of the interesting old chapel and genuine Scottish Episcopalian congregation of St Paul's, Carrubber's Close, in the Old Town. The chapel was largely attended during his ministry, and the value of the living while he held it was L 400 per annum.

In 1827 he was appointed assistant minister of St John's, and, on the death of the late Bishop Sandford in 1830, was elected to the incumbency of that charge, which he continued to hold until his long and honoured life reached its close on the 27th December 1872. The more strictly professional details and characteristics of Mr Ramsay's career are not subjects of comment or notice in this place. It will suffice to mention that in the faithful and assiduous discharge of his duties he secured to himself appreciation, confidence, and esteem, which, as years rolled on and in proportion as he became better known, grew and ripened into genuine and universal regard and love.

In 1838 he proposed and carried through the General Synod of the Scottish Episcopal Church a canon for establishing a society, the main object of which was to supplement the very inadequate stipends of the clergy, to provide teachers for the poor, and generally to improve the financial condition of the Communion to which he belonged. He was specially useful as a catechist among the young of his flock, and compiled a manual of catechetical instruction for their use, which has passed through more than twelve editions. He published a volume of Advent Sermons, also pastoral letters addressed to his congregation on various subjects, occasional sermons and pamphlets on matters connected with his own communion, and a series of Lectures on Diversities of Character, and another series on Faults in Christian Believers, which were subsequently combined and expanded into a Treatise on the Christian Life. In 1841 Mr Ramsay was appointed by Bishop Terrot, on his own elevation to the Episcopate, Dean of the Diocese of Edinburgh. In 1845 he was offered by Sir Robert Peel, on behalf of the Crown, the Bishopric of New Brunswick in Nova Scotia, and in 1848, and again in 1862, he was elected by the clergy of two Scottish dioceses to be their Bishop. But he saw fit to decline on each of these occasions the offer of a mitre, much to the satisfaction of his own congregation, who viewed with little favour these

attempts to deprive them of their tried and valued friend and pastor. In 1859, on the occasion of the installation of his distinguished friend, Mr Gladstone, as Lord Rector, the University of Edinburgh conferred on the Dean the degree of LL.D. In 1828-1829, he was one of the secretaries of the ordinary meetings of the Royal Society. He subsequently became a member of Council, and in 1859 a Vice-President. In 1861 he opened the winter session with an address from the chair, which was published in the Proceedings. The only paper contributed by him to the Society's General Transactions was a biographical memoir of the late Dr Chalmers, with whom he was on terms of intimate friendship. A few years ago he inaugurated a movement for erecting a statue of the same eminent philosopher and divine, which is now approaching completion in the studio of Mr John Steele, and is to be placed at the intersection of George Street and Castle Street in this city.

The Dean's continued interest in botanical study was evinced by his publishing a notice of the works and discoveries of his friend Sir J. E. Smith. His taste for the highest style of music, and his earnest desire to extend the knowledge and cultivation of it, led him to choose, as the subject of two lectures before the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh, "The Genius and Works of Handel." They were delivered to a crowded audience in the Music Hall, with the assistance of illustrations by a choir, and were afterwards published. The Dean delivered before the same body a lecture on Pulpit Oratory and Orators, and pursued the subject thus suggested in a printed letter to a young clergyman on the art of clear and articulate public speaking, in which he was himself an unsurpassed proficient. The work, however, with which his name is most widely connected is his "Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character." It has gone through twenty editions, and more than ninety thousand copies of it have been sold. It is to be found on the library tables of royalty and in the cottage of the peasant. It is sold by the newsboys at every railway station. It is to be seen in the huts of new settlements in Western America, and of the cattle and sheep runs of New Zealand and Australia. It has made the Dean's good Scottish name a household word in every land on which the sun shines. Wherever the exiled Scotchman goes, he carries with him the

“Reminiscences” as one of the links which will continue to bind his heart to his own country, and to keep alive in his memory the most vivid and pleasing recollections of her history and people. The object of the book was not to produce a mere momentary amusement, but to contribute to an important branch of historical science, the neglect of which has left us too ignorant of what our forefathers and their times really were. It was intended to preserve the remembrance of old Scottish customs, and of national peculiarities and characteristics, the traces of which, in many respects to our loss, are fast dying out. That jocular sayings and anecdotes should prove the staple of the work was an accident, or rather I might say a necessity, and not an arbitrary choice of the author. It may have its literary faults. But many of us were too partial to the man, too much in sympathy with his purpose and with the genuine, kindly, patriotic motives which guided his pen, to dwell on them. Nay more, critics have been slow to point them out, and the judgment of the public has done more than condone them. It may not be too much to apply to the “Reminiscences” the language which the greatest Scottish novelist has used with regard to his own works, and to say that the Dean was happy in the knowledge that the perusal of his book has amused hours of relaxation and relieved those of languor, pain, and anxiety, and that it has contributed in no small degree to the happiness and instruction of his fellow-countrymen. It is no little credit, the Dean felt it to have been a great privilege, to have followed, however humbly, in the footsteps of Sir Walter Scott, and to have added to the literature of his country a volume which must always serve to make Scotland better known, appreciated, and loved, wherever it is read.

