

Francis Galton, aged 73.

THE  
LIFE, LETTERS AND LABOURS  
OF  
FRANCIS GALTON

BY  
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VOLUME II  
RESEARCHES OF MIDDLE LIFE

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## PREFACE

THE first volume of this biography appeared in July, 1914, about a month before the outbreak of the Great War. It met with few readers, and failed to repay the cost of production. The war injured the Galton Laboratory in many ways, the chief, perhaps, being that it rendered of small value its publication funds; thus a collection of Galton's published papers, which had been projected before the war, was placed out of the question. Further the relative and the friend of Galton who in 1914 had financed together the first volume were unable to face the excessive post-war costs of printing. In 1919 accordingly, when the pen again replaced ballistics, the tired mind and hand could not seek a legitimate relief in continuing the story of Galton's life. It was only in 1922 that the generous gift of an old schoolfriend, the late Mr Lewis Haslam, M.P., enabled me to face the difficulties of a second volume. I deeply regret that he did not live to see this work in type. But if friends and admirers of Galton find in it anything they value, let them remember the debt they owe to Lewis Haslam.

When it came to planning this second volume the biographer found himself, however, in a very different position from what he had anticipated in 1914. He then considered that the issue of the collected works of Galton would render easy the task of describing Galton's researches. Such issue having ceased to be practicable, a grave problem arose. Many of Galton's papers are now inaccessible, even a record of the original *loci* of publication is not available<sup>1</sup>, there is no annotated bibliography to guide men to the memoirs themselves by a suggestion of their contents, and they are scattered, one might almost say, at random not only through the publications of many learned societies and scientific journals, but in the daily, weekly and monthly press, often in magazines which have long ceased to appear. The most striking factor in Galton's work was its pioneer character, he blazed a trail where others have followed with a highway. To grasp his extraordinary suggestiveness—even when his methods are the crude extemporisations of the first settler, ever ready to advance further as others crowd in behind—the reader must study Galton's writings in the mass. But these are in many cases beyond his reach, if not beyond his ken. Thinking the matter out carefully, I determined that this second volume of Galton's biography should to a large extent supply the reader with what the collected works would have done; that the *résumé* of memoirs, books, and articles should be full enough to enable the anthropologist, the geneticist and the statistician to appreciate

<sup>1</sup> The bibliography attached to the *Memories* is very incomplete. Not only do papers fail, but often the description is incorrect either as to volume or as to year, or even as to the title of the journal assigned, while throughout no pages are given.

what Galton had done, and so starting from his suggestions make a more thorough map of a district, where Galton would only claim to have made a chart of the cardinal points. In taking this determination I was soon aware that it meant adding a third volume to this *Life*. I have had to postpone to that volume the discussion of Correlation, the Statistical Theory of Heredity, Personal Identification and Description and Eugenics together with many letters, characteristic of Galton's mentality and of his affectionate disposition. But that volume seems an easy one after the present, for it largely deals with work done after Galton had been recognised as a master and friend.

The multitude of my own tasks from 1880 onwards gave me little leisure to do more than keep in touch with current work; I had small opportunity for considering earlier memoirs, and many of Galton's papers written before I left Cambridge I have only read forty years after their publication. How I now regret that I had not studied them, when with youthful energy still mine I might have pursued further their lines of thought! How many are the suggestions they make for novel and profitable research! I shall indeed be content, if this book of mine opens up to the younger men of to-day that field of inspiration, which Galton provided for some half-dozen of us in the 'eighties. How much one seems to have lost by waiting to explore it fully, until one's *Wanderjahre* were for ever gone!

If this second volume be written essentially to bring the thoughts of a great scientist home to the younger scientists of to-day, to show them the wide regions, practical and theoretical, which Galton opened to the mathematician and statistician, there are still some interludes which appeal to a wider audience, such as the beauty of Galton's friendship for Darwin, the interest of his correspondence with De Candolle, and his brief contact with the "Passionate Statistician." The ingenuity of Galton's mechanisms and the originality of his photographic work will attract others, while in the field of psychology it will be found difficult to refute the claim that he was the first English experimentalist.

If the reader should find Chapter XIII of this work more clumsily worded and carelessly written than those which precede it, he will understand the loss which the biographer incurred by the death of his friend, W. Paton Ker, while the book was passing through the press. Professor Ker's returned proofs, duly loaded with admonition, ejaculation, and humorous chiding, were not only assurance that many of the author's blunders were detected, but led him with delight on more than one occasion to unwonted realms, little sought by votaries of science. Let us rejoice that he has lived,

"And laugh like him to know in all our nerves  
Beauty, the spirit, scattering dust and turves."

I have again to acknowledge the ready help of Francis Galton's relatives and friends, especially in the matter of portraiture. Even as it is I have had to make a selection from the vast amount of photographic material placed at my disposal, and a portion of that selection is still reserved for the third volume. In contrast to Darwin, Galton was repeatedly photographed, and the result is that we can trace not only the physical changes in his

personality from childhood to old age, but I venture to think we can find portraits which emphasise even the individual moods and characteristic phases of his many-sided mentality. This book may help to preserve that play of expression which forms the charm of our memory of a friend, and which is renewed and kept alive by many photographs, until they perish also.

