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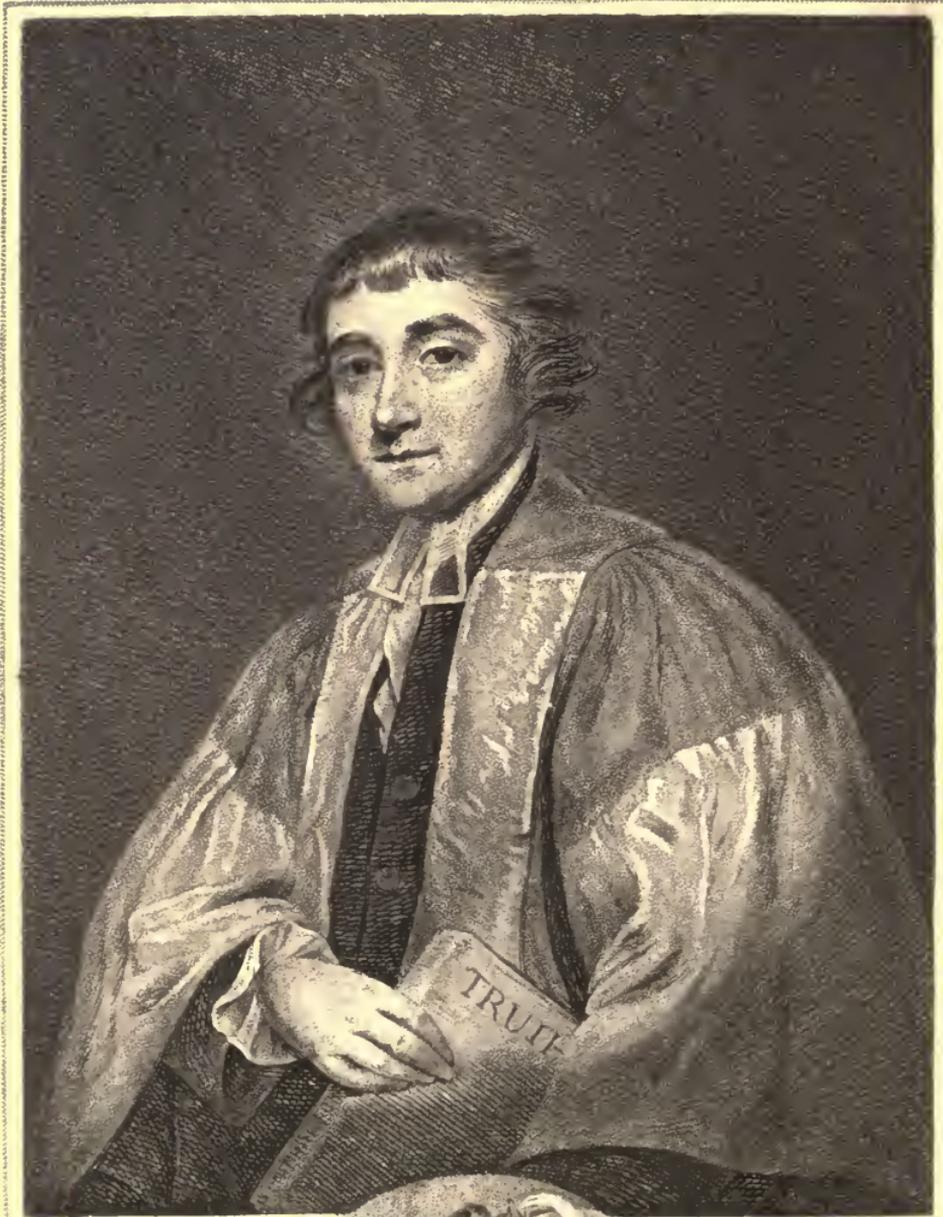




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AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF
JAMES BEATTIE, LL. D.

EDINBURGH:
Printed by James Ballantyne & Co.



sculpsit J. Stuart Reynolds pinxit

T. Gaudin sculp.

JAMES

BEATTIE LL.D.

*O. Magna Vis Veritatis quae
Calliditatem, Solertiam,
invidiam, facile se per*



*contra hominum ingenium,
contraque factas omnium
se ipsa defendat. Cicero*

Printed 12 March 1767 by T. Phillips, Golden Square, London

AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF
JAMES BEATTIE, LL.D.

LATE PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND LOGIC IN
THE MARISCHAL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY
OF ABERDEEN.

INCLUDING MANY OF HIS ORIGINAL LETTERS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY
SIR WILLIAM FORBES
OF PITSLIGO, BART.
ONE OF THE EXECUTORS OF DR BEATTIE.

SECOND EDITION.

VOL. I.

*Earum rerum omnium vel in primis hic fructum a me repetere prope
suo jure debet. Nam hunc video mihi principem, et ad suscipiendam, et
ad ingrediendam rationem horum studiorum exiltisse.—Cic. pro Arch.*

EDINBURGH :

PRINTED FOR ARCH. CONSTABLE AND CO. EDINBURGH;
LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME, T. CADELL AND W. DAVIES,
AND JOHN MURRAY, LONDON.

1807.



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TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

AND

RIGHT REVEREND

BEILBY PORTEUS, D. D.

LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,

ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S MOST HONOURABLE PRIVY COUNCIL,

&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

As soon as I formed the resolution of attempting to write the Life of Dr Beattie, I determined to request permission to inscribe it to your Lordship; because I well know the high value he justly

1044456

set on your friendship, and how much it would have gratified him to think, that his name should be joined with that of the Bishop of London.

Your Lordship well knew Dr Beattie's merit as a Philosopher and a Poet, and his worth as a Man and a Christian. If in this attempt, therefore, to delineate his character, I am so fortunate as to gain, in any degree, your approbation, I shall look upon my work with no ordinary degree of complacence.

I embrace, with the greatest satisfaction, and with peculiar propriety, this opportunity of expressing my respect for you; as it was to Dr Beattie's kind partiality

that I owed my first introduction to your Lordship, and the beginning of that friendship with which you have ever since been pleased to honour me. I am,

MY LORD,

*Your Lordship's most obedient,
And faithful humble Servant,*

WILLIAM FORBES.

EDINBURGH, 24th March, 1806.

INTRODUCTION.

MR MASON prefaces his excellent and entertaining Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Gray,* with an observation, more remarkable for its truth than novelty, that “the lives of men of letters seldom abound with incidents. A reader of sense and taste, therefore,” continues he, “never expects to find, in the memoirs of a philosopher or poet, the same species of enter-

* Vol. II. p. 1. Ed. 12mo.

“ tainment or information which he would
“ receive from those of a statesman or ge-
“ neral. He expects, however, to be either
“ informed or entertained. Nor will he be
“ disappointed, did the writer take care to
“ dwell principally on such topics as cha-
“ racterize the man, and distinguish that
“ peculiar part which he acted in the va-
“ ried drama of society.”

Keeping in view this rule of Mr Mason's, it is my purpose to give to the world some account of the late DR BEATTIE; a man, whose life, if it does not afford many striking incidents, yet furnishes no unuseful lesson, and no mean incentive, to men of genius, how obscure soever their origin may be, or unpromising their early prospects; as it shews the degree of celebrity and independence at which they may reasonably

hope to arrive, by the exertion of those talents which they inherit from Nature, and a virtuous conduct in the society in which Providence has placed them.

Before I enter, however, on this undertaking, I deem it necessary to offer some apology for my attempting it at all. I wish, indeed, that it had fallen to the lot of some other person better qualified to do justice to the subject; yet perhaps I may be thought to possess some advantages in that respect, which are essential to the execution of a work of this nature. For as he, who attempts to write biography, ought to have had a near acquaintance with the person whose life and character he means to delineate; it is my pride to say, that, during the long period of almost forty years, I was honoured with Dr Beattie's unreserved

friendship, as well as intimate epistolary intercourse. By those means I enjoyed the opportunity of knowing him well, and of duly appreciating his merit as a poet and philosopher, in both of which capacities he eminently excelled. I have also been fortunate enough to recover much of his private correspondence with others. From all which I hope to be able to show, that the writings which he gave to the world, were but transcripts of his mind: and that he evinced his love of virtue and religion, as well as his refined and classical taste, no less in his private and unreserved communications with his friends, (some of them of high rank in life, as well as in the literary world,) than in those valuable works which he composed, with more care, for the public instruction.

In order to exhibit to the reader a faithful portrait of the original, I propose to follow the example of Mr Mason in his Life of Gray, by producing some of the most interesting of Dr Beattie's letters, and connecting them by a narrative, at proper periods, of the principal incidents of his life. By this method, he will, in no inconsiderable degree, be his own biographer. And those letters will more clearly show the genuine goodness of his heart, and the soundness of his judgment, than any laboured character of him that could possibly be drawn.

This mode of printing the letters of men of eminence to their private friends, which of course were never meant to meet the public eye, has, I know, been condemned by some; but it has been well vindicated

by others, particularly by Mr Mason.*—
“ Letters of eminent persons, not written
“ for publication,” says the Editor of Lord
Orford’s works, “ have always been sought
“ for with eagerness by the intelligent pub-
“ lic, who justly conceive, that, by their
“ means, the most intimate and most satis-
“ factory acquaintance, both with the au-
“ thor and his contemporaries, is often ac-
“ quired.” † Those who are of a different
opinion, may be asked, Whether they can
wish that they had never seen such letters
as Mr Mason has printed? and, farther,
Whether they think that Mr Gray’s cha-
racter, as a gentleman or a scholar, has
been injured by their publication? It may
also be asked, Whether there be not a wide

* Life of Gray, Vol. II. p. 5. Ed. 12mo.

† Preface to the Works of the Earl of Orford, p. xix.

difference between those elegant selections, which do equal honour to the head and the heart of the writers, and the collections of such men as Edmund Curl, into which every thing is indiscriminately admitted, whether having merit or not, because it bears the name of the eminent literary characters of his day? I believe few readers of taste will be at any loss to find an answer to the question. If any farther authority were wanting, I might add that of Mr Hayley, who has published his interesting life of Cowper on the same plan. In the introduction to his third volume, Mr Hayley has given a dissertation on the subject of the publication of private letters; and a list of the most eminent collections of that species of composition to be met with in ancient as well as modern lan-

guages. Whether these letters of Dr Beattie's, which I have thus ventured to lay before the public, may be deemed any valuable addition to those of which it is already in possession, I scarcely dare to think myself a proper judge ; as the partiality I feel for every thing that has fallen from his pen, may not unnaturally be supposed somewhat to bias my judgment in that respect. That every letter of Dr Beattie's here printed is equally interesting, I am very far from wishing to affirm ; but I trust that many will be found of no inconsiderable value, as containing the opinions, on literary subjects, of one who was himself so excellent a judge, and so eminent an example, of what is most valuable in philosophy, poetry, or criticism.

I shall only add farther, that I have been

scrupulous in not admitting any thing that I thought would hurt the feelings of others; nor any anecdote or opinion which Dr Beattie himself could have wished to have suppressed. As an Editor, I have not taken the liberty to add a single iota to what Dr Beattie has written; but I have thought myself fully warranted in omitting, without scruple, whatever it seemed to me that he would not have permitted to see the light.

When I consider the very great number of his letters, which I have been able to recover, some of them of great length, besides many more that he must have written to his other correspondents, which have escaped my research, or have not been deemed worth the preserving; when I consider, too, the labour he bestowed in composing, as

well as transcribing over and over again (for he seldom employed an amanuensis), his works for the press, and at the same time think of the deplorable state of his health, and that he employed three hours every day, for almost half the year, in teaching his class, I cannot but be filled with wonder how he could possibly have contrived to write so much, preserving and enjoying at the same time a suitable intercourse with society.*

After these few introductory observa-

* I have retained the ancient custom of placing the Notes at the bottom of the page, though in opposition to the authority of some distinguished historical and biographical writers, who throw all their notes, how short soever, to the end of the volume; a mode which I have always thought extremely inconvenient for the reader. When notes run to such a length, however, as to break the narrative too much, they will be found, by references, in the Appendix.

tions, I now proceed, with the utmost diffidence, to submit the following narrative to the candour and indulgence of the public.

L I F E

O F

JAMES BEATTIE, LL. D.

SECTION I.

THE
LIFE OF JAMES BEATTIE, LL. D.

SECTION I.

FROM DR BEATTIE'S BIRTH, IN THE YEAR
1735, TO HIS ESTABLISHMENT AT ABERDEEN, IN THE
YEAR 1758.

JAMES BEATTIE, LL. D. was born on the 25th October, 1735, at Lawrencekirk,* at that time an obscure hamlet in the county of Kincardine in Scotland. His father was James Beattie, who, at

* Lawrencekirk, which is situated twenty-eight miles south from Aberdeen, owes its rise, from so slender a beginning, to the rank of a borough of barony (as such small towns are called in Scotland, holding a rank somewhat above that of a village) to the ardent spirit of Lord Gardenstown, and the great encouragement he bestowed on it, at a very considerable expence.— Any farther account of Lawrencekirk, however, is foreign from my present purpose. I may merely add, that the house, in which Dr Beattie was born, stood on a rising ground at the north-east end of the village, at no great distance from the scite of the pre-

the same time that he kept a small retail shop in the village, rented a little farm in the neighbourhood, on which, and on a similar spot about a mile distant, his forefathers, for several generations, had carried on the same useful employment of agriculture. His mother's name was Jean Watson ; and they had six children, of whom the youngest was James, the subject of these memoirs. If from this humble line of ancestry Dr Beattie derived no lustre, it may be fairly said, that he incurred no disgrace. For, though they were poor, they were honest ; and were even distinguished in that neighbourhood for their superior understanding. His father, in particular, is represented as having been a man of a most respectable character, who, by reading, had acqui-

sent inn, from which it was separated by a small rivulet. On the same spot is now built a house inhabited by a nephew of Dr Beattie's. And it has been remarked, by some who are fond of fanciful analogies, that, as the tomb of Virgil, in the neighbourhood of Naples, was adorned with a laurel, the birthplace of Beattie was partly covered with ivy, as if to denote that it had produced a poet. The banks of the rivulet are beautifully fringed with wild roses, where Dr Beattie had been accustomed to spend his playful hours when at school, and which he delighted to contemplate each time he passed through Lawrencekirk, with that enthusiasm with which we revisit, in after life, the haunts of our boyish days.

red knowledge superior to what could have been expected in his humble condition.

After his father's death, his mother, who was a woman of uncommon abilities, was assisted in the management of their small farm by her eldest son David; by the profits of which, and of the retail shop in the village, she was enabled to bring up her family in a comfortable manner. Her son James she placed at the parish-school of Lawrence Kirk.

To that part of the civil polity of Scotland, by which in every parish a public school is by law established, it has been, not unjustly, attributed, that the lower classes of people in Scotland often display a superior degree of abilities through common life, to those of the same station in other countries, among whom the blindest ignorance but too frequently prevails. For in these parochial schools, the youth, even of the peasantry, may, if so inclined, receive such a measure of instruction, as is suited to their station, or may enable them, if possessed of superior genius, to arrive at still higher attainments in literature.

The parish-school of Lawrence Kirk was at that time of some reputation; and it was rendered the more remarkable, by being the same in which

Ruddiman, the celebrated grammarian, had taught about forty years before. When young Beattie attended it, this school was taught by a person of the name of Milne, whom he used to represent as a good grammarian, and tolerably skilled in the Latin language, but destitute of taste, as well as of some other qualifications essential to a good teacher.

During the period of his attendance at the parish-school, he had access to few books. * Such as he could procure, he read with avidity; and it was then that he chanced to meet with Ogilby's translation of Virgil, from which he learned "the tale of Troy divine," and first became acquainted with English versification. † Even at that early

* For such books as he read at this early period, he was almost solely indebted to the Rev. Mr Thomson, at that time minister of Lawrencekirk; a very learned man, whose collection, though in all probability it was not large, yet was superior to what a minister of the church of Scotland can generally be supposed to possess in a country parish. Of that clergyman, Dr Beattie always spoke with the highest respect, and acknowledged, in a particular manner, his obligations to him for the use of books.

† It is a curious coincidence of circumstances, that Pope was initiated in poetry at eight years of age by the perusal of Ogilby's Homer. A friend having presented Dr Beattie, in the latter part of his life, with a copy of Ogilby's Virgil, made him

period, his turn for poetry began to show itself, and among his school-fellows he went by the name of *the Poet*. It was remarked, likewise, by his family at home, particularly by a sister some years older than himself, at whose house in Montrose, after her marriage, he occasionally visited,* that, during the night-time, he used to get out of bed, and walk about his chamber, in order to write down any poetical thought that had struck his fancy.

In the year 1749, he commenced his academical course, and attended the Greek class in Marischal College, Aberdeen, at that time taught by Dr Blackwell. † Of Dr Blackwell's friendship to him, he retained through life the most grateful remembrance; frequently declaring, that the learned Principal was the first person who gave

very happy, in thus recalling to his imagination all the ideas with which his favourite author had at first inspired him, even through the medium of such a translation.

* Mrs Valentine, who told this anecdote to Mr Arbuthnot, from whom I had it.

† Dr Thomas Blackwell, Principal of Marischal College, and Professor of Greek, in which language he was eminently skilled; author of an "Inquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer;" "Letters concerning Mythology;" and "Memoirs of the Court of Augustus."

him reason to believe that he was possessed of any genius. By Dr Blackwell he was, to his astonishment, early distinguished as superior to all his class-fellows; and, at the close of the session 1749-50, he received from him a book, elegantly bound, bearing the following inscription: "*Jacobus Beattie, in prima classe, ex comitatu Mernensi, * post examen publicum librum hunc ἀριστοῦτι, præmium dedit T. Blackwell, Aprilis 3^o MDCCCL.*"

As his finances were but slender, he became a candidate for one of the bursaries, which are annually bestowed on such of the students as are unable to bear the usual expences attendant on a university education. These bursaries are small annual stipends, which the piety of our ancestors, and their zeal for the advancement of learning, had led them to establish.

But no opprobrious distinction, no menial office, no degrading servitude, is annexed to the appellation of Bursar at Aberdeen, which merely implies the receipt of a certain revenue. On the contrary, it is a proof of superior merit. For, instead of being a sinecure to which the student is

* "The Mearus," to which Dr Blackwell has here given a Latin termination, is the vernacular name for the county of Kincardine.

presented without trial, it is the reward of learning, after a competition among those who are the candidates, and of whose literary merits the professors of the university are the judges. And it not unfrequently happens, as was the case of young Beattie, that the Bursars, by being the best scholars, are found at the head of their class.*

He continued his attendance at the university of Aberdeen during four years, in the course of which, besides attending the Greek class, † he

* This alludes to those Bursaries which are in the gift of the university, and are publicly contended for by every candidate who chuses to make his appearance. Besides these there are several in the gift of private patrons, who bestow them, without trial, on whom they please.

† As a proof of the ardour with which he prosecuted his studies, not only while he attended the regular course of instruction at the university, but even after he had ceased to be an academical student, he wrote a book of notes on the Iliad, which has been found among his papers since his death. It consists of one hundred and forty duodecimo pages, closely written. § There was also found among his papers, a book of notes on some of the Italian classics, similar to those on Homer. In his library is an interleaved copy of Xenophon's Memorabilia of Socrates, divided into two volumes, with very copious notes in the same manner, most accurately written in a fair hand on the interleaved pages. Longinus on the Sublime is prepared for the same purpose, but no notes are written. In his copy of Virgil in Usum Delphini there are some notes written by him, but they are not

§ Vide Appendix, [A.]

studied philosophy under the late Dr Gerard; and during three sessions he attended the lectures given by Dr Pollock, at that time professor of divinity in Marischal College, no doubt with a view to the ministry;—a pursuit, however, which he soon relinquished. One of his fellow-students has informed me, that during their attendance at the divinity hall, he heard Beattie deliver a discourse, which met with much commendation, but of which it was remarked by the audience, that he spoke poetry in prose.*

very numerous, nor longer than can be easily contained in the blank spaces of the book itself. Yet they are sometimes not unimportant; for example, Æneid VI. v. 488. he has corrected the interpretation of the editor Ruæus, who has totally misunderstood the meaning of the expression *et conferre gradum*, which that editor renders *et admovere pedem propius*. On that passage, by a note in Dr Beattie's handwriting, we are referred to Georg. III. v. 169. where the same expression is used, when Virgil is giving directions how to teach heifers to walk side by side, to fit them for the plough. There Ruæus himself could not mistake the meaning of the expression, (for the same words are used,) and renders it as it ought to have been in Æneid VI. by *simul incedere*. From his corrections of the text of this his favourite Latin poet, as well as by what he has been heard to say, he seems to have preferred the readings of Nicholas Heinsius. In his library are several beautiful copies of Virgil. ||

* It is told, in the same manner, of Thomson, who had also been a student of divinity, that when he produced, as a proba-

|| I owe the substance of this note to his assistant and successor, Mr Glennie.

- Having finished his course of study at the university, he was appointed, on the 1st day of August, 1753, to be schoolmaster of the parish of Fordoun, a small hamlet, distant about six miles from his native village of Lawrence Kirk, at the foot of the Grampian mountains, where he also filled the office of præcentor or parish-clerk.

In this obscure situation he must have passed many of his hours in solitude; for except that of Mr Forbes, the parish minister, who shewed him great kindness, and in whose family he frequently visited, he had scarcely any other society than that of the neighbouring peasantry, from whose conversation he could derive little amusement, and no information. But he had a never failing resource in his own mind, in those meditations which he loved to indulge, amidst the beautiful and sublime scenery of that neighbourhood, which furnished him with endless amusement. At a

tionary exercise, the explanation of a psalm, the professor reproved him for speaking a language that would be altogether unintelligible to a popular audience; which so disgusted Thomson with theological pursuits, that he resolved to betake himself entirely to the cultivation of his poetical talents, by which he afterwards rose to such distinguished eminence. §

§ Dr Anderson's Life of Thomson, in the Poets of Great Britain, Vol. ix, p. 274.

small distance from the place of his residence, a deep and extensive glen, finely clothed with wood, runs up into the mountains. Thither he frequently repaired, and there several of his earliest pieces were written. From that wild and romantic spot he drew, as from the life, some of the finest descriptions, and most beautiful pictures of nature, in his poetical compositions. He has been heard to say, for instance, that the description of the Owl, in his charming poem on "Retirement,"

" Whence the scared Owl, on pinions grey,
" Breaks from the rustling boughs,
" And down the lone vale sails away
" To more profound repose," *

was drawn after real nature. And the seventeenth stanza of the second book of the "Minstrel," in which he so feelingly describes the spot of which he most approved for his place of sepulture, is so very exact a picture of the situation of the churchyard of Lawrence Kirk, which stands

* It is curious to compare this stanza with the second of Gray's *Elegy in a Country Church-Yard*, in which the same thought occurs.

near to his mother's house, and in which is the school-house where he was daily taught, that he must certainly have had it in his view at the time he wrote those beautiful lines :

“ Let vanity adorn the marble tomb
“ With trophies, rhymes, and scutcheons of renown,
“ In the deep dungeon of some Gothic dome,
“ Where night and desolation ever frown.
“ Mine be the breezy hill that skirts the down,
“ Where a green grassy turf is all I crave,
“ With here and there a violet bestrown,
“ Fast by a brook, or fountain's murmuring wave ;
“ And many an evening sun shine sweetly on my grave.”*

It was his supreme delight to saunter in the fields the live-long night, contemplating the sky,

* The wish, that our bones should be laid “ in the sepulchre with our fathers,” has been so prevalent in all ages, that it seems to be a sentiment inherent in our nature. No wonder, therefore, that the local scenery where his nearest and dearest connections were interred, should have made an early and deep impression on the mind of young Beattie, and should have suggested to him the idea, that *there*, perhaps, might be his own place of sepulture.

At a later period, however, he had changed his design in that respect ; and after he began to spend so much of his time at Peterhead, he became fond of an ancient burying-ground, at six miles distance, where had originally stood the church, now in ruins, of the parish of St Fergus, in the middle of the beautiful

and marking the approach of day ; and he used to describe, with peculiar animation, the pleasure he received from the soaring of the lark in a summer morning. A beautiful landscape which he has magnificently described in the twentieth stanza of the first book of the "Minstrel," corresponds exactly with what must have presented itself to his poetical imagination, on those occasions, at the approach of the rising sun, as he would view the grandeur of that scene from the hill in the neighbourhood of his native village. The high hill which rises to the west of Fordoun,

links || of that name. This was a favourite spot of Dr Beattie's, where he much delighted to take his walks of meditation. Combining the idea of solitude and repose with the solemn purpose to which the scene was devoted, he felt a more than common interest in that sequestered spot, and used to say to his friends, that it was there he wished his remains might be laid. With that view, the first season in which his niece, Mrs Glennie, accompanied him to Peterhead, he carried her to visit the churchyard in the links of St Fergus.

It was the recollection of that circumstance which induced Mrs Glennie to ask him, after the death of both his sons, where he desired to be interred ? to which he replied, that " he would wish his body to be laid beside those of his two sons, rather than beside that of the greatest monarch upon earth." He was accordingly buried at Aberdeen.

|| A word used in Scotland, nearly synonymous with what in England they call "Downs,"

would, in a misty morning, supply him with one of the images so beautifully described in the twenty-first stanza. And the twentieth stanza of the second book of the "Minstrel" describes a night-scene unquestionably drawn from nature, in which he probably had in view Homer's sublime description of the moon, in the eighth book of the Iliad, so admirably translated by Pope, that an eminent critic has not scrupled to declare it to be superior to the original.* He used, himself, to tell, that it was from the top of a high hill in the neighbourhood that he first beheld the ocean, the sight of which, he declared, made the most lively impression on his mind.

It is pleasing, I think, to contemplate these his early habits, so congenial to the feelings of a poetical and warm imagination; and, therefore, I trust I shall be forgiven for having dwelt on them so long. †

* Melmoth's Letters of Sir Thomas Fitzosborn, Letter xx. p. 85.

† It must have been about this period, that an incident happened to him, which I should be afraid to relate, were I not fully persuaded of its authenticity: I never, indeed, myself heard him mention it; but I have perfect confidence in the veracity of those friends to whom he has frequently told the circumstance. Having lain down, early in the morning, on the bank of his fa-

From this cheerless want of society, however, he was, not long after, in a great degree relieved, by the arrival of his eldest brother, David, who came to establish himself in the village of Furdoun. Although he was eleven years older than our author, the utmost cordiality subsisted between the two brothers, and much of their time was spent in each other's company. At that time David, who was so much older than his brother, no doubt had it in his power to do him considerable service. But that service was amply returned in the course of their after lives, by Dr Beattie, who took every opportunity of assisting his brother and his family. And finally, by his will, he left to David a legacy, from which, however, by his dying before Dr Beattie, he did not derive any benefit.

avourite rivulet adjoining to his mother's house, he had fallen asleep; on awaking, it was not without astonishment that he found he had been walking in his sleep, and that he was then at a considerable distance (about a mile and a half) from the place where he had lain down. On his way back to that spot, he passed some labourers, and enquiring of them, if they had seen him walking along, they told him that they had, with his head hanging down, as if he had been looking for something he had lost. ¶

¶ Vide Appendix, [B.]

His first patron was the late Lord Gardenstown,* who, being at that time sheriff of the county of Kincardine, resided occasionally at Woodstock, a house in the neighbourhood of Fordoun. To Beattie Mr Garden became accidentally known, by his having found him one day in his favourite glen, employed in writing with a pencil. On enquiring what he was about, and finding that he was employed in the composition of a poem, Mr Garden's curiosity was attracted, and from that period he took the young bard under his protection. Dr Beattie has been frequently heard to mention an anecdote which took place in the early part of his acquaintance with this gentleman. Mr Garden, having seen some of his pieces in manuscript, and entertaining some doubt of their being entirely of his own composition, in order to satisfy himself of the abilities of the young poet, asked him, with politeness, to translate the invocation to Venus from the first book of Lucretius. In compliance

* Francis Garden, afterwards one of the judges of the supreme courts of civil and criminal law in Scotland, by the title of Lord Gardenstown, the same who is mentioned in the note on p. 13. as the patron of the village of Lawrencekirk, which was on his estate.

with this request, Beattie retired into the adjoining wood, and in no long time produced the translation, bearing all the marks of original composition, for it was much blotted with alterations and corrections. It was printed in the first collection of Dr Beattie's poems, in the year 1760, but omitted in all the subsequent editions.

He also became known at this time to Lord Monboddo, * (whose family-seat is in the parish of Fordoun,) with whom he always maintained a friendly intercourse, although they essentially differed in some very material points, as must be very apparent to those who are conversant with their writings.

* James Burnet of Monboddo, also one of the judges of the supreme court of law in Scotland, by the title of Lord Monboddo, well known in the literary world by his publications on the origin and progress of language, and a still more extensive work, entitled, "Antient Metaphysics," in which he has indulged himself in not a few paradoxical and fanciful theories. His writings, however, evince him to have been a man of learning and talents, though credulous in the extreme. He died at Edinburgh, May 26, 1799, aged 85. The beautiful "Elegy, written in the year 1758," beginning

" Still shall unthinking man substantial deem,"

was written by Dr Beattie, on the death of Mrs Walker, sister of Lord Monboddo.

He continued to teach the school of Fordoun till the year 1757, when, on a vacancy happening of the place of usher in the grammar-school of Aberdeen, his friend, Mr Forbes, minister of Fordoun, advised him to become a candidate for it. He accordingly offered himself, but did not succeed. He acquitted himself, however, so well in his examination on that occasion, that, on a second vacancy of the same place happening about a year afterwards, the magistrates, who are the electors, requested him to accept of the office without any further trial; and he was accordingly elected to it, 20th June, 1758, soon after which period he left Fordoun, and removed to Aberdeen.

SECTION II.

FROM DR BEATTIE'S ESTABLISHMENT AT ABERDEEN
IN THE YEAR 1758, TO THE PUBLICATION OF HIS ESSAY
ON TRUTH IN THE YEAR 1770.

THIS event of Beattie's election to be one of the ushers of the grammar-school at Aberdeen, humble as the appointment was for a man of his talents and acquired knowledge, yet forms a memorable epoch in his life. It removed him in fact from the obscurity in which he had hitherto languished, at a distance from books, with few friends, and with but little of the blessings of congenial society, to a large and populous town, the seat of an university, where he had access to public libraries for study, and the opportunity of

cultivating the friendship of persons of taste and learning. Principal Blackwell, his early friend, and the first to discover his genius and talents, was now dead. But the two universities of Marischal college, New Aberdeen, and King's college, Old Aberdeen, could boast of no inconsiderable number of men of genius and learning, with whom he had soon the happiness of becoming more immediately connected. And there were likewise several gentlemen at that time at Aberdeen, though not of the class of literary men by profession, yet of liberal education, and a competent degree of general knowledge, well suited to the taste of such a person as Beattie, who delighted to associate in convivial meetings with friends whose disposition and habits were congenial with his own.

He did not remain long, however, in the humble situation of usher of the grammar-school. In the year 1760, a chair in the Marischal college and university of Aberdeen, became vacant by the death of Dr Duncan, professor of natural philosophy. On Beattie's relating this event, merely as an occurrence of the day, to a gentleman with whom he lived in much intimacy, his friend suggested to him the idea of his endeavouring to

procure the vacant appointment for himself. Beattie heard the proposal with amazement, conceiving such a situation to be an object altogether beyond his grasp. And, indeed, few things seemed less likely to take place, than that he, who but two years ago had filled the obscure office of a country parochial schoolmaster, almost friendless and unknown, should succeed in obtaining a professor's chair in the gift of the crown. His friend,* however, willing to try what could

* The gentleman, to whose active zeal and friendly interposition, on this occasion, Beattie owed so much, was Robert Arbuthnot, Esq. secretary to the Board of Trustees for fisheries and manufactures at Edinburgh, but who, at that time, resided chiefly, and carried on business as a merchant, at Peterhead in Aberdeenshire. Beattie and he had become acquainted on the removal of the former to Aberdeen; and a friendship was soon formed between them, which terminated only with their lives. Mr Arbuthnot, who was nearly related to the celebrated Dr Arbuthnot, the friend of Pope and Swift, to a considerable share of classical learning, added an intimate acquaintance with the best authors in the English language, particularly in poetry and belles lettres, of whom he well knew how to appreciate the respective merits, and with the most favourite passages of whose works his memory was stored beyond that of almost any man I ever knew. He had likewise read the most esteemed writers in the French and Italian languages. By these means his conversation was uncommonly entertaining and instructive. He possessed, likewise, an inexhaustible flow of spirits, which had helped to support him through a variety of distressful circumstances, to which it had been his lot to be exposed. And to all

be done, prevailed on the late Earl of Erroll, (father of the present lord,) with whom he lived in

this he added a vein of delicate and peculiar humour, and “ flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table in a roar.”

