

Miss Jane Pearson
With the Author's
Kind regards. -

CHAPTERS IN MY LIFE.

LEONARD BLOMEFIELD.

(LATE JENYNS.)

For Private Circulation.

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CHAPTERS

IN MY

LIFE.

With APPENDIX,
CONTAINING SPECIAL NOTICES
OF
PARTICULAR INCIDENTS
AND PERSONS.

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BATH:
1887.

CHARLES DARWIN.

I became acquainted with Charles Darwin, the celebrated Naturalist, while he was yet an undergraduate at Christ's College, Cambridge. He came up to the University in 1828, and took his Bachelor's degree in 1832. Few, I imagine, now living, except his own relatives, could have known him longer than myself. He was my junior at College by ten years; but from the similarity of our pursuits, we soon became intimate after the first introduction. He was at that time a most zealous Entomologist, and attended but little—so far as I remember—to any other branch of Natural History. He occasionally visited me at my Vicarage, at Swaffham Bulbeck, and we made Entomological excursions together, sometimes in the Fens—that rich district yielding so many rare species of insects and plants—at other times in the woods and plantations of Bottisham Hall. He mostly used a sweeping net, with which he made a number of successful captures I had never made myself, though a constant resident in the neighbourhood.

He was always one of the foremost to join Henslow's "Herborizing Excursions," undertaken mainly for the benefit of the men who attended his Botanical Lectures, but open to all Naturalists who liked to go, as many did—for the opportunity thus afforded them of following up their particular pursuits in concert with others of the same taste. He was also one of those who were most constantly present at Henslow's Weekly Scientific Soirées, his own recollections of which will be found in my "Memoir of Professor Henslow."*

* *Memoir* pp. 52, 53.

It was soon after taking his degree that Darwin had the appointment of Naturalist in the "Beagle," the vessel in which the late Capt. Fitzroy made his surveying voyage,—extending over five years. The appointment arose in this way. Dean Peacock, at that time fellow of Trinity College, was intimate with Captain Fitzroy, and was applied to by the latter, as to whether he could not find some one among the Cambridge men, who would be fit and willing to accompany him in his voyage in the capacity of Naturalist. Peacock immediately thought of Henslow and myself. Henslow, however, being a married man with a family, was not disposed to go under his then circumstances,—(though earlier in life no doubt he would have caught at such an offer gladly,)—and he tried to persuade me to go instead.—I hesitated;—and—after a full day taken to consider my decision, I also declined,—as well on account of my being engaged in parish work—as Vicar of Swaffham Bulbeck—which I did not think it quite right to quit for a purpose of that kind,—as on account of my judging that I was not exactly the right person, either in point of health or other qualifications,—to offer myself for the situation. We then agreed (Henslow and self) that Darwin, in all respects, would be a fit man to go, and on his assenting—his name was at once sent up to Capt. Fitzroy, and the appointment was confirmed. The result shewed that no better man could have been chosen for the purpose. It was during this voyage that Darwin collected the materials, which—along with his own observations, and thoughts on all he had seen and noted down,—formed the basis of

those celebrated works, which from time to time appeared in after years, testifying to the grasp his master mind had taken of Natural History in all its departments, and quite revolutionizing the whole science of Biology as then conceived. After his return, I saw him only at intervals: from the state of his health he lived a good deal in seclusion. But a correspondence was kept up for some time, and his letters to me—all preserved—are bound up, along with those of other Naturalists, in four volumes,—now in the “Jenyns Library,” at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution.