

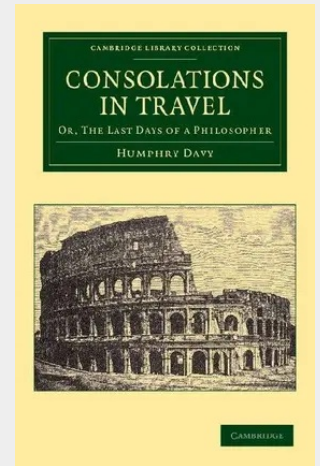
Davy

Consolations in Travel

Or, the Last Days of a Philosopher

Arguably the first celebrity scientist, and the epitome of the 'Romantic' natural philosopher, Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829) was a brilliant lecturer whose popularising of science made him famous. He pioneered electrochemistry, befriended the Romantic poets, invented a safety lamp for miners and even wrote on angling (see *On the Safety Lamp* and *Salmonia*, also reissued in this series). Described as 'the last words of a dying Plato', *Consolations in Travel* was published posthumously in 1830. It is an intriguing mixture of poetry, autobiographical sketches, descriptions of dreams, philosophical musings on the afterlife and, in the view of one contemporary review, 'some [matter] which sober reason must dissent as extravagant, and almost bordering on the absurd'. Here, in his final months, Davy turns to the eternal, believing that through science all the questions of the universe could be answered. It remains a poignant and controversial postscript to an illustrious life.

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