An intimate friendship between Mr Arbuthnot and the author of these memoirs had commenced at an earlier period than that at which either of us knew Dr Beattie, whom we both equally loved as a friend, and admired as a writer of very superior genius. We had the happiness, too, of possessing in Major Mercer, of whom I shall have occasion to say more hereafter, another early friend, who was equally attached to Dr Beattie by long habits of the strictest intimacy. Of the Doctor's regard for all the three, he has given the strongest proof; first, by inscribing to us the collection which he printed of his son's miscellanies, and at last by appointing us the executors of his will, and the trustees of his property; bequeathing to each, at the same time, some memorial of his kind remembrance, with very flattering expressions of esteem. || From those gentlemen, therefore, so intimately acquainted with Dr Beattie, and in whose taste and judgment on literary subjects I had the fullest confidence, I trusted that I should have received the most essential aid, in preparing, by our united efforts, this tribute of affection to the memory of our much loved friend. But,

“ On our firmest resolutions

“ The silent and inaudible tread of Death

“ Steals like a thief.”

Major Mercer and Mr Arbuthnot survived Dr Beattie only a very short space of time; and the health of both had become so much impaired, as to render it impossible for either to give me any assistance: a misfortune which I feel, as I proceed, almost in every page. Mr Arbuthnot died 5th November, 1803, and Major Mercer 18th November, 1804.

|| Vide Dr Beattie's will, Appendix [C.]

much intimacy, to apply, by means of Lord Milton, to the late Duke of Argyll, who at that time was supposed to have the chief interest in the disposal of such offices as became vacant in Scotland; and, fortunately for Beattie, Lord Erroll received a favourable answer. In consequence of which, on the 8th of October, 1760, he was installed professor of moral philosophy and logic in Marischal college.

Dr Duncan,* whose death thus made way for Dr Beattie's appointment, was Professor of Natural Philosophy. But the professorship of Moral Philosophy and Logic becoming vacant soon afterwards by the resignation of Dr Gerard, on his being appointed Professor of Divinity, Dr Skène, who was also a candidate for one of these offices, and Dr Beattie, agreed, that the professorship of Moral Philosophy should be assigned to the last, as more suitable to his taste and disposition; and that of Natural Philosophy to Dr Skene. They were both installed on the same day. †

* The translator of "Cicero's Orations."

† As an expression of his gratitude to Lord Erroll for this most important service, he dedicated to that nobleman his first publication of a volume of poems. And when his eldest son

By this honourable appointment, Dr Beattie found himself raised to a situation of much respectability, where he could give full scope to his talents, and indulge his favourite propensity of communicating knowledge of the most important nature, and thereby promoting the best interests of mankind.

His first business was to prepare a course of lectures, which he began to deliver to his pupils during the winter session of the years 1760-1. These he continued gradually to improve by repeated study, till he brought them to that state of perfection of which some idea may be formed, from the publication of his "Elements of Moral Science;" a compendium of his lectures, which he prepared and published for the use of his students, as will be mentioned hereafter.

How indefatigable he was in the discharge of the duties of his important office, may be gather-

was born, he named him James Hay Beattie, after the Christian name and surname of his noble patron, for whom he ever after entertained the highest respect. Lord Erroll, on his part, constantly treated Dr Beattie with the most friendly regard; so that he was always a welcome guest at Slains-Castle, the seat of Lord Erroll, in Aberdeenshire. For some farther account of this accomplished nobleman, vide Appendix [D].

ed from a very curious diary, found among his papers, and now in my possession, in which he has noted down the subject of each lecture; and from a perusal of which may be known what was done in his class every day, during a long period of upwards of thirty years. It exhibits, not only the plan of his lectures, but his unwearied diligence. For he did not content himself, it will be seen, with merely delivering a lecture to his students. He laboured, by recapitulations and public examinations in his class, to impress on the minds of his auditors the great and important doctrines which he taught.*

Among other advantages derived by Dr Beattie from his removal to Aberdeen, was that of becoming a member of a society, which at that time subsisted there, composed chiefly of professors of King's and Marischal Colleges, with the addition of several gentlemen of that place, of a literary turn, and of agreeable conversation. So far back as the year 1742, a similar society had been formed there, consisting of young men, who were students of divinity at those universities, in which the pleasures of conversation were combined with

* Vide Appendix [E], for some farther account of this diary.

the pursuits of sacred literature. The chief founder of that society, which was denominated the Theological Club, was Dr Campbell;* besides whom, the principal members were, the Reverend Dr John Glennie, who afterwards successfully conducted an academy in the parish of Mary Coulter, in the county of Kincardine, of which he was minister, to a very advanced

* The Rev. Dr George Campbell, Principal of Marischal College, and Professor of Divinity, distinguished as a scholar and a divine by his valuable publications in the cause of religion; in particular, his "Essay on Miracles," in opposition to the doctrine of Mr Hume, has ever been esteemed one of the most acute and most convincing argumentative treatises on that great and fundamental doctrine of revealed religion, that has ever appeared. His translation of the "Four Gospels," with the accompanying dissertations, is a work of much erudition: and his "Philosophy of Rhetoric" is a very classical performance, in which the laws of elegant composition and just criticism are laid down with singular taste and perspicuity. Dr Campbell, with whom I had the happiness of being long intimately acquainted, besides being eminently learned as a writer, was a man of the utmost simplicity of manners and naiveté of character; pleasant and agreeable in conversation, and most attentive to the discharge of all the duties of his station as a minister of the gospel, and a public instructor of the youth committed to his care. The strongest friendship and strictest intimacy took place, at a very early period, between Dr Campbell and Dr Beattie, which continued, without interruption, to the close of Dr Campbell's life, which happened at Aberdeen, 6th April, 1796, in the 77th year of his age.

period of life;* Dr Trail, afterwards Lord Bishop of Down and Connor in Ireland; and the Reverend Mr John Skinner, of the Episcopal church in Scotland, author of an Ecclesiastical History of that country, who, at the age of 83, is now the only surviving member of the society. It lasted during several years, until most of its members, having been settled as ministers in country parishes, removed to a considerable distance from Aberdeen.

In the beginning of the year 1758, a new society was formed, chiefly by the Reverend Dr Reid, † and his friend and relation, Dr John Gre-

* To the memory of Dr Glennie, who first taught me the rudiments of learning, when I attended his English school at Aberdeen, I am happy in the opportunity of thus publicly testifying my most sincere respect; and that gratitude which I shall ever feel towards him for the warm interest he was pleased to take in the direction of my early studies. A strong and mutual regard subsisted between us ever after, during the long period of more than half a century. He died in 1801. His son married Dr Beattie's niece; and to him I here acknowledge my obligations for the materials with which he has taken the trouble to furnish me respecting the early part of the life of Dr Beattie.

† The Reverend Dr Thomas Reid, professor first at Aberdeen, afterwards in the university of Glasgow, whose "Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense," and his "Essays on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man," have deservedly ranked him among the first philosophical and

gory,* on a more extensive plan, for the discussion of literary and philosophical subjects. The

metaphysical writers of our age. He left Aberdeen not long after Dr Beattie was settled there. But the friendship which they had early contracted for each other continued unabated to the close of their lives. For farther particulars of Dr Reid, who died in the year 1796, in his 87th year, see an elegant and well written account of his life by my friend Professor Dugald Stewart of Edinburgh.

* Dr John Gregory, at that time professor of medicine in the university of Old Aberdeen, with whom Dr Beattie became early acquainted; and a friendship was formed between them, of the sincerest and most intimate nature, which lasted unimpaired to the death of Dr Gregory. Not long after the period here spoken of, he removed to Edinburgh, from a consciousness of his own talents, which he justly deemed calculated for a more extensive sphere than that wherein he was placed at Aberdeen. In Edinburgh he soon obtained a chair in that celebrated school of medicine, was honoured with the office of first physician to his majesty for Scotland, and speedily arrived at high eminence in the practice of his profession. His publications of "A comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man, with those of the Animal World," of his "Lectures on the Duties and Offices of a Physician," and his beautiful little address to his daughters, published after his death, with the title of "A Father's Legacy," show, in a most conspicuous point of view, the goodness of his heart as a man, and his merit as a philosopher. He possessed an elegant taste, and an intimate acquaintance with the world. He was, moreover, a person of much piety, and a Christian in the best sense of the word. Of manners uncommonly gentle and engaging, his society was courted by persons of the first distinction; and he lived in intimacy with the most eminent literary characters of his time, both in England and Scotland,

original members were, Dr Reid, Dr Gregory, Dr David Skene, a physician of genius and taste, particularly skilful in botany; the Reverend Dr Robert Trail, nephew of the Bishop of Down and Connor; and Dr Stewart, professor of mathematics in Marischal college. To these were afterwards added, Dr Gerard,* Dr George Skene, physician and professor of natural philosophy in the same university; the Reverend Mr John Farquhar, † and Dr Beattie. This literary society,

He honoured me very early, and in a particular degree, with his friendship, of which he gave the most unequivocal proof, by naming me one of the guardians of his children. And I now look back, with a melancholy satisfaction, to the many pleasing and instructive hours I have spent in his company. For a more particular account of Dr Gregory, who died 9th February, 1773, see his life, written by Lord Woodhouselee, prefixed to his works.

* The Reverend Dr Alexander Gerard, professor of divinity, first in Marischal College, New Aberdeen, afterwards in King's College, Old Aberdeen, was another of that set of learned and philosophical friends, from whose writings those two universities have justly derived so great celebrity. He was distinguished by his publications, viz. "An Essay on Taste," to which was adjudged the gold prize-medal by the Philosophical Society of Edinburgh; "Dissertations on the Genius and Evidences of Christianity;" "An Essay on Genius;" and two volumes of sermons. Dr Beattie and he were constant and intimate friends from their first acquaintance. He died 22d February, 1795.

† Author of two volumes of excellent sermons, published af-

(or rather club, for it was a convivial meeting in a tavern,) which the vulgar and uninformed denominated the *Wise Club*, subsisted for several years, and seems to have had the happiest effect in awakening and directing that spirit of philosophical research, which has reflected so much lustre on the north of Scotland. The members (says the elegant author of the life of Dr Gregory,) were persons of distinguished abilities and learning, attached to the same plan, and engaged in similar pursuits. The animosities and the mean jealousies, which so often disgrace the characters of literary men, were unknown to those friends, who, educated in one school, professing no opposite tenets, or contending principles, seem to have united themselves as in one common cause, the defence of virtue, of religion, and of truth.

It would be curious, in many instances, (continues the author whom I quote,) to trace the history of those literary compositions, which have instructed or amused the world, and to mark their progress from their first rude sketches to

ter his death, by his two friends, Dr Campbell and Dr Gerard. He was brother to Sir Walter Farquhar, Bart. physician in London.

their complete form and ultimate perfection. Some of the most admired works of those philosophers I have mentioned, owed their origin to this literary society, which was held once a fortnight in Aberdeen, on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month. The members met at five o'clock in the evening (for in those days at Aberdeen it was the custom to dine early,) when one of the members, as president, took the chair, and left it at half an hour after eight, when they partook of a slight and unexpensive collation, and at ten o'clock they separated.*

At these meetings, a part of the evening's entertainment was the reading a short essay, composed by one of the members in his turn. Besides those more formal compositions, thus read as discourses, a literary or philosophical question was proposed each night, for the subject of conversation at the subsequent meeting. And it was the duty of the proposer of the question to open the discussion; by him also the opinions of the members, who took a part in it, was digested into the form of an essay, which was ingrossed in the *album* of the society.

* Rules of the Philosophical Society of Aberdeen, MS.

Of such an institution the advantages were obvious and eminent. Besides the benefit to be derived to the members from a mutual communication of their sentiments on the common objects of their pursuit, an opportunity was afforded of subjecting their intended publications to the test of friendly criticism. And the many valuable works, which issued nearly about the same time from individuals connected with this institution, more particularly the writings of Reid, Campbell, Beattie, Gregory, and Gerard, furnish the best panegyric on the enlightened views of those under whose direction it was originally planned, and by whose exertions it was so successfully carried on.*

But it was not solely to ethics, metaphysics, and logic, that Dr Beattie had devoted his time and attention at this period. For it appears by the following letter, that he relaxed his mind from those severer studies, by a perusal of works of imagination: thus preparing himself for the composition of those admirable essays on poetry, and other subjects of taste, which he afterwards gave to the world.

* See Appendix, [F.]

LETTER I.

DR BEATTIE TO DR JOHN OGILVIE.*

Aberdeen, 20th August, 1759.

“ I had intended to have written a long letter on the occasion of my reading “ Clarissa ;” and I actually had begun one in a very methodical manner; but happening to read the postscript † afterwards, I was surprised to find the very subject touched upon there, which I had proposed to treat of in my intended letter. I therefore changed my first resolution, judging it unnecessary to trouble you with reading in my words what you find much better expressed in that postscript. I intended to have inquired into the conveniences and disadvantages of Richardson’s manner of writing, compared with that of other

* The Reverend Dr John Ogilvie, minister at Midmar, in Aberdeenshire, author of “ *Providence*,” and other poems of very considerable merit, especially his earlier lyric compositions. He also published “ *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Infidelity and Scepticism of the Times*,” a book containing much valuable matter.

† To “ *Clarissa*,” referred to in the preface of the work, in which several objections are considered by the author.

novelists; to have considered the propriety or impropriety of the catastrophe; and to have indulged what other critical reflections might have occurred upon the arrangement of the narrations, the length of the work, and a few other particulars. But finding this plan executed, as I said before, in the postscript, and executed in a manner very similar to that which I had designed, I shall trouble you at present only with a few miscellaneous observations upon that celebrated novel.

“The author shows great knowledge of mankind, and of human nature. He possesses an inexhaustible fund of original sentiment, a happy talent at some kinds of description, particularly conversation pieces; he delineates some characters with masterly and distinguishing strokes; he seems to be well acquainted with the human heart, and with the particular emotions that arise in it on particular occasions. The fervour wherewith he recommends religion and virtue, intimates that he is truly in earnest, and that his heart goes along with his pen.

“On reading “Clarissa,” we immediately discover that its design is more to instruct than to amuse. The author warns the reader of this in his preface, and again repeats it in the postscript.

It is for this reason, that they, who read more for amusement than instruction, will not be so much captivated with "Clarissa," as with some other of our English novels. I grant there are in the novel before us a great many passages of the most interesting kind, but these passages are few in comparison to the extent of the work. I cannot help thinking that our author is often tedious to a fault. In the first volumes there are, if I mistake not, many needless (and I had almost said nauseating) repetitions. I grant, such letters as fall under this censure are generally characteristical, are often humorous, often instructive, and might possibly please, if we were to read the book a second or third time, when we are acquainted with all the characters, and all the particulars of the story. But as there are not many readers who can afford leisure to read so long a romance twice or thrice over, I presume proper care ought to have been taken to blend amusement and instruction in such a manner, as that the one might be a heightening and seasoning to the other. When a stop is put to the progress of the story, in order to give the author room to show his talent for humour, or for moralizing, the readers (especially those of the young-

er sort, for whom principally such books are intended) will be impatient till they disentangle themselves of these digressions, and fall in again with the story. This, I believe, will generally be the case, if the narrative be deeply interesting; and deeply interesting every narrative of this kind ought to be. One of the rules to be observed in the Aristotelean drama, is, that there be no scene in the piece superfluous. I wish the author of "Clarissa" had kept some such rule as this in his eye; that he had disposed all the parts of his work in such a manner, as that the reader, though always impatient for the catastrophe, should never be tempted to pass over any part, but should ever find the story rising upon him, so as that his passion for novelty should be fully gratified all along. For my own part, I was often chagrined at his tediousness, and frequently was obliged to turn to the contents of the volume, to relieve my mind a little from the rack of unsatisfied impatience; yet I doubt not, if I were now to read "Clarissa" a second time, I should find these tedious parts not the least useful. Whoever rails at Mr Richardson's tediousness, should recollect, that his design is more to instruct than to amuse; and that consequently

his tediousness is a pardonable fault, as the motive to it is so laudable.

“ With respect to the characters in “ Clarissa,” they are, I think, in general, particular and distinct enough. There is something similar in the characters of the three brothers, Harlowes, and at the same time something peculiar in each. The same thing may be observed, upon a comparison of others of the characters that are apparently pretty much alike. The character of Lovelace is wrought up with great art. In the first volume the reader sees something amiable enough in this character, sees what he thinks almost sufficient to engage the affections of Clarissa ; nor does he discover the deep-designing ruffian, till the third volume ; and yet so consistent are Lovelace’s designs, even then, with that character which he bears at the beginning, that the reader is not disappointed when he comes to trace out his villainy.