This perishing of photographic portraits, whether negatives or prints, has been sadly impressed upon me not only in the case of photographs of Galton himself—which I have endeavoured to put into a more permanent form—but further in the case of nearly all Galton's own photographic work. Box after box of his negatives as well as the prints from them have perished or are rapidly perishing. I felt strongly the need for preserving at least his hitherto unpublished results in composite portraiture. But to add this number of plates to my volume seemed only possible by curtailing its text. This difficulty was finally overcome by the generosity of Mr Edward Wheler-Galton and by the aid of one who owed much to Sir Francis. In this way it became feasible to give comprehensive illustration of what Galton achieved in composite photography. The exhibit will, I hope, lead to the renewal of this branch of investigation, for I am convinced that its possibilities are by no means exhausted.

I have to acknowledge the great aid I have received from my son Mr Egon S. Pearson in dealing with Galton's photographic material and researches. I have further to thank Major Leonard Darwin and my colleague Miss Ethel M. Elderton for aid in a variety of ways. Lastly I have to place on record a confession. The *Galtoniana* contain a large number of manuscripts and notebooks in Galton's hand; many of these are in pencil, much rubbed, occasionally obliterated. In the earlier chapters of this volume I have constantly used this material. Lately I have been unable, owing to failure of sight, to do so. I may well have missed material which ought to have found its place in these pages. My only apology must be that of what lay in my power to give I have freely given.

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July 8, 1924.



Francis Galton in later life. From a sketch by his niece,  
Miss Eva Biggs (Mrs Ellis).

## ERRATUM.

*Life, Letters and Labours of Francis Galton, VOL. II.*

Plates XV and XVI and p. x.

I regret that owing to an inadvertence on my part the subjects of Plates XV and XVI, which were lent to me by Mr Francis Darwin Swift, were said to be in the possession of Mr Darwin Wilmot. K.P.

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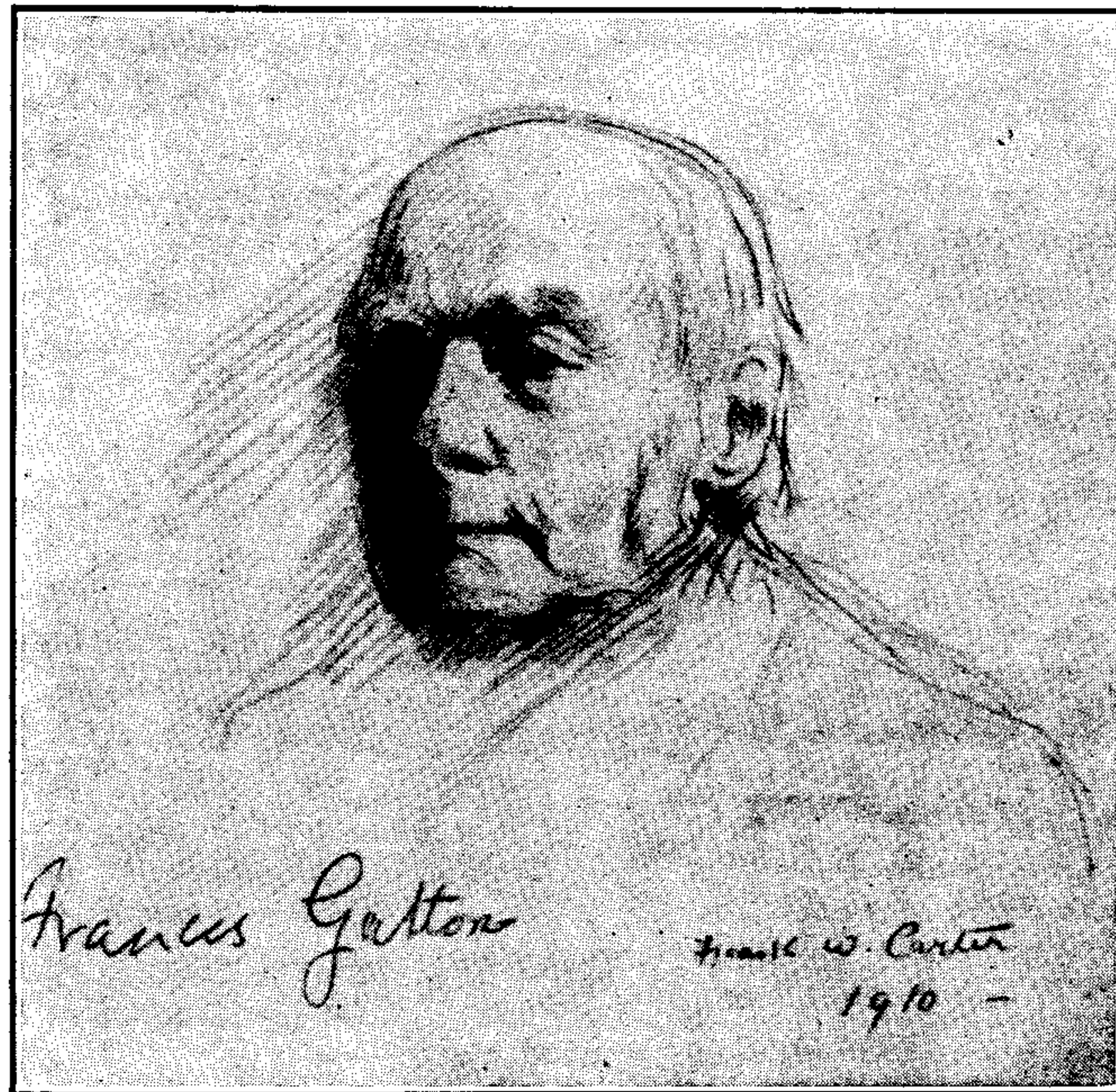


