

Biographical Notices.

JAMES SMITH OF JORDANHILL, F.R.S., F.G.S.

James Smith, merchant, Biblical critic, and geologist, was descended from the Smiths of Craighend, in the parish of Strathblane, Stirlingshire. His father, Archibald Smith, coming to Glasgow, and then going to Virginia to seek his fortune, afterwards returned to Glasgow and became a partner of Leitch & Smith, West India merchants, a firm which developed a large and profitable business.

James Smith was the eldest of five children, and was born in Glasgow on the 15th of August, 1782, and died in Jordanhill on the 17th of January, 1867, in his eighty-fifth year. He was educated at the Grammar School and University of Glasgow. He was elected a member of our Society in 1859. There was evidently great joy in the young Society when it was being joined by such a distinguished man, but let the minute speak for itself—“At a meeting of the Society on the 3rd November, 1859, the President (Mr. James Pinkerton Fraser) read the following letter from Mr. James Smith of Jordanhill:—

‘Jordanhill, Oct. 31st, 1859.

‘Dear Sir,

‘Will you kindly propose my name as a member of the Glasgow Geological Society?’

‘Yours faithfully,

‘JAMES SMITH.’

The admittance of Mr. Smith as a member of the Society was carried by acclamation, and unanimously, and the Secretary was requested by the President to intimate the same by the first post.”

He was President of our Society at the time of his death in 1867. He was a Fellow of the Royal and Geological Societies of London, and also some foreign societies. He was President of the Archæological Society of Glasgow, as well as the president of the Andersonian University, and for more than thirty years took a deep interest in its welfare; he founded the Natural History

Biographical Notices.

Museum in that institution, and enriched the collection with many handsome donations.

Mr. Smith was a keen yachtsman and an able navigator, and his taste for natural history was largely developed in this pursuit. He had often as a companion in his yachting expeditions a kindred scientific spirit in the person of Dr. Scouler, of the Andersonian University, and a former President of our Society. As a Biblical critic and archæologist we do not propose to deal with him, except to mention that in the former capacity his essay on "The Sources of St. Luke's Writings" and a book on "The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul" are acknowledged to be written with an accuracy and clearness of expression which have rendered them classic. It was during one of his yachting cruises that he discovered the Vitrified Fort on one of the Burnt Islands in the Kyles of Bute, which he described in a paper published by the Antiquarian Society of Edinburgh.

It is in connection with geology, however, that his name will be for ever remembered. William Smith is justly styled the Father of British Stratigraphical Geology; so James Smith may be called the Father of the post-Tertiary Geology of this country. Mr. Smith read his first paper on the subject to the Geological Society of London on the 16th November, 1836, entitled "An Indication of Changes in the Elevated Beds of Sea and Land in the West of Scotland." His epoch-making paper was read to the Wernerian Natural History Society of Edinburgh on the 26th of January, 1839, on "The Late Changes of the Relative Levels of the Land and Sea in the British Islands" (see the *Memoirs* of that society, vol. viii., p. 49, &c.). This paper was the result of careful and laborious investigations. To state it briefly, he found molluscs in the clay beds in the counties of Lanark, Renfrew, and Dumbarton, which could not be found in the adjacent seas, but were found living in the Arctic Seas. From these and other researches, says De la Beche, "Mr. Smith obtained a mass of evidence which led him to conclude,

Biographical Notices.

from the remains of the molluscs discovered in deposits of this date in different localities, that the climate of the British Islands had been colder than it now is, more especially as Arctic molluscs, not now found round the British coasts, were obtained from these accumulations." The late Dr. Crosskey, in an "Address in Memory of James Smith" (see vol. ii., p. 228, of our *Transactions*), says, "These happy discoveries will connect our late President's name with the history of geology. No geological manual can be written without its chapter on the Glacial epoch, and the first page in this chapter must be ascribed to the hand of James Smith." Professor James Geikie, in his "Great Ice Age," in the chapter dealing with the Arctic shell-beds of Scotland, says, "The deposits now about to be considered are memorable in the annals of geological discovery. Mr. Smith of Jordanhill was the first to introduce them to notice, and the phenomena, as described by him, at once convinced the most sceptical that an Arctic climate had really at one time characterised our country."

Mr. Smith wrote a great number of papers on the subject, which were collected and published in one volume, entitled "Researches in Newer Pliocene and post-Tertiary Geology."

We have quoted from Dr. Crosskey's Memoir of Mr. Smith, but we would recommend those interested to read the whole of it.

It may not be out of place to mention in this notice that his son, Archibald Smith of Jordanhill, M.A., F.R.S., LL.D., was the first Scotsman who was Senior Wrangler at Cambridge.



James Smith, F.R.S.

This biographical notice was published in *History of the Geological Society of Glasgow, 1858–1908* (1908), pages 202–204.