“ It is with some a very strong objection against our author, that he proposes to our imitation, what they call a perfect character in the person of Clarissa. Clarissa’s character is indeed exalted, but it is not *humanly* perfect. And in proposing a character something more than humanly perfect

to our imitation, I cannot at present discern any absurdity. For is it not recommended to those who study to excel in any art or science, that they form themselves after the most perfect models, even although it be morally impossible for them ever to attain the perfection of these models? Does not the celebrated judge of the sublime very strongly recommend this rule, when he proposes for the imitation of those who would attempt epic poetry and oratory, no less perfect patterns than Homer and Demosthenes? Nay, (if we may, without profanation, use this other illustration,) does not the scripture enjoin us to imitate the great Original of all perfection? This rule is founded in nature and reason. If the model be imperfect, the copies must of consequence be more imperfect; and so liable to error is the human mind, that we are as prone to imitate the faults as the excellencies of what is proposed for an original to us. Now, shall this rule be allowed to every other science, and not to the most important of all sciences—the science of life and manners? I know the grand objection is, that, to give a man or woman a perfect character, is out of nature. A character absolutely perfect, does not, we acknowledge, belong to man.

“ But what height of excellence even a human soul may arrive at, we cannot ascertain, till we have left no experiment untried. One who had never seen the tricks of a wire-dancer, would be apt to ridicule as fabulous the first accounts he should hear of those astonishing feats, of which long application and unwearied industry make these performers capable. Who can tell, what happy, what glorious effects might be produced, were an equal proportion of industry applied to the regulation of the passions, and the strengthening and improving the reasonable powers! Let not then the novelist be censured, if his hero or heroine be possessed of a proportion of virtue superior to what we have discovered in our acquaintance with mankind; provided the natural genius inherent in the hero or heroine, assisted by the improvements of the happiest education, be sufficient to render their virtues at least probable. Nature, we must remember, had endowed *Clarissa* with a genius of the most exalted kind, and a temperament of soul formed to receive the impressions of virtue. This genius, and this disposition, improved by the culture of a liberal and strictly virtuous education, amid the simplicity of a country life, could not fail to produce an admi-

rable character. Nor do I think this character (all circumstances considered) stretched beyond the limits of humanity. Clarissa's external conduct was indeed unblameable, (and I hope, for the honour of mankind, there are many to be found whose external conduct is unblameable,) but she often acknowledges her heart was not so. She owns, she was conceited and puffed up in her happy days, and not entirely proof against the suggestions of chagrin and despondency in her adversity. If, then, her character be perfect, we must call it (as we before called it) *humanly* perfect.

“ On the whole, I think Mr Richardson is, with regard to the manners of his heroine, entirely unworthy of blame.

“ You ask, What I think of Richardson's talents for the pathetic? In this respect, I think he has no equals among his own tribe of writers, and not many superiors even among the most celebrated tragedians. I said before, that he seems to be acquainted with the particular emotions that arise in the human heart on particular occasions. Several passages of his work I could point out in proof of this; I shall only at present give one instance, and that is, Clarissa's delirious letter to Love-

lace, (Vol. v. p. 309.) which no person can read without sensible emotion. The starts of phrenzy, of phrenzy in such a person, under such circumstances, are, I think, hit off in such a manner, as would not have been unworthy of Shakespeare himself. I shall transcribe a few lines from that letter, with which I cannot tell how much I was struck. “ But good, now, Lovelace, don’t set “ Mrs Sinclair upon me again. I never did her “ any harm. She so affrights me when I see her. “ Ever since—*When was it ? I cannot tell.* You “ can, I suppose.” This (*When was it ?*) suggests a great deal to my imagination. It is one of those soul-harrowing expressions which are seldom to be met with but in Shakespeare, and which are infinitely preferable to all the laboured harangues and verbose descriptions of a Dryden. I must add, that the full beauty of that phrase cannot be taken in but by one who is well acquainted with this part of the story. The descriptions of the arrest, and of Clarissa’s death, are very pathetic : and the author shows, by his account of the infamous Sinclair’s fate, that he has no mean talent at describing scenes of horror. There is something dreadfully striking in the penknife scene, as it is called, (Vol. vi. p. 60.) But, as it

is needless to be more particular, I cannot dismiss this criticism, without taking notice, that, however pathetic the account of the lady's misfortunes may be, *sorrow* will not (I think) be the prevailing passion in one who peruses it. If I mistake not, *indignation* at the infernal villainy of the ruffian, who is the author of these misfortunes, will not a little contribute to steel the heart against the softer impressions of sorrow; at least, will render them less penetrating. And yet, perhaps, either of these passions may be prevalent, according to the constitution of the reader.

“Richardson, I think, merits commendation for his carefully avoiding to hint the least anticipation of the catastrophe in the first volumes. The reader is left as much in the dark, with respect to events, as the interested persons themselves. This naturally results from the manner of writing which our author has chosen, and is no doubt one of the principal excellencies of his manner, compared with that of other novelists. But this matter is handled in the postscript to the work.

“I shall have done with my criticism on “Clarissa.” To point out faults is a disagreeable

task ; I chuse rather to insist upon beauties. Richardson, upon the whole, is an original writer ; and deserves well of his country, for giving it one of the most *useful* novels in the English language.

“ After allowing this writer so large a share of merit, perhaps it may be thought too trifling to censure his style. It is, indeed, sometimes very expressive. To have raised it above the familiar had been faulty. He has often coined words, which, in a literary correspondence is allowable. He varies his style with great judgment, and adapts it admirably to the different characters. If I were to find fault with it at all, I would only say, that, from an over-affectation of the familiar, he too often uses the parenthesis ; and, as he seldom unites the latter part of the period with the former, by a *recapitulating word* or two, he lays his reader under the necessity, especially where the parenthesis is long, of reading the sentence once and again, before he can catch the meaning and intent of the whole. I think the parenthesis ought to be used very sparingly ; and, when an author chuses to use it, he should condescend so far to the weakness of his reader’s memory, as to unite the disjointed parts of the

period by a few recapitulating words, as I venture to call them, prefixed to the latter clause.

“ I was surprised to find, at the end of such a work as the “ History of Clarissa,” a set of verses so very paltry as those inscribed to the author of “ Clarissa.” But, I believe, authors are on such occasions often at a loss, and find themselves obliged to prefer, not the quality of the complimentary verses, but the quality of the friendly rhymers themselves ; otherwise I should venture to pronounce Mr Richardson an inadequate judge of poetical merit. Take the following four lines, and tell me if you have ever seen more prosaic doggerel :

“ With streaming eyes, too late, the mother blames
 “ Her tame submission to the tyrant, James ;
 “ Even he, the gloomy father, o’er the hearse
 “ Laments his rashness, and recalls his curse.”*

* It is pleasing to compare this criticism of Dr Beattie’s on Richardson’s “ Clarissa,” written, when a very young man, in a private letter to a friend, with that which he afterwards gave to the world, at the distance of four-and-twenty years, in his “ Dissertation on Fable and Romance ;” § whence it will be seen, how accurately he had formed his opinion on the subject at so early a period of life.

§ Dissert. on Fable and Romance, p. 567.

Dr Beattie, as has been already mentioned, had given early indications of poetical genius. This, however, he had merely employed for the amusement of himself and his friends. He had indeed occasionally sent some verses to the Scots Magazine, published at Edinburgh.* But his first appearance in print, in his own character, was by the publication, in London, in the year 1760, of a small collection, entitled, "Original Poems and

* In the Scots Magazine, for the year 1756, p. 391, will be found a poem written by Dr Beattie, on reading the declaration of war, signed "*J. B. Kincardineshire, 7th June, 1756.*" In the same Magazine, for the year 1757, p. 258, there is an epitaph with the following words prefixed, "*designed for its author,*" which was signed "*Moriturus, K—d—esh—e,*" evidently Kincardineshire, like the former, which was certainly written by him; as the epitaph in the first edition of his Poems, p. 66, contains nearly the same thought, and the last stanza verbatim. In the Scots Magazine for 1758, p. 482, is the "Ode to Peace," signed "*Aberdeen, J. B.*" In the Scots Magazine, 1759, p. 134, is the "Elegy on the Death of Mrs Walker," signed "*J. B. Aberdeen, Feb. 1759.*" In the same year, p. 303, is the "Epitaph for a Messenger, written and published at the particular desire of the person for whom it was intended." It is signed, "*Mont. Abd. Ford. June 28, 1759.*" The contracted words are for *Montrose, Aberdeen, Fordoun.*

Translations," to which he prefixed his name, and dedicated it to the Earl of Erroll, in testimony of gratitude to that nobleman, to whom he was indebted for his chair in the university. *

This collection was very favourably received, and stamped Dr Beattie with the character of a poet of great and original genius. The public judgment in his favour must be considered, too, as the more valuable ; and indeed cannot, by any means, be suspected of partiality, when it is considered, that the poems were presented to the

* The contents of this small volume were :

“ Ode to Peace.

“ Retirement, an Ode.

“ Ode to Hope.

“ The Triumph of Melancholy.

“ An Elegy, occasioned by the Death of a Lady.

“ The Hares, a Fable.

‡ “ Epitaph.

‡ “ Epitaph on Two Brothers.

“ Elegy.

‡ “ Song in imitation of Shakespeare.

‡ “ Anacreon, Ode 22. translated.

‡ “ Invocation to Venus, from Lucretius, translated.

‡ “ Horace, Book II. Ode 10. translated.

‡ “ Horace, Book III. Ode 13. translated.

‡ “ The Ten Pastorals of Virgil, translated.”

Those pieces marked ‡, were never reprinted ; and the “ Ode to Peace,” as well as the “ Triumph of Melancholy,” were omitted out of his later editions.

world without any patronage, and with nothing but their own intrinsic merit to recommend them; for the name of the author had never been so much as heard of in London previous to their publication. The harmony of his numbers, however, the simplicity, yet force, and elegance of his diction, the brightness of his fancy, as well as the correct and appropriate sentiments throughout, were of themselves sufficient to command the applause of every competent judge.

Of the pieces in this collection, all are certainly not of equal merit. While the odes to "Peace," to "Hope," on "Retirement," breathe the true spirit of lyric poetry, and some of the elegiac poems are highly pathetic and affecting, fable seems to be a species of composition for which he had but little genius. It may therefore, probably, excite some wonder, that while, in the subsequent editions of his poems, he chose to retain the "Hares," a poem which seems to possess little other merit than smooth versification and a faultless moral, he should have omitted his beautiful "Ode to Peace," and the "Triumph of Melancholy." The concluding dozen lines of the "Hares," indeed, present a beautiful and glowing

picture of evening, and as such are deserving of no ordinary commendation. *

In this respect, however, Dr Beattie is not the first poet who has entertained a judgment of his own works, different from that which was held of them by the public. It is known, that Milton preferred the "Paradise Regained" to his divine poem of "Paradise Lost." Virgil is recorded to have ordered, on his death-bed, that the "Æneid" should be burnt, because he did not think it sufficiently finished for publication; and it is to the disobedience of his executors that we are indebted for the possession of that exquisite performance. Tasso new-modelled and injured his "Gierusalemme Liberata." And it may reasonably be doubted, from the specimen which Akenside has left of the manner in which he intended to alter his "Pleasures of the Imagination," whether that beautiful poem would have been improved by the experiment, had he lived to finish it. With all these authorities before me, I trust I shall stand acquitted of any impropriety, if I rescue from oblivion those two most beautiful poems, the "Ode

* The concluding lines of the "Hares" seem to me to possess beauty sufficient to entitle them to preservation. I have therefore ventured to place them in the Appendix, [F.]

to Peace,” and the “Triumph of Melancholy.” Let those who think differently from me in this respect, only take the trouble carefully to peruse the stanza III. 1. of the “Ode to Peace:”—

“Ambition, outside fair! within as foul
 “As fiends of fiercest heart below,
 “Who ride the hurricanes of fire, that roll
 “Their thundering vortex o’er the realms of woe,
 “Yon naked waste survey;
 “Where late was heard the flute’s mellifluous lay;
 “Where late the rosy-bosomed hours,
 “In loose array, danced lightly o’er the flowers;
 “Where late the shepherd told his tender tale;
 “And, wakened by the murmuring breeze of morn,
 “The voice of cheerful labour filled the dale;
 “And dove-eyed Plenty smiled, and waved her liberal horn.”

Or stanza IV. 3. of the same poem:—

“On Cuba’s utmost steep,*
 “Far leaning o’er the deep,
 “The goddess’ pensive form was seen,
 “Her robe, of nature’s varied green,
 “Waved on the gale; grief dimmed her radiant eyes,
 “Her bosom heaved with boding sighs.
 “She eyed the main; where gaining on the view,
 “Emerging from the ethereal blue,

* This alludes to the discovery of America by the Spaniards under Columbus. Those ravagers are said to have made their first descent on the islands in the Gulph of Florida, of which Cuba is one.—*Note of the Poet.*

“ ’Midst the dread pomp of war,
 “ Blazed the Iberian steamer from afar :
 “ She saw ; and, on refulgent pinions borne,
 “ Slow winged her way sublime, and mingled with the morn.”

And then let them say, if they think I have done wrong in preserving this fine poem, by placing it in the Appendix. * For similar reasons, I have also inserted in the Appendix the “ Triumph of Melancholy,” wishing that this poem also should not be entirely lost. †

The epitaph, printed at p. 66. of the collection of the year 1760, without any particular address, I have also ventured to place in the Appendix ; because, from the words prefixed to it in its original form, in the Scots Magazine which I have already quoted, it seems certainly to have been intended as an epitaph for himself ; a circumstance whence it unquestionably derives an additional value.

The beautiful “ Epitaph on Two Brothers,” was written on occasion of a fatal accident which actually took place ; when, in crossing the river Southesk on horseback, in the neighbourhood of Montrose, in the county of Angus, two young

* Vide Appendix, [G.]

† Vide Appendix, [H.]

men, brothers, of the name of Leitch, were carried down by the stream, and both drowned. Their bodies were afterwards found clasped in each other's arms. In such compositions it was that Dr Beattie eminently excelled. Yet that piece, too, he has omitted from the later editions of his poems ; but I have ventured to place it also in the Appendix.*

Of this collection of Dr Beattie's poetical pieces, the largest share consisted of poetical translations from the classics, and of these the principal were the "Pastorals of Virgil." Speaking of them, he says in his preface, that "Mr Dryden's translation will be admired as long as the English language is understood, for that fluent and graceful energy of expression, which distinguishes all the writings of that poet. In his compositions," continues Beattie, "even in those which have been censured as inaccurate, we are charmed with

"Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn."

"And if we find any thing blameable, we are inclined to impute it, not to any defect in his

* Vide Appendix, [I.]

“ own genius or taste, but to the depravity of the
“ age in which it was his misfortune to live.

“ The translation of Virgil, published some
“ years ago by the learned and ingenious Mr Jo-
“ seph Warton,” he goes on, “ did not come into
“ my hands till long after what is now offered to
“ the public was finished. The perusal of these
“ two masterly versions,” he says, “ might have
“ effectually discouraged the publication of the
“ following, had he ever intended it as a rival to
“ either of the others. But he disclaims that in-
“ tention, and would wish only to be thought an
“ humble copier of Virgil. And he hopes that
“ his translation will be pardoned, if, in a few
“ particular instances, it be found to have set any
“ of the beauties of the admired original in a
“ more conspicuous point of view to the English
“ reader.”

After a declaration so modest on the part of the author, it would not be fair to scrutinize this translation too severely, more especially as it was never republished after the first edition; yet it is no mean praise, that it may be read with satisfaction even after the translation of Dryden, of which Dr Johnson, in his life of that great poet,

speaks with such high commendation : * and whoever shall take the trouble of comparing the translations of Dryden and of Beattie with the original, will not probably deny, that Beattie comes the nearest to the sense of the author, with, at the same time, no inconsiderable portion of poetical spirit. †

After all, a better translation of Virgil than any we yet have seen, seems to be a work more to be wished for than expected. Dr Beattie himself has said in another place, that “ it is not possible “ for one who is ignorant of Latin, to have any “ adequate notion of Virgil. The choice of his “ words, and the modulation of his numbers, “ have never been copied with tolerable success “ in any other tongue.” ‡

In the following letter we have an account of one of those coincidences in writing, of which it is sometimes difficult to say, whether they happen by accident, or are to be classed under the head of plagiarism.

It seems to me to be by no means improbable, that both the translator of Musæus and Dr Beat-

* Lives of the English Poets, Vol. ii. 12mo, p. 283.

† Vide Appendix, [K.]

‡ Essays on the Utility of Classical Learning, p. 758.

tie may have written the line in question, under an impression on the memory, even unknown to themselves, of the beautiful threnody of David on the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, in which the royal Hebrew bard employs the very same turn of expression. *

LETTER II.

DR BEATTIE TO ROBERT ARBUTHNOT, ESQ.

Aberdeen, 18th August, 1760.