We may not intrude into the sacred domestic circle to find material for this biographical notice; it may suffice to say that those who knew Dean Ramsay best loved him best. He was honoured above most men with the friendship of the good and great. Dignified ecclesiastics, eminent statesmen, nobles of character and renown no less exalted than their rank, sought and valued his acquaintance, his wise counsels, his kindly sympathy. Men of distinction and repute from all quarters found a welcome under his roof, and never left it without feeling that they had added to their circle of life-long friends.

In every philanthropic movement the Dean was ready to assist with his money and influence. He gave largely, from no great means, to charitable agencies and to individual cases of need and distress. He was a friend to those of every class with whom he was brought in contact. The cabmen vied with each other as to which of them should take him for his daily drive, and they counted his presence at more than one of their yearly social entertainments a special honour. Every one seemed gratified at any occasion for intercourse with him, even for a few moments. He was essentially a gentleman, dignified, courteous, and kindly. The Dean's influence in his own Communion was deservedly very great, and if it was exerted in every way in his power to advance her usefulness and prosperity, it was at the same time always tempered and guided by a spirit of charity and good-will, which enabled him to do more than almost any man of his day and generation to purify and sweeten the atmosphere both of social and ecclesiastical life in this city and country. Whatever estimate may be formed of the views he held, the work he did, this at least must be universally admitted, and may not unfitly be put on record even here. To Dean Ramsay, charity, freedom from bigotry, narrowness, and ill-will, were not the accidents of temperament, or the fruits of an easy disposition, of high breeding, and culture. They were essential elements in the ideas he had formed of the Christian religion and of the Christian character. He was never tired of enforcing them in his teaching, as he never ceased to illustrate and exemplify them in his conduct. And that his endeavours to do this by every means he could, and towards men of every creed and party known to the religious and political world, were acknowledged and appreciated, the great demonstration which took place at his funeral amply testified. It was not only in numbers one of the largest which ever took place in this city, but it was attended by the leading representatives, both lay and clerical, of every denomination. Men forgot their differences and the causes of their separation one from another, as they gathered round his grave. It was the realisation for once of the dream and aspiration of Dean Ramsay's own life. It was the most striking and worthy tribute which could possibly have been paid to his memory.

It will be well for religion, as, I may venture to add, it will be well also for learning, and science, and truth in all its forms and aspects, if the same spirit which breathed and spoke in all that Dean Ramsay did and said shall increase, and spread, and deepen among us, in our various spheres and callings. We cannot but feel that in every point of view Dean Ramsay's was a career which, as it was honoured while he was spared to us, and marked by such distinctions as befitted his position in the Church and in society during his life, so it demanded some tribute and notice in this place, now that his name is withdrawn from the roll of our living Fellows. If it was not given him to further the cause of science and learning, as many belonging to the Royal Society have done, yet his teaching and example were such as all may profitably recall to memory and strive to follow and imitate.

2. Obituary Notice of Professor Rankine.

By Lewis D. B. Gordon, C.E.

WILLIAM JOHN MACQUORN RANKINE was the son of Lieutenant David Rankine of the Rifle Brigade, younger son of Macorne or Macquorn Rankine, Esq., of Drumdow in Ayrshire, and thus of an ancient Scottish family. His mother was the elder daughter of Archibald Grahame, Esq., of Drumquassel. He was born in Edinburgh, 5th July 1820. Rankine records of himself, "My earliest distinct recollection is that of my mother teaching me the Lord's Prayer, next my father explaining to me the character of Jesus Christ;" and further he records, "My early instruction in arithmetic and elementary mechanics and physics was mainly obtained from my father." The mutual dependency thus begun continued through as beautiful a life of mutual self-devotion between parents and son as can be pictured; for the three were rarely far separate during the fifty years the parents lived after his birth.

Rankine went to the Ayr Academy in 1828, and afterwards to the High School of Glasgow in 1830, and thence to Edinburgh, where he studied geometry under Mr George Lees; but his knowledge of the higher mathematics was chiefly obtained by private study. He records that in 1834 "My uncle Archibald Grahame