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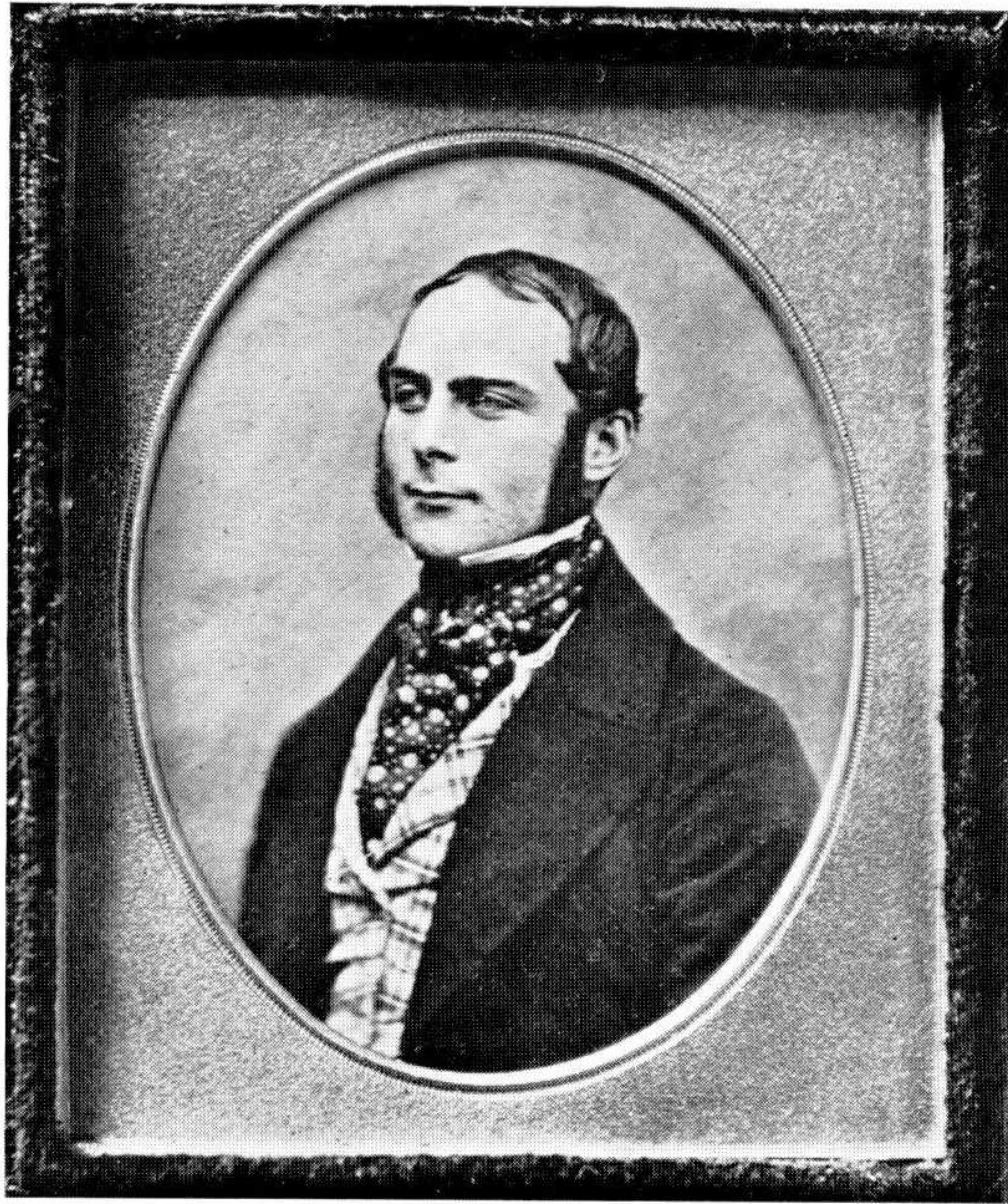
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I thought it safer to proceed like the surveyor of a new country, and endeavour to fix in the first instance as truly as I could the position of several cardinal points.

FRANCIS GALTON.

PLATE I



Francis Galton, aged 28, at the end of the "Fallow Years" and before starting for Damaraland.