“ In a translation, just published, of Musæus’ Loves of “ Hero and Leander,” I was surprised to find the following line,

“ They lived united, and united died;”

which is exactly the same with one in my epitaph on the two brothers. In order to obviate the imputation commonly applied in such cases, I have subjoined the date to my little piece, which (juxta MS. vetus) appears to be the first of November, 1757. Instances of this sameness

* 2 Kings, ch. i. v. 23.

in expression, as well as sentiment, have so often happened, even in my experience, that I have wondered at some of the criterions proposed for the detection of imitations, by the accurate and judicious Mr Hurd,* in his letters to Mr Mason. I remember, in particular, he will not allow Milton the honour of making Death

“ Grin horribly, a ghastly smile,”

because Spenser mentions grinning in some part of his *Fairy Queen*. That pamphlet of Mr Hurd's is, notwithstanding, an ingenious performance, and evinces a great compass of classical knowledge, both ancient and modern.

“ I have never yet seen the “*Fragments of Highland Poetry*.” I see one of these fragments versified in a late Magazine, and to better purpose (a few passages excepted) than I did expect. But does not the spirit of such compositions evaporate, when it is strained through the syllable-squeezing alembic? Did you ever see a version of the Psalms of David in metre, of Job, or the Song of Solomon, that possessed all the pathos, and simplicity, and sublimity of our prose trans-

* The present Lord Bishop of Worcester.

lation? The motley mixture of antique and modern phrases, that must necessarily take place in all such paraphrases, gives a grotesque appearance to the whole, and puts one in mind of Cato arrayed in a full-bottomed periwig."

The following letter contains some strictures on Rousseau's "Eloise;" of which he afterwards gave a short character in his "Dissertation on Fable and Romance," p. 570.

LETTER III.

DR BEATTIE TO ROBERT ARBUTHNOT, ESQ.

Aberdeen, 24th October, 1761.

"I am just now employed in reading the first volume of the "Nouvelle Eloise." The author seems to possess great knowledge of the human heart: his reflections, in general, are beautiful, original, and just; his sensibility exquisite, and his eloquence wonderfully affecting. But, though

I grant him these excellencies, I must be pardon-
ed, when I censure either his judgment or his
virtue. If he meant to promote the cause of vir-
tue, it was certainly a proof of an egregious failure
in his judgment, that he made choice of a fable
whose tendency seems directly contrary. Van-
brugh, and Congreve, and Rochester, only in-
flame the imagination; Rousseau poisons the
principles, and misleads the understanding: the
former is a momentary evil, the other is perma-
nent. And as a harlot, when she assumes the
garb, the features, and the language of virtue, is
much more dangerous than when she speaks her
own words, and wears her proper dress; so I think
the “*Nouvelle Eloise*” a much more dangerous
book than all the ribaldry printed in the reign of
Charles the Second.”

The following letter, written at the period when
“*Ossian's Poems*” made their first appearance,
shows the accuracy of Dr Beattie's critical taste
and judgment, which could not be swayed from
the genuine dictates of truth and nature in poetry,

even by the strong torrent of applause with which that singular production was received at that time, by the learned as well as unlearned of this country.

LETTER IV.

DR BEATTIE TO ROBERT ARBUTHNOT, ESQ.

Aberdeen, 29th March, 1762.

“ I have now read Fingal ; but I am at a loss to know whether I should give you my opinion of it or not. My humble tribute of praise (were I disposed to praise it) would be lost amidst that universal deluge of approbation poured upon it, both from the critics of London and of Scotland. And were I inclined to censure it, my suffrage would be as little regarded as the loitering javelin which palsied Priam threw against the heaven-tempered shield of Pyrrhus—*telum imbelle sine ictu*. The particular beauties of this wonderful work are irresistibly striking, and I flatter myself that I am as sensible of them as another. But to that part of its merit which exalts it, considered as a whole, above the Iliad or Æneid,

and its author above Homer or Virgil, I am insensible. Yet I understand, that of critics not a few aver Ossian to have been a greater genius than either of these poets. Yet a little while, and, I doubt not, the world will be of a different opinion. Homer was as much admired about three months ago—I speak not of the present moment, for Ossian just now is all in all—I say, Homer was lately admired as much as he was three thousand years ago. Will the admiration of our Highland bard be as permanent? And will it be as universal as learning itself?

“ Knowledge of the human heart is a science of the highest dignity. It is recommended, not only by its own importance, but also by this, that none but an exalted genius is capable of it. To delineate the objects of the material world requires a fine imagination, but to penetrate into the mental system, and to describe its different objects, with all their distinguishing (though sometimes almost imperceptible) peculiarities, requires an imagination far more extensive and vigorous. It is this kind of imagination which appears so conspicuous in the works of Shakespeare and Homer, and which, in my opinion, raises them above all other poets whatsoever; I mean

not only that talent by which they can adapt themselves to the heart of their readers, and excite whatever affection they please, in which the former plainly stands unrivalled; I mean also that wonderfully penetrating and plastic faculty, which is capable of representing every species of character, not, as our ordinary poets do, by a high shoulder, a wry mouth, or gigantic stature, but by hitting off, with a delicate hand, the distinguishing feature, and that in such a manner as makes it easily known from all others whatsoever, however similar to a superficial eye. Hotspur and Henry V. are heroes resembling one another, yet very distinct in their characters; Falstaff, and Pistol, and Bardolph, are buffoons, but each in his own way; Desdemona and Juliet are not the same; Bottom, and Dogberry, and the grave-diggers, are different characters: and the same may be said of the most similar of Homer's characters; each has some mark that makes him essentially different from the rest. But these great masters are not more eminent in distinguishing, than in completing their characters. I am a little acquainted with a Cato, a Sempronius, a Tinsel, a Sir Charles Easy, &c. but I am perfectly acquainted with Achilles,

Hector, Falstaff, Lear, Pistol, and Quickly ; I know them more thoroughly than any other persons of my acquaintance.

“ If this accurate delineation of character be allowed the highest species of poetry, (and this, I think, is generally allowed,) may I not ask, whether Ossian is not extremely defective in the *highest* species of poetry? It is said, indeed, that this poet lived in an age when mankind, being in a state of almost total barbarism, were incapable of that diversity of character which is found in countries improved by commerce and learning, and that, therefore, he had no materials for a diversity of character. But it is certain, that diversities of character are found among the rudest savages ; and it is the poet's business, not to portray the characters as they really exist, (which is left to the historian,) but to represent them such as they *might have* existed. But, to have done, Ossian seems really to have very little knowledge of the human heart ; his chief talent lies in describing inanimate objects, and therefore he belongs, (according to my principles,) not to the highest, but to an inferior order of poets.”

It is to be observed, that, in this letter, Dr Beattie does not at all enter into the question respecting the authenticity of the poems of Ossian. He confines his strictures merely to their merit as poetical compositions, such as we have them, of whatsoever period. And he views them solely in comparison with other poets of acknowledged celebrity.

The controversy respecting the authenticity of these poems of "Ossian" is well known. When Macpherson published first his "Fingal," and afterwards his "Temora," he exhibited them as being complete and regular epic poems, of very remote antiquity, which had existed in the Highlands and islands of Scotland, although the parts had been scattered and disjointed, through lapse of time; which he had searched for, and been so fortunate as to discover; and which, when thus collected, and brought together into regular order, he had translated and published as a whole. This story, as told by Macpherson, was at first believed by many, in its full extent, even by men

of high character in the literary world. Dr Blair, in particular, was so persuaded of their being completely genuine, as to write a dissertation in proof of their antiquity, and illustrative of their beauties.* This opinion he formed partly from the apparent similarity between the poetry thus attributed to Ossian, and that of some detached pieces traditionally preserved in the Highlands, in which the same names were found, as well as from some other points of resemblance; and partly perhaps from a national vanity, arising from the possession of so extraordinary a performance as “Fingal” certainly is, if genuine.

Others, again, insisted, and do still insist, that the whole was an impudent forgery of Macpherson’s own, which, having once produced as the work of the Highland bard, he would not retract, notwithstanding many arguments against their authenticity, drawn from their own internal evidence, as well as from his refusal to comply with the demands repeatedly made upon him to put an end to the controversy, by exhibiting the

* “A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal. By Hugh Blair, D. D. one of the Ministers of the High Church, and Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the University of Edinburgh.”

original manuscript of the poems which he had translated. At the head of this set of critics was Dr Johnson, who, in his tour to the Hebrides, has strenuously maintained their being altogether a forgery.

That there never existed poems exactly in the form in which "Fingal" and "Temora" were published by Macpherson, seems now to be the opinion most generally entertained. But it is still maintained by many, with the strongest appearance of reason, that there certainly were poetical compositions, consisting of songs, and ballads, and other pieces, existing in the Highlands many years before Macpherson was born, of which sufficient traces are even yet to be found in various parts of that country, some in a more, some in a less perfect form. From these scattered fragments it probably was, that Macpherson, by imitations and additions of his own, wrought his work into a whole, and thus gave it the appearance, in some degree, of a regular epic poem. Nor is it very difficult, perhaps, to conceive how these fragments may have been handed down from father to son, even without the use of writing, among a people who, with scarcely any knowledge of agriculture, commerce,

or useful arts, filled up the vacancies of a pastoral life, by the recital of those popular songs and ballads. This is a practice not peculiar to the Highlands of Scotland, but to be found in all nations, who, by their local situation, in the midst of hills and fastnesses, are cut off from any great degree of intercourse with neighbouring countries, farther advanced in the arts of polished life. Nor will it appear so very wonderful, if, in this manner, that poetry may have been preserved, which is believed by many to have existed in the Highlands, when the powers of the memory are considered, and the strength it acquired by the perpetual exercise of listening to the bards, who were an appendage of the state and magnificence of a Highland chieftain.

But Macpherson is dead, so that no farther information can be obtained from him; and the researches that are now made, must be attended with great difficulty, when the means of enquiry are daily becoming fewer, from the lapse of time, and the gradual disuse of those local manners and customs by which the Highlanders were once distinguished.

The misfortune therefore is, that it seems to be almost impossible to detect the imitations and

interpolations which Macpherson has intermixed, with what may have been genuine, and original of ancient Gaelic poetry, of the reality of which, in some form or other, I cannot help being myself a strong believer. *

In the following letter, Dr Beattie gives the first hint of his "Essay on Poetry," composed that year, but not published till 1776, along with the edition, in quarto, of his "Essay on Truth."

In this letter, mention also is made of a poem under the title of the "Grotesquiad," which I never either saw or heard of. It was undoubtedly of the mock heroic or satiric kind, a species of poetry of which Dr Beattie used to express himself uncommonly fond; and being, in all likelihood, a *jeu d'esprit* of the moment, he had wisely suppressed it. I find no trace of any such

* The Highland Society of Edinburgh are at present engaged in an investigation of the authenticity of the "Poems of Ossian," and from their enquiries, it is expected that considerable light will be thrown on the subject.

production among his papers. He speaks likewise of his translation of Addison's "Battle of the Pigmies and Cranes," which has since been published.

LETTER V.

DR BEATTIE TO ROBERT ARBUTHNOT, ESQ.

Aberdeen, 28th December, 1762.

* * * * * Pray what is like to be the fate of the "Grotesquiad?" It is natural for a father to be concerned about his offspring, though it be spurious. I shall leave it to you to do with that poem as you think proper. I think you said that Pitt had translated the "Pigmies" of Addison.

"You will perhaps remember, that in March last I wrote a letter to you, containing some strictures on the "Poems of Ossian," then newly published. The remark which I made on that occasion, was, that the poetry of that old bard, however exquisite in its kind, was not the highest in dignity, and that, therefore, its author could have no title to be ranked above Milton,

or Homer, or Shakespeare, who have all made a distinguished figure in the highest species of poetry. This was a subject on which I often had occasion to expatiate in conversation, while the rage of extolling the Highland bard continued. It was then that I formed a design of throwing together some thoughts, by way of essay, on the comparative dignity of the several kinds of poetry; a subject which, so far as I know, has never been treated in a philosophical manner by any critic, ancient or modern. As I applied my thoughts more seriously to this inquiry, I found the plan enlarge itself to a very considerable extent. I have, however, reduced it to something of form, and find that it will naturally consist of three parts. The first part contains a philosophical inquiry into the nature of poetry in general, considered as an imitation of nature, by means of language. In the second part, I propose to consider the principles which determine the degrees of our approbation in the imitative arts, particularly poetry. In the third part, I intend to consider the several kinds of poetry, with a view to these principles, and to determine their comparative excellence according to the degrees of approbation which they naturally command.

The first part, which is finished, made a discourse of, an hour and a half, which I read to a philosophical society, composed of some of our literati, who were very well pleased with it, and seemed to think that I had made several new observations, and set some points of criticism in a new light. The discussion of the second and third parts I intend to attempt during the summer vacation."

In the summer of 1763, Dr Beattie went, for the first time, to London. Of this journey I am not able to give any account, as it had taken place before my acquaintance with him commenced. It was most probably a journey of curiosity merely; for Beattie was at that time unknown in London, and had scarcely any acquaintance there, except the late Andrew Millar, the bookseller, who had published his poems in the year 1760, of whom I find him complaining bitterly in some of his letters, for his negligence in not promoting their sale. In one of his letters to Mr Arbuthnot, after his return home, he men-

tions a gentleman of Scotland, of their mutual acquaintance, who had accompanied him on a visit to Pope's house at Twickenham.

In some of his letters, at this time, he gives an intimation of a poem upon which he was at work, under the title of the "Judgment of Paris," a classical fable known to every school-boy. Ancient authors have mentioned it as a poetical or legendary tale; and, in modern times, Congreve has written a masque under that title, and upon the ancient plan. Dr Beattie wished to follow a different course, and thought he could render his "Judgment of Paris" subservient to the cause of virtue, by personifying wisdom, ambition, and pleasure, in the characters of his three goddesses. It was published in the spring of 1765.*

The poem opens with a most beautiful description of the landscape where the scene is laid; and the appearance of the three goddesses, with

* Of the plan and intended mode of execution of this poem, he gives an account in two letters to Mr Arbuthnot, which I have thought it right to preserve, by inserting them in the Appendix: For although the poem was never republished after the edition of the year 1766, copies of it are still preserved in many libraries; and it is but justice to Dr Beattie, that the public should know what his original design was in writing the poem. Appendix, [L.]

their characteristic attributes, is described in a vein of the richest imagery; which I have thought it worth while to preserve, by inserting those lines in the Appendix. But it will probably be thought, that the poet's personification of virtues, under the semblance of those celestial personages, is rather too metaphysical, and is scarcely compensated by the beauties of the poetry. This, indeed, seems to have been pretty much the decision of the public; for the "Judgment of Paris" never was a popular poem. It was republished in the edition of Beattie's poems in the year 1768; but he has himself omitted it in all his subsequent editions.

LETTER VI.

DR BEATTIE TO ROBERT ARBUTHNOT, ESQ.

Aberdeen, 12th December, 1763.

"Since you left us, I have been reading Tasso's "Jerusalem," in the translation lately published by Hoole. I was not a little anxious to peruse a poem which is so famous over all Europe, and has so often been mentioned as a rival to the "Iliad,"

“Æneid,” and “Paradise Lost.” It is certainly a noble work; and though it seems to me to be inferior to the three poems just mentioned, yet I cannot help thinking it in the rank next to these. As for the other modern attempts at the “Epopée,” the “Henriade” of Voltaire, the “Epigoniad” of Wilkie, the “Leonidas” of Glover, not to mention the “Arthur” of Blackmore, they are not to be compared with it. Tasso possesses an exuberant and sublime imagination, though in exuberance it seems, in my opinion, inferior to our Spenser, and in sublimity inferior to Milton. Were I to compare Milton’s genius with Tasso’s, I would say, that the sublime of the latter is flashy and fluctuating, while that of the former diffuses an uniform, steady, and vigorous blaze: Milton is more majestic, Tasso more dazzling. Dryden, it seems, was of opinion, that the “Jerusalem Delivered” was the only poem of modern times that deserved the name of epic; but it is certain that criticism was not this writer’s talent; and I think it is evident, from some passages of his works, that he either did not, or would not, understand the “Paradise Lost.” Tasso borrows his plot and principal characters from Homer, but his manner resembles Virgil’s.

He is certainly much obliged to Virgil, and scruples not to imitate, nor to translate, him on many occasions. In the *pathetic* he is far inferior both to Homer, to Virgil, and to Milton. His characters, though different, are not always distinct, and want those masterly and distinguishing strokes which the genius of Homer and Shakespeare, and of them only, knows how to delineate. Tasso excels in describing pleasurable scenes, and seems peculiarly fond of such as have a reference to the passion of love. Yet, in characterising this passion, he is far inferior, not only to Milton, but also to Virgil, whose *fourth book* he has been at great pains to imitate. The translation is smooth and flowing; but in dignity, and variety of numbers, is often defective, and often labours under a feebleness and prolixity of phrase, evidently proceeding either from want of skill, or from want of leisure in the versifier."

In the month of November 1764, Churchill died; a writer who attracted much notice in his day, not only from his having assumed the character of an open and professed satirist, but from his possessing no inconsiderable strength of thought, with a vigorous, though slovenly, energy of expression, which, notwithstanding all his profaneness, faction, calumny, and ribaldry, still preserves, in a certain degree, his reputation as a poet. As Churchill, at the time of his death, was extremely unpopular in Scotland, not only on account of some of his own poetical productions, but of his connexion with Wilkes, who, at that time, was publishing "The North Briton;" a periodical paper, peculiarly levelled against Scotland, it was proposed to Dr Beattie, that he should write some verses on the death of Churchill; a task which he readily undertook.

The "Verses on the Death of Churchill" appeared soon after, without the author's name, and had a rapid sale. Of this poem Dr Beattie him-

self appears, by his letters written at the time, to have been exceedingly fond; and they who yet remember the violence of the political contests of those days, with what intemperate zeal Churchill prostituted his poetical talents in the support of the plans and pursuits of the seditious demagogues, who, under the banners of Wilkes, set all decency, good order, and good government, at defiance, will not wonder that Dr Beattie, whose principles and opinions were the very reverse of theirs, should feel his indignation roused by the popular applause with which he saw Churchill distinguished while he lived, and heard of the honours which were said to be preparing for his memory when dead, by the proposal of erecting a monument to him in Westminster Abbey. The lines are therefore marked with more than ordinary asperity, though perhaps not more than the occasion warranted. The allusion, indeed, in the conclusion of the poem, was deservedly found fault with. In the edition of Dr Beattie's poems, published the year following, he omitted the name of "Churchill," and prefaced the verses with an address in prose, in which he vindicates the keenness of his satire. In the sub-

sequent editions of his poetical works,* he omitted the lines altogether.

In the autumn of the year 1765, Mr Gray, whose “Elegy in a Country Church-yard,” and noble lyric compositions, have raised his name to the first rank of British poets, came to Scotland on a visit to the late Earl of Strathmore. Dr Beattie, who was an enthusiastic admirer of Gray, as soon as he heard of his arrival, addressed to him the following letter. This procured to Dr Beattie an invitation to Glammis castle, which led to a friendship and correspondence between these two eminent poets and amiable men, which continued, without interruption, till the death of Mr Gray, on the 31st July, 1771.

LETTER VII.

DR BEATTIE TO MR GRAY.

Marischal College of Aberdeen, 30th August, 1765.

“If I thought it necessary to offer an apology for venturing to address you in this abrupt man-

* Vide Appendix, [M.]

ner, I should be very much at a loss how to begin. I might plead my admiration of your genius, and my attachment to your character; but who is he, that could not, with truth, urge the same excuse for intruding upon your retirement? I might plead my earnest desire to be personally acquainted with a man whom I have so long and so passionately admired in his writings; but thousands, of greater consequence than I, are ambitious of the same honour. I, indeed, must either flatter myself that no apology is necessary, or otherwise, I must despair of obtaining what has long been the object of my most ardent wishes; I must for ever forfeit all hopes of seeing you, and conversing with you.

“ It was yesterday I received the agreeable news of your being in Scotland, and of your intending to visit some parts of it. Will you permit us to hope, that we shall have an opportunity, at Aberdeen, of thanking you in person, for the honour you have done to Britain, and to the poetic art, by your inestimable compositions, and of offering you all that we have that deserves your acceptance, namely, hearts full of esteem, respect, and affection? If you cannot come so far northward, let me at least be acquainted with the

place of your residence, and permitted to wait on you. Forgive, sir, this request; forgive me if I urge it with earnestness, for indeed it concerns me nearly; and do me the justice to believe, that I am, with the most sincere attachment, and most respectful esteem, &c. &c. &c.

“ P.S. Dr Carlyle of Musselburgh, and Dr Wight of Glasgow, acquainted me of your being in Scotland. It was from them I learned that my name was not wholly unknown to you.”



It was in the course of this year, 1765, that my acquaintance with Dr Beattie began. We first met at the house of our mutual friend, Mr Arbuthnot, in Edinburgh; and having occasion to pass some time that autumn in Aberdeenshire, I renewed my intercourse with him there. As those with whom he chiefly associated at Aberdeen were my most intimate friends, we were much together; and that friendship and correspondence took place between us, which I regarded, not only as my pride, but as a source of

the purest pleasure; and I may fairly add, that if I am not a better man for the correspondence and instructive conversation of Dr Beattie, great will be my condemnation at my last account.

From that correspondence, therefore, which continued to the end of his days, when the decay of his faculties would not permit him to carry it on any longer, I am now enabled to begin to elucidate still farther his writings and his character.

But I am not without my apprehensions here, that I may be charged with no small degree of vanity, for publishing to the world those warm expressions of esteem, affection, and gratitude towards me, which occur in several of the letters addressed to me by Dr Beattie. And I own I *do* feel some little pride (an honest pride, I hope) in preserving and recording *some* testimonies of that favourable opinion which such a man as Dr Beattie was pleased to entertain of me. I can, however, at the same time assure the reader, (as some apology for myself,) that I have suppressed much stronger passages of that nature, and a much larger number of them, than I have allowed myself to retain.

LETTER VIII.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

Aberdeen, 7th December, 1765.

“ The receipt of your very obliging letter ought to have been sooner acknowledged. I should abhor myself, had my delay been owing to indolence: possessed as I am with a most grateful sense of your favours, with the highest regard for your friendship, and the most zealous attachment to your character: my delay was indeed owing to another cause.

“ I have been employed for some time past in writing a kind of poetical epistle to Mr Blacklock, in return for a present which he was so kind as make me of his works, accompanied with a very handsome copy of verses; and I had intended to send under the same cover my letter to you, and my verses to Mr Blacklock. The verses are indeed finished; but as there are some passages in them which seem to need correction, I must, for some time, let them lie by me; for I have found by experience, that I am a much more

impartial judge of such of my works as I have almost quite forgotten, than of such as are fresh in my memory. The epistle, when ready, will be sent to Dr Gregory's care, and he will show it to you and to Mr Arbuthnot as soon as it comes to hand.

“ I hope you will pardon me, if I cannot return such an answer to your letter as it deserves. I want words to express how much I value your friendship. Allow me to assure you, that I am not one of the ungrateful, nor (if good intentions can confer any merit on a character) one of the undeserving. The friendship of the good is the object of my highest ambition: if I cannot lay claim to it, I shall at least approve myself not entirely unworthy of it. Let me be tried by my conduct; and if I shall ever give a good man reason to be ashamed of owning me for his friend, then let my name be despised to the latest posterity.

“ I intend, if possible, to publish this winter a new edition of all my original pieces of poetry. I wrote to Mr Arbuthnot some time ago, to treat with a bookseller, but have received no answer, which disappoints me a good deal, as the season is fast advancing, and as it will soon be too late

to apply to another, in case the person to whom he promised to apply should decline my offer.— Pray, will you advise me to insert the verses on Churchill in the collection? I do not think them the worst part of my works, and therefore should be sorry to lose them altogether. My scheme, at present, is to strike out the name of Churchill, and insert a fictitious one. But in this I would wish to be directed by my friends.

“ I am sorry you did not see Mr Gray on his return; you would have been much pleased with him. Setting aside his merit as a poet, which, however, in my opinion, is greater than any of his contemporaries can boast, in this or in any other nation, I found him possessed of the most exact taste, the soundest judgment, and the most extensive learning. He is happy in a singular facility of expression. His conversation abounds in original observations, delivered with no appearance of sententious formality, and seeming to arise spontaneously without study or premeditation. I passed two very agreeable days with him at Glammis, and found him as easy in his manners, and as communicative and frank, as I could have wished.”

The following letter, from Dr Beattie to Dr Blacklock,* is the first, I find, of their correspondence, and does equal honour to his head and to his heart.

LETTER IX.

DR BEATTIE TO DR BLACKLOCK.*

Aberdeen, 15th January, 1766.

“ I cannot express how agreeably I was flattered by the present you were pleased to make me of your works, and by the elegant verses which accompanied it. The acquaintance of good men has always appeared to me almost the only temporal object worthy of my ambition; and I can, with great sincerity, declare, that the consciousness of having attained your friendship, yields me much higher pleasure than any compliments

* For some account of Dr Blacklock, see Appendix, [N.]

that can be paid to my poor merit. Your genius and character I have long known and admired; and although remoteness of place and diversity of employment had almost extinguished my hopes of becoming personally acquainted with you, I still flattered myself, that, in some way or other, I should find an opportunity of letting you know how highly I esteem and love you. This opportunity I have found at last, and it is with the utmost pleasure that I avail myself of it.

“ On receiving your valuable present, I resolved to attempt an answer in verse; but, by reason of many unavoidable interruptions from business, from bad health, and from studies of a most unpoetical nature, it advanced more slowly than I could have wished. I found means, however, to bring it to a conclusion two months ago, and sent it in a cover addressed to Dr Gregory. I heard, some days ago, that it had come safely to hand, and that you was pleased to give it a favourable reception. You will easily perceive, by its miscellaneousness, that the composition of it must have been interrupted with frequent and long intervals; yet I have attempted to give it a kind of unity, and I hope, upon the whole, it is not more incoherent than a poetical epistle may

be allowed to be. There is, perhaps, more asperity in it than you can approve; there is, indeed, more than I will undertake to excuse; but when one dips into certain subjects, it is perhaps difficult to preserve that meekness of expression, and tame acquiescence of sentiment, which, in the ordinary intercourse of mankind, is, for the most part, so agreeable. But, whatever you may think of particular expressions, you will not blame the general design; the thoughts, I trust, are such as become an honest man, who is more ambitious of approving himself to his own conscience than to the world. Let the sincerity of the writer be also pleaded in favour of the essay; for, though written in rhyme, it is a faithful transcript of the real sentiments of his heart. Indeed, I have always thought it a piece of contemptible affectation in an author to assume, in his writings, a character which is none of his own. If a man's sentiments be bad, he ought to conceal them altogether; but, if good, I see no reason why he should be ashamed of them. However, as a very general prejudice prevails against the sincerity of poetical protestations, I could not rest till I had assured you, in plain prose, that I set a very high value upon your friendship, and will ever account

it my honour to act such a part as may merit the continuance of it.

“ That you may long live an honour to your country, a blessing to your family, and the delight of your acquaintance, is my earnest prayer.”

LETTER X.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

Aberdeen, 30th January, 1766.

“ Your zeal in promoting my interest demands my warmest acknowledgments; yet, for want of adequate expressions, I scarce know in what manner to pay them. I must therefore leave you to guess at my gratitude, by the emotions which would arise in your own heart, on receiving a very important favour from a person of whom you had merited nothing, and to whom you could make no just return.

“ I suppose you have seen my letter to Dr Blacklock. I hope, in due time, to be acquainted with your sentiments concerning it. I know not whether I have gained my point or not: but, in composing that letter, I was more studious of

simplicity of diction, than in any other of my pieces. I am not, indeed, in this respect, so very scrupulous as some critics of these times. I see no harm in using an expressive epithet, when, without the use of such an epithet, one cannot do justice to his idea. Even a compounded epithet, provided it be suitable to the genius of our language, and authenticated by some good writer, may often, in my opinion, produce a good effect. My notion of simplicity discards every thing from style, which is affected, superfluous, indefinite, or obscure; but admits every grace, which, without encumbering a sentiment, does really embellish and enforce it. I am no friend to those prettinesses of modern style, which one may call the pompous earrings, and flounces of the muses, which, with some writers, are so highly in vogue at present; they may, by their glare and fluttering, take off the eye from imperfections; but I am convinced they disguise and disfigure the charms of genuine beauty.

“ I have of late been much engaged in metaphysics; at least I have been labouring with all my might to overturn that visionary science. I am a member of a club in this town, who style themselves the Philosophical Society. We have

meetings every fortnight, and deliver discourses in our turn. I hope you will not think the worse of this Society, when I tell you, that to it the world is indebted for “A comparative View of the Faculties of Man,” and “An Enquiry into Human Nature, on the principles of Common Sense.” Criticism is the field in which I have hitherto (chiefly at least) chosen to expatiate; but an accidental question lately furnished me with a hint, which I made the subject of a two hours discourse at our last meeting. I have for some time wished for an opportunity of publishing something relating to the business of my own profession, and I think I have now found an opportunity; for the doctrine of my last discourse seems to be of importance, and I have already finished two-thirds of my plan. My doctrine is this: that as we know nothing of the eternal relations of things, *that* to us *is* and must be *truth*, which we feel that we must believe; and *that* to us is falsehood, which we feel that we must disbelieve. I have shown that all genuine reasoning does ultimately terminate in certain principles, which it is impossible to disbelieve, and as impossible to prove: that therefore the ultimate standard of truth to us is common sense, or that in-

instinctive conviction into which all true reasoning does resolve itself: that therefore what contradicts common sense is in itself absurd, however subtle the arguments which support it: for such is the ambiguity and insufficiency of language, that it is easy to argue on either side of any question with acuteness sufficient to confound one who is not expert in the art of reasoning. My principles, in the main, are not essentially different from Dr Reid's; but they seem to offer a more compendious method of destroying scepticism. I intend to show, (and have already in part shown,) that all sophistical reasoning is marked with certain characters which distinguish it from true investigation: and thus I flatter myself I shall be able to discover a method of detecting sophistry, even when one is not able to give a logical confutation of its arguments. I intend farther to enquire into the nature of that modification of intellect which qualifies a man for being a sceptic; and I think I am able to prove that it is not genius, but the want of it. However, it will be summer before I can finish my project. I own it is not without indignation, that I see sceptics and their writings (which are

the bane not only of science, but also of virtue) so much in vogue in the present age.”

In the summer of 1766, a new edition of Dr Beattie's Poems was published in London. In this edition, all his poetical translations were omitted; and of the pieces formerly published, only the following were retained—

“ The Ode to Peace.

“ Retirement, an Ode.

“ Ode to Hope.

“ The Triumph of Melancholy.

“ Elegy occasioned by the Death of a Lady.

“ The Hares, a Fable.”

On some of these earlier pieces he had made considerable improvements; and he had added,

“ The Judgment of Paris,”

which had been printed as a pamphlet; also,

“ Verses, on the Report of a Monument to be erected in Westminster Abbey, to the Memory of a late Author.”

These were the verses on the death of Churchill, which had also been published separately. From

this poem he had withdrawn Churchill's name, and substituted that of "Bufo," and had prefaced it with an apologetical letter.

"The Wolf and the Shepherds, a Fable;" in praise of which much cannot be said; for it has been already remarked, that "Fable" was by no means a species of composition in which Dr Beattie excelled.

"An Epistle to the Reverend Mr (afterwards Dr) Thomas Blacklock." This is a most excellent performance. While at the same time it pays many just and striking compliments to Dr Blacklock, it may be considered as of the nature of an ethic epistle, breathing a noble spirit and freedom of sentiment, with great richness of poetry and harmony of versification.

The last piece of the collection is "The Battle of the Pigmies and the Cranes;" a translation from Addison's "Pygmæo-gerano-machia," which certainly is at least equal to, if it does not surpass, the original. Of this piece, he was himself more than usually fond. "It is written," says he, in a letter to a friend, "in Ovid's manner. I have affected a greater solemnity of style and versification, and have bestowed a few heightening touches on all the images."

Of these additional pieces, “The Judgment of Paris,” the “Lines on Churchill,” “The Wolf and the Shepherds,” and the “Epistle to Dr Blacklock,” have been omitted in the subsequent editions of Dr Beattie’s Poems. With the three first, we may easily dispense; but we regret, with reason, I think, the loss of the “Epistle to Dr Blacklock.”

This republication was received by the public equally well with the former.

LETTER XI.

DR JOHN GREGORY* TO DR BEATTIE.

Edinburgh, 1st January, 1766.

“Mr Gray got the books. He spoke of you in terms of very high esteem. I think him an excellent critic, and I am persuaded you found him so. But though I think he could give you an excellent advice in what relates to that intrinsic merit of your compositions, which will be regarded by real judges, of which there is not one in a thousand who read them; yet I would not

* For some account of Dr Gregory, see p. 41.

depend much on his judgment of that sort of merit which makes a poet popular among the bulk of readers. It is a sentiment that very universally prevails, that poetry is a light kind of reading, which one takes up only for a little amusement, and that therefore it should be so perspicuous as not to require a second reading. This sentiment would bear hard on some of your best things; and on all Gray's, except his "Church-yard Elegy," which he told me, with a good deal of acrimony, owed its popularity entirely to the subject, and that the public would have received it as well if it had been written in prose. Dr Blair thinks your verses on Churchill the best you ever made. I do not quite agree with him there, though I think it one of the best and most spirited satires that was ever written; but we all agree, that two or three lines should be altered.

"What I earnestly wish, is, to have you employ your genius on some subject that will be generally interesting, and which can alone procure you that universal fame which you deserve, and will likewise procure you a more solid reward of your labours."

LETTER XII.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

Aberdeen, 18th September, 1766.

“ You flatter me very agreeably, by wishing me to engage in a translation of Tasso’s “Jerusalem.” If I had all the other accomplishments necessary to fit me for such an undertaking, (which is by no means the case,) I have not as yet acquired a sufficient knowledge of the Italian language, although I understand it tolerably well. My proficiency would have been much more considerable, if my health had allowed me to study ; but I have been obliged to estrange myself from books for some months past. I intend to persist in my resolution of acquiring that language, for I am wonderfully delighted with the Italian poetry. It does not seem to abound much in those strokes of fancy that raise admiration and astonishment, in which I think the English very much superior ; but it possesses all the milder graces in an eminent degree ; in simplicity, harmony, delicacy, and tenderness, it is altogether without a rival.

I cannot well account for that neglect of the Italian literature, which, for about a century past, has been fashionable among us. I believe Mr Addison may have been instrumental in introducing, or, at least, in vindicating it; though I am inclined to think, that he took, upon trust, from Boileau, that censure which he past upon the Italian poets, and which has been current among the critics ever since the days of the "Spectator." *

"A good translation of Tasso would be a very valuable accession to English literature; but it would be a most difficult undertaking, on account of the genius of our language, which, though in the highest degree copious, expressive, and sonorous, is not to be compared with the Italian in delicacy, sweetness, and simplicity of composition; and these are qualities so characteristical of Tasso, that a translator would do the highest injustice to his author, who should fail in transfusing them into his version. Besides, a work of such a nature must not only be laborious, but ex-

* It will be remembered, that this observation was made by Dr Beattie very nearly forty years ago. Since that period, Italian literature has been much more cultivated in Britain, than it was at his first acquaintance with it.

pensive; so that a prudent person would not chuse to engage in it without some hope, not only of being indemnified, but even rewarded; and such a hope it would be madness in me to entertain. Yet, to show that I am not averse from the work, (for, luckily for poor bards, poetry is sometimes its own reward, and is at any time amply rewarded, when it gratifies the desire of a friend,) I design, as soon as I have leisure, and sufficient skill in the language, to try my hand at a short specimen. In the mean time, I flatter myself, you will not think the worse of me for not making a thousand protestations of my insufficiency, and as many acknowledgements of my gratitude, for the honour you do me in supposing me capable of such a work. The truth is, I have so much to say on this subject, that if I were only to begin, I should never have done. Your friendship, and your good opinion, which I shall ever account it my honour to cultivate, I do indeed value more than I can express.

“ Your neglect of the modern philosophical sceptics, who have too much engaged the attention of these times, does equal honour to your understanding and to your heart. To suppose that every thing may be made matter of dispute, is an

exceeding false principle, subversive of all true science, and prejudicial to the happiness of mankind. To confute without convincing is a common case, and indeed a very easy matter : in all conviction (at least in all moral and religious conviction) the heart is engaged, as well as the understanding ; and the understanding may be satisfied, or at least confounded, with a doctrine, from which the heart recoils with the strongest aversion. This is not the language of a logician ; but this, I hope, is the language of an honest man, who considers all science as frivolous, which does not make men wiser and better ; and to puzzle with words, without producing conviction, (which is all that our metaphysical sceptics have been able to do,) can never promote either the wisdom or the virtue of mankind. It is strange that men should so often forget, that “ happiness is “ our being’s end and aim.” Happiness is desirable for its own sake : truth is desirable only as a mean of producing happiness ; for who would not prefer an agreeable delusion to a melancholy truth ? What, then, is the use of that philosophy, which aims to inculcate truth at the expence of happiness, by introducing doubt and disbelief in the place of confidence and hope ? Surely the

promoters of all such philosophy are either the enemies of mankind, or the dupes of their own most egregious folly. I mean not to make any concessions in favour of metaphysical truth : genuine truth and genuine happiness were never inconsistent : but metaphysical truth (such as we find in our sceptical systems) is not genuine, for it is perpetually changing ; and no wonder, since it depends not on the common sense of mankind, (which is always the same,) but varies, according as the talents and inclinations of different authors are different. The doctrines of metaphysical scepticism are either true or false ; if false, we have little to do with them ; if true, they prove the fallacy of the human faculties, and therefore prove too much ; for it follows, as an undeniable consequence, that all human doctrines whatsoever (themselves not excepted) are fallacious, and consequently, pernicious, insignificant, and vain.”

In the following letter he gives a hint of his design of writing the “ Minstrel.”

LETTER XIII.

DR BEATTIE TO DR BLACKLOCK.

Aberdeen, 22d September, 1766.

“ I am not a little flattered by your friendly and spirited vindication of the poem on *Bufo*. * Among the invidious and malicious I have got a few enemies on account of that performance; among the candid and generous, not one. This, joined to the approbation of my own conscience, is entirely sufficient to make me easy on that head. I have not yet heard, whether my little work has been approved or condemned in England. I have not even heard whether it has been published or not. However, the days of romantic hope are now happily over with me, as well as the desire of public applause; a desire of which I never had any title to expect the gratification, and which, though I had been able to gratify it, would not have contributed a single mite to my

* “ Verses on the Report of a Monument to be erected in Westminster Abbey, to the Memory of a late Author.” See p. 103.

happiness. Yet I am thankful to Providence for having endued me with an inclination to poetry; for, though I have never been supremely blest in my own muse, I have certainly been gratified, in the most exquisite degree, by the productions of others.

“ Those pieces of mine, from which I have received the highest entertainment, are such as are altogether improper for publication; being written in a sort of burlesque humour, for the amusement of some particular friend, or for some select company. Of these I have a pretty large collection; and, though I should be ashamed to be publicly known as the author of many of them, I cannot help entertaining a certain partiality towards them, arising, perhaps, from this circumstance in their favour, that the pleasure they have yielded me has been altogether sincere, unmixed with that chagrin which never fails to attend an unfortunate publication.

“ Not long ago I began a poem in the style and stanza of Spenser, in which I propose to give full scope to my inclination, and be either droll or pathetic, descriptive or sentimental, tender or satirical, as the humour strikes me; for, if I mistake not, the manner which I have adopted ad-

mits equally of all these kinds of composition. I have written one hundred and fifty lines, and am surprised to find the structure of that complicated stanza so little troublesome. I was always fond of it, for I think it the most harmonious that ever was contrived. It admits of more variety of pauses than either the couplet or the alternate rhyme; and it concludes with a pomp and majesty of sound, which, to my ear, is wonderfully delightful. It seems also very well adapted to the genius of our language, which, from its irregularity of inflexion and number of monosyllables, abounds in diversified terminations, and consequently renders our poetry susceptible of an endless variety of legitimate rhymes. But I am so far from intending this performance for the press, that I am morally certain it never will be finished. I shall add a stanza now and then, when I am at leisure, and when I have no humour for any other amusement; but I am resolved to write no more poetry with a view to publication, till I see some dawnings of a poetical taste among the generality of readers, of which, however, there is not at present any thing like an appearance.

“ My employment, and indeed my inclination, leads me rather to prose composition; and in this way I have much to do. The doctrines commonly comprehended under the name of moral philosophy are at present over-run with metaphysics; a luxuriant and tenacious weed, which seldom fails to choke and extirpate the wholesome plants, which it was perhaps intended to support and shelter. To this literary weed I have an insuperable aversion; which becomes stronger and stronger, in proportion as I grow more and more acquainted with its nature, and qualities, and fruits. It is very agreeable to the paradoxical and licentious spirit of the age; but I am thoroughly convinced, that it is fatal to true science, an enemy to the fine arts, destructive of genuine sentiment, and prejudicial to the virtue and happiness of mankind. There is a little Ode of yours on the refinements of metaphysical philosophy, which I often read with peculiar satisfaction, and with high approbation of your spirit and sentiments:

“ You, who would be truly wise,
“ To Nature’s light unveil your eyes,
“ Her gentle call obey :
“ She leads by no false wandering glare,
“ No voice ambiguous strikes your ear,
“ To bid you vainly stray.

" Not in the gloomy cell recluse,
 " For noble deeds, or generous views,
 " She bids us watch the night :
 " Fair virtue shines to all display'd,
 " Nor asks the tardy schoolman's aid,
 " To teach us what is right.
 " Pleasure and pain she sets in view,
 " And which to shun, and which pursue,
 " Instructs her pupil's heart.
 " Then, lettered Pride ! say, what thy gain,
 " To mask with so much fruitless pain
 " Thy ignorance with art ?"

Of the following letter, there is so much pleasant humour in the first part, so very unlike the admirable piece of criticism in the second, that the reader, I think, will thank me for thus exhibiting to him the versatility of Dr Beattie's powers of genius, which could pass at once from the most playful to the gravest style of epistolary correspondence.

Mr Boyd, to whom the letter is addressed, was the second son of the unfortunate Earl of Kilmarnock,* and brother of the Earl of Erroll.

* Vide Appendix, [C.]

Although he had not attached himself to any learned profession, he had received a literary education ; and, having resided long in France, he possessed a familiar acquaintance with the best writers of both countries. He was master, too, of no inconsiderable portion of humour, and had some turn for making verses ; qualities which had the natural effect of producing a friendship and correspondence between him and Dr Beattie, that lasted till Mr Boyd's death at Edinburgh, 3d August, 1782.

LETTER XIV.

DR BEATTIE TO THE HON. CHARLES BOYD.

Aberdeen, 16th November, 1766.

“ Of all the chagrins with which my present infirm state of health is attended, none afflicts me more than my inability to perform the duties of friendship. The offer which you were generously pleased to make me of your correspondence, flatters me extremely ; but, alas ! I have not as yet been able to avail myself of it. While the good weather continued, I strolled about the

country, and made many strenuous attempts to run away from this odious giddiness; but the more I struggled, the more closely it seemed to stick by me. About a fortnight ago the hurry of my winter business began; and, at the same time, my malady recurred with more violence than ever, rendering me at once incapable of reading, writing, and thinking. Luckily I am now a little better, so as to be able to read a page, and write a sentence or two, without stopping; which, I assure you, is a very great matter. My hopes and my spirits begin to revive once more. I flatter myself I shall soon get rid of this infirmity; nay, that I shall ere long be in the way of becoming a *great man*. For have I not headachs, like Pope? vertigo, like Swift? grey hairs, like Homer? Do I not wear large shoes, (for fear of corns,) like Virgil? and sometimes complain of sore eyes, (though not of *lippitude*,) like Horace? Am I not at this present writing invested with a garment, not less ragged than that of Socrates? Like Joseph the patriarch, I am a mighty dreamer of dreams; like Nimrod the hunter, I am an eminent builder of castles (in the air.) I procrastinate, like Julius Cæsar; and very lately, in imitation of Don Quixote, I rode a horse, lean, old,

and lazy, like Rozinante. Sometimes, like Cicero, I write bad verses; and sometimes bad prose, like Virgil. This last instance I have on the authority of Seneca. I am of small stature, like Alexander the Great; I am somewhat inclinable to fatness, like Dr Arbuthnot and Aristotle; and I drink brandy and water, like Mr Boyd. I might compare myself, in relation to many other infirmities, to many other *great men*; but if fortune is not influenced in my favour by the particulars already enumerated, I shall despair of ever recommending myself to her good graces. I once had some thought of soliciting her patronage on the score of my resembling great men in their good qualities; but I had so little to say on that subject, that I could not for my life furnish matter for one well-rounded period; and, you know, a short ill-turned speech is very improper to be used in an address to a female deity.

“ Do not you think there is a sort of antipathy between philosophical and poetical genius? I question, whether any one person was ever eminent for both. Lucretius lays aside the poet when he assumes the philosopher, and the philosopher when he assumes the poet: In the one character he is truly excellent, in the other he is

absolutely nonsensical. Hobbes was a tolerable metaphysician, but his poetry is the worst that ever was. Pope's "Essay on Man" is the finest philosophical poem in the world; but it seems to me to do more honour to the imagination than to the understanding of its author: I mean, its sentiments are noble and affecting, its images and allusions apposite, beautiful, and new; its wit transcendently excellent; but the scientific part of it is very exceptionable. Whatever Pope borrows from Leibnitz, like most other metaphysical theories, is frivolous and unsatisfying; what Pope gives us of his own, is energetic, irresistible, and divine. The incompatibility of philosophical and poetical genius is, I think, no unaccountable thing. Poetry exhibits the general qualities of a species; philosophy the particular qualities of individuals. *This* forms its conclusions from a painful and minute examination of single instances; *that* decides instantaneously, either from its own instinctive sagacity, or from a singular and unaccountable penetration, which at one glance sees all the instances which the philosopher must leisurely and progressively scrutinize, one by one. This persuades you gradually, and by detail; the other overpowers you in an instant by a single effort.

Observe the effect of argumentation in poetry ; we have too many instances of it in Milton : it transforms the noblest thoughts into drawling inferences, and the most beautiful language into prose : it checks the tide of passion, by giving the mind a different employment in the comparison of ideas. A little philosophical acquaintance with the most beautiful parts of nature, both in the material and immaterial system, is of use to a poet, and gives grace and solidity to poetry ; as may be seen in the “Georgics,” the “Seasons,” and the “Pleasures of Imagination:” but this acquaintance, if it is any thing more than superficial, will do a poet rather harm than good ; and will give his mind that turn for minute observation, which enfeebles the fancy by restraining it, and counteracts the native energy of judgment, by rendering it fearful and suspicious.”

LETTER XV.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

Aberdeen, 8th January, 1767.

“ I thank you for your excellent description of Mrs Montague; * I have heard much of that lady, and I admire her as an honour to her sex and to human nature. I am very happy to hear, that, from the favourable representations of my friends, she has done me the honour to think of me with approbation. I cannot flatter myself with the hope of ever having it in my power to let her know how much I esteem her; but I shall rejoice in the remembrance of having been, in some little degree, esteemed by her

“ The favourable reception you gave to my little poem, † demands my acknowledgments. I

* This alludes to a letter which I had written to him, giving an account of a visit which Mrs Montague had paid to the late Dr Gregory in Edinburgh, in the autumn of 1766, and to which this letter of Dr Beattie's is in answer. He was not then personally known to Mrs Montague.

† “ The Hermit.”

aimed at simplicity in the expression, and something like uncommonness in the thought; and I own I am not ill pleased with it upon the whole; though I am sensible it does not answer the purpose for which I made it. I wrote it at the desire of a young lady of this country, who has a taste both for poetry and music, and wanted me to make words for a Scots tune called "Pentland Hills," of which she is very fond. The verses correspond well enough with the measure and subject of the tune, but are extremely unsuitable for the purpose of a song.

"My broken health, and a hurry of other business, has for a long time interrupted my Italian studies, to my very great regret. However, within the last fortnight, I have read five or six of Metastasio's operas with much pleasure. We are apt to despise the Italian opera, and, perhaps, not altogether without reason; but I find the operas of Metastasio very far superior to what I expected. There is a sameness in the fables and character of this author; and yet he seems to me to have more of character in his drama than any other poet of this or the last age. A reader is generally interested in his pieces from beginning to end; for they are full of incident, and the in-

cidents are often surprising and unexpected. He has a happy talent at heightening distress ; and very seldom falls into that unmeaning rant and declamation which abounds so much on the French stage. In a word, I should not scruple to compare the modern Italian opera, as it appears in Metastasio, to the ancient Greek tragedy. The rigid observation of the unities of place and time, introduces many improprieties into the Greek drama, which are happily avoided by the less methodical genius of the Italian. I cannot, indeed, compare the little Italian songs, which are often very impertinent, as well as very silly, to the odes of the ancient tragedians : but a poet must always sacrifice something to the genius of his age. I dare say Metastasio despises those little *morçeaux* of sing-song ; and it is evident, from some of his performances in that way, that he is qualified to excel in the more solemn lyric style, if it were suitable to the taste of his countrymen. Some of his little songs are very pretty, and exhibit agreeable pictures of nature, with a brevity of description, and sweetness of style, that is hardly to be found in any other modern odes. I beg leave to mention, as instances, the songs in the 7th and 15th scenes of the second,

and the 1st of the third act of "Artaserse." By the bye, the songs in this opera, as it is now adapted to the English stage, seem to be very ill translated.

"You will readily believe, that I rejoice to hear of Dr Gregory's success. I earnestly wish, for the honour of human nature, and for the good of society, that he may still be more and more successful. The reception his talents and his virtues have met with, gives me a better opinion of the present age than I should otherwise have had; and seems to prove, that there is yet in the world something of a sense of virtue and regard to justice. I have just received a letter from him, which I will answer as soon as possible. Mr Arbuthnot and he will please to accept of my best wishes; may you live long happy in each other's society; and may I have the satisfaction to hear that you are so, and that you sometimes think of me with pleasure.

"There is a famous stanza in the 4th canto of Tasso's "Gierusalemme," which has often been quoted as an instance of the harmony of the Italian language:

" Chiama gli abitator de l'ombre eterne

" Il rauco suon de la tartarea tromba ;

“ *Treman le spaciose atre cavernæ,*
 “ *E l’aer cieco a quel rumor rimbomba :*
 “ *Ne stridendo così da le superne*
 “ *Regioni del cielo il folgor piomba,*
 “ *Ne si scossa giamai trema la terra,*
 “ *Quando i vapori in sen gravida serva.”*

I attempted, the other day, in a solitary walk, to turn this passage into English; and produced the following lines, which are as obstreperous at least as the original, but, I am afraid, not so agreeable:

“ Forthwith to summon all the tribes of hell,
 “ The trump tartarean pour’d a thundering yell;
 “ Trembled th’ unfathomable caverns round,
 “ And night’s vast void rebellow’d to the sound:
 “ Far less the roar that rends th’ ethereal world,
 “ When bolts of vengeance from on high are hurl’d;
 “ Far less the shock that heaves earth’s tottering frame,
 “ When its torn entrails spout th’ imprison’d flame.”*

* In Dr Beattie’s “*Essay on Poetry and Music*,” † he has given a somewhat different translation of this stanza:

“ To call the tribes that roam the Stygian shores,
 “ The hoarse tartarean tramp in thunder roars;
 “ Hell through her trembling caverns starts aghast,
 “ And night’s black void rebellows to the blast:
 “ Far less the peal that rends th’ ethereal world,
 “ When bolts of vengeance from on high are hurl’d;
 “ Far less the shock that heaves earth’s tottering frame,
 “ When its torn entrails spout th’ imprison’d flame.”

† *Essay on Poetry and Music*, Part II. Ch. II. p. 570. 4to edit.

I have not Hoole at hand just now ; Fairfax runs thus :

“ The dreary trumpet blew a dreadful blast,
 “ And rumbled through the lands and kingdoms under ;
 “ Through vastness wide it roared, and hollows vast,
 “ And filled the deep with horror, fear, and wonder.
 “ Not half so dreadful noise the tempest cast,
 “ That fall from skies with storms of hail and thunder ;
 “ Not half so loud the whistling winds do sing,
 “ Broke from the earthen prisons of their king.”

This is sonorous, but tautological, and not quite true to the original ; Fairfax makes no mention of the earthquake, and introduces, in the place of it, what is really a bathos. Wind was never so loud as thunder.” *

* In order that the examination of the merit of Dr Beattie's translation of this famous stanza of Tasso may be the more complete, I set down here the lines as they stand in Hoole ; which every reader of any taste will perceive to be flat and languid in the extreme, compared either with the original, or with Beattie's spirited version :

“ The trumpet now, with hoarse-resounding breath,
 “ Convenes the spirits in the shades of death :
 “ The hollow caverns tremble at the sound ;
 “ The air re-echoes to the noise around !
 “ Not louder terrors shake the distant pole,
 “ When through the skies the rattling thunders roll ;
 “ Not greater tremors heave the lab'ring earth,
 “ When vapours, pent within, contend for birth.”

LETTER XVI.

DR BEATTIE TO ROBERT ARBUTHNOT, ESQ.

Aberdeen, 2d March, 1767.

“ I have led a very retired life this winter ; the condition of my health having prevented my going into company. By dint of regularity and attention, I flatter myself I have now established my health on a tolerable footing ; for I have been better during the two last months than for a year before.

“ My leisure hours, of which I have but few at this season, have been employed in reading Metastasio, an author whom I now understand pretty well, and of whom I am very fond. I have also finished my essay on—I know not well how to call it ; for its present title-page, “ *An* “ *Essay on Reason and Common Sense,*” must be altered.

“ Some persons, who wish well to me and to my principles, have expressed their wishes, in pretty strong terms, to see this essay in print. They say, I have set the sceptics in a new point

of view, by treating them without any kind of reserve or deference ; and that it might be of use to those who may be in danger from their doctrines, to consider them in the same light. However, I am far from being convinced that it would be proper to publish such a treatise ; for the principles are quite unfashionable ; and there is a keenness of expression in some passages, which could please only a few, namely, those who are thoroughly convinced of the truth and importance of religion. I shall be directed entirely by you and Dr Gregory, and my other friends at Edinburgh. At any rate, I do not repent my having written it ; it has rivetted my conviction of the insignificance of metaphysics and scepticism : and I hope it will be of some use to the young people under my care ; for whose principles (at least as far as they depend upon me) I hold myself accountable to my own conscience and the public.”

LETTER XVII.

DR BEATTIE TO DR BLACKLOCK.

Aberdeen, 20th May, 1767.

“ My performance in Spenser’s stanza has not advanced a single line these many months. It is called the “ Minstrel.” The subject was suggested by a dissertation on the old minstrels, which is prefixed to a collection of ballads lately published by Dodsley in three volumes. I propose to give an account of the birth, education, and adventures of one of those bards; in which I shall have full scope for description, sentiment, satire, and even a certain species of humour and of pathos, which, in the opinion of my great master, are by no means inconsistent, as is evident from his works. My hero is to be born in the south of Scotland; which you know was the native land of the English minstrels; I mean of those minstrels who travelled into England, and supported themselves there by singing their ballads to the harp. His father is a shepherd. The son will have a natural taste for music and the

beauties of nature ; which, however, languishes for want of culture, till in due time he meets with a hermit, who gives him some instruction ; but endeavours to check his genius for poetry and adventures, by representing the happiness of obscurity and solitude, and the bad reception which poetry has met with in almost every age. The poor swain acquiesces in this advice, and resolves to follow his father's employment ; when, on a sudden, the country is invaded by the Danes, or English borderers, (I know not which,) and he is stript of all his little fortune, and obliged by necessity to commence minstrel. This is all that I have as yet concerted of the plan. I have written 150 lines, but my hero is not yet born, though now in a fair way of being so, for his parents are described and married. I know not whether I shall ever proceed any farther : however, I am not dissatisfied with what I have written."

In perusing the following, and some subsequent letters of Dr Gregory's, the reader of this day cannot but be struck with some surprise at

the picture which Dr Gregory draws of the scepticism of the times in which he wrote. When Dr Beattie harangues against the alarming progress of infidelity, there are some readers who may believe his declamations to be those of a recluse, uttered from within the walls of his college, by a person totally unacquainted with life and manners: but this cannot be said of Dr Gregory, who was a man of the world, of extensive observation, and who, by living much in society, with men of all principles and of all parties, had the best opportunities of knowing the spirit and temper of the times. I know not the person, therefore, of all my acquaintance, on whom I should more fully rely for a faithful report of the prevailing opinions of his day. Yet I would gladly flatter myself, that even Dr Gregory, with all his penetration, may, in this case, have been somewhat mistaken; and that his own ardent zeal for the cause of revelation may have too easily taken the alarm, where he found any tendency towards the growth of scepticism. It will be observed, too, with what nice discrimination Dr Gregory marks the character of those pretenders to science, who most probably having never read, and most certainly not understand-

ing, the writings which they affected so much to admire, had blindly adopted the language of those bold spirits, who rested their pretensions to the character of men of superior genius on the paradoxes they maintained; and their daring attack on principles that had been held by the best and wisest of men, as essential to the truest interests of human society.

But whatever may have been the character of the preceding age, I am happy to think, that the same features do not belong to the present; and I rejoice to have witnessed, in this case, an instance of that beautiful order of Providence, by which evil is made to administer to its own remedy. The sceptical conclusions of Mr Hume's philosophy excited an attention which might not otherwise have been bestowed upon it, and stimulated the friends of religion and of science to inquire into the foundations upon which it was built. It was this inquiry that first produced the "Essay on Truth;" in which its sophistry was exposed to the conviction of men of reflection, and its consequences to human conduct and happiness unfolded to the apprehension of the most thoughtless. It was this which afterwards pro-

duced the great work of Dr Reid,* in which its errors were traced to their source, and the mighty fabric of modern scepticism shown at last to rest upon some of those weak hypotheses which usually disgrace the infancy of science.

LETTER XIX.

DR JOHN GREGORY TO DR BEATTIE.

Edinburgh, 16th June, 1767.

“ I have been in daily expectation of seeing your papers, which you said, some time ago, you would send me: Pray, what is become of them? By the accounts Mr Williamson gave me of them, I am sure they will be much to my taste. I am well convinced, that the great deference paid to our modern heathens has been productive of the worst effects. Young people are impressed with an idea of their being men of superior abilities, whose genius has raised them above vulgar prejudices, and who have spirit enough to avow openly their contempt of them. Atheism and

* “ Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man.”

materialism are the present fashion. If one speak with warmth of an infinitely wise and good Being, who sustains and directs the frame of nature, or expresses his steady belief of a future state of existence, he gets hints of his having either a very weak understanding, or of being a very great hypocrite. Christianity seems to be now thought even below these gentlemen's ridicule, as I never almost hear a sneer against it. There is an insolence and a daring effrontery in this, which is extremely provoking; but what hurts me most, is the emphatic silence of those who should be supposed to hold very different sentiments on these subjects. The world supposes, that no man will tamely hear sentiments ridiculed which he holds as the most deeply interesting and sacred, without expressing such dissatisfaction as would effectually prevent any gentleman of tolerable good breeding from repeating the insult, or, at least, that he would endeavour to retort the ridicule, if he was not conscious of the weakness of his cause. Till within these thirty years, the wit was generally on the side of religion. I do not remember any man, of the least pretensions to genius in Britain, who ever thought of subverting every principle of natural religion till of

late; and, if the present spirit is not very speedily checked, I am confident it will give the finishing stroke to that corruption of heart and principles which makes such an alarming progress. It is not worth while to say, after this, that it will as certainly and speedily suppress all great efforts of genius and imagination. You are the best man I know to chastise these people as they deserve; you have more philosophy, and more wit, than will be necessary for the purpose, though you can never employ any of them in so good a cause."



On the 28th June, 1767, Dr Beattie was married at Aberdeen, to Miss Mary Dun, the only daughter of Dr James Dun, rector of the grammar school there. From the period of his establishment at Aberdeen, he had naturally been much connected in social intercourse with Dr Dun's family. His daughter was a few years younger than Dr Beattie; she was tolerably handsome, and lively in conversation; sung a little, and accompanied her voice with the harp-

sichord. As these were accomplishments exactly suited to the taste of Dr Beattie, whose heart was full of sensibility, no wonder, that what was at first the ordinary interchange of civility, grew into a strong and mutual attachment. When, therefore, Dr Beattie found himself in a situation in which he had the reasonable prospect of being able to maintain a wife and family, he naturally wished, like every virtuous man, to marry; and he thought himself more than commonly fortunate, in having met, in Miss Dun, with a mate so exactly suited to his taste, with whom he hoped for that measure of happiness, which the married state, when wisely engaged in, is, of all others, the best calculated to insure.

This connection, however, from which he augured such lasting felicity, unfortunately proved to him a source of the deepest sorrow; Mrs Beattie having inherited from her mother that most dreadful of all human evils, a distempered mind, which, although it did not, for a considerable time, break out into open insanity, yet, in a few years after their marriage, showed itself in caprices that embittered every hour of his life, till, at last, it unquestionably contributed to bring him to his grave.

The following letter is curious, as it gives us his sentiments of some of Rousseau's works at a very early period.

Of that celebrated philosopher, and his writings, Dr Beattie has since given an elaborate and masterly character in a long note to the "Essay on Truth," Part III. ch. ii. p. 291. 4to edit.

LETTER XX.

DR BEATTIE TO THE REV. MR JAMES WILLIAMSON.*

Aberdeen, 22d October, 1767.

"I have been studying Rousseau's miscellanies of late. His "Epistle to D'Alembert," on thea-

* Mr Williamson had been his pupil, and had gained his friendship. That gentleman went afterwards to Oxford, where he became a fellow of Hertford College, and distinguished himself by his skill in mathematics. He published a "Commen-

trical exhibitions, I think excellent, and perfectly decisive. His discourse on the effects of the sciences is spirited to a high degree, and contains much matter of melancholy meditation. I am not so much of his mind in regard to the origin of inequality among mankind, though I think the piece on this subject has been much misunderstood by critics, and misrepresented by wits. Even by his own confession, it is rather a *jeu d'esprit* than a philosophical inquiry; for he owns, that the natural state, such as he represents it, did probably never take place, and probably never will; and if it had taken place, he seems to think it impossible that mankind should ever have emerged from it without some very extraordinary alteration in the course of nature. Farther, he says, that this natural state is not the most advantageous for man; for that the most delightful sentiments of the human mind could not exert themselves till man had relinquished his brutal and solitary nature, and become a domestic animal. At this period, and previous to the establishment of property, he places the age

tary on Euclid's Elements," also an "Argument in favour of Christianity," and now holds the living of Plumtree, near Nottingham.

most favourable to human happiness; which is just what the poets have done before him, in their description of the golden age; so that his system is not that preposterous thing it has been represented. Yet he says many things in this treatise to which I cannot agree. His solitary and savage man is too much of a brute; and many of his observations are founded on facts not well ascertained, and very ambiguous in their meaning. There is a little treatise of his, which he calls a letter to Mr Voltaire, which I read with much pleasure, as I found it to be a transcript of my own sentiments in regard to Pope's maxim, "Whatever is, is right."

LETTER XXI.

DR JOHN GREGORY TO DR BEATTIE.

Edinburgh, 1st January, 1768.

"I approve much of your plan,* and am confident you will execute it in a manner that will do you credit, and promote the interests of vir-

* The plan of the "Essay on Truth."

tue and mankind. You are well aware of the antipathy which the present race of readers have against all abstract reasoning, except what is employed in defence of the fashionable principles; but though they pretend to admire their metaphysical champions, yet they never read them, nor, if they did, could they understand them. Among Mr Hume's numerous disciples, I do not know one who ever read his "Treatise on Human Nature." In order, therefore, to be read, you must not be satisfied with reasoning with justice and perspicuity; you must write with pathos, with elegance, with spirit, and endeavour to warm the imagination, and touch the heart of those, who are deaf to the voice of reason. Whatever you write in the way of criticism will be read, and, if my partiality to you does not deceive me, be admired. Every thing relating to the "Belles Lettres" is read, or pretended to be read. What has made Lord Kames's "Elements of Criticism" so popular in England, is his numerous illustrations and quotations from Shakespeare. If his book had wanted these illustrations, or if they had been taken from ancient or foreign authors, it would not have been so gene-

rally read in England. This is a good political hint to you, in your capacity of an author; and certainly, if you write to the world, and wish to gain their approbation, you must write in such a manner as experience shows to be effectual for that purpose, if that manner be not criminal."

LETTER XXII.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

Aberdeen, 17th January, 1768.

"I have been intending, for these several weeks, to write to you, though it were only to assure you of the continuance of my esteem and attachment. This place, you know, furnishes little amusement, either political or literary; and at this season it is rather more barren than usual.

"I have, for a time, laid aside my favourite studies, that I might have leisure to prosecute a philosophical inquiry, less amusing indeed than poetry and criticism, but not less important. The extraordinary success of the sceptical philosophy has long filled me with regret. I wish I could undeceive mankind in regard to this matter.

Perhaps this wish is vain; but it can do no harm to make the trial. The point I am now labouring to prove, is the universality and immutability of moral sentiment,—a point which has been brought into dispute, both by the friends and by the enemies of virtue. In an age less licentious in its principles, it would not, perhaps, be necessary to insist much on this point. At present it is very necessary. Philosophers have ascribed all religion to human policy. Nobody knows how soon they may ascribe all morality to the same origin; and then the foundations of human society, as well as of human happiness, will be effectually undermined. To accomplish this end, Hobbes, Hume, Mandeville, and even Locke, have laboured; and, I am sorry to say, from my knowledge of mankind, that their labour has not been altogether in vain. Not that the works of these philosophers are generally read, or even understood by the few who read them. It is not the mode, now-a-days, for a man to think for himself; but they greedily adopt the conclusions, without any concern about the arguments or principles whence they proceed; and they justify their own credulity by general declamations upon the transcendent merit of their favourite authors, and the

universal deference that is paid to their genius and learning. If I can prove those authors guilty of gross misrepresentations of matters of fact, unacquainted with the human heart, ignorant even of their own principles, the dupes of verbal ambiguities, and the votaries of frivolous, though dangerous philosophy, I shall do some little service to the cause of truth; and all this I will undertake to prove in many instances of high importance.

“ You have no doubt seen Dr Blacklock’s new book.* I was very much surprised to see my name prefixed to the dedication, as he never had given me the least intimation of such a design. His friendship does me great honour. I should be sorry, if, in this instance, it has got the better of his prudence; and, I have some reason to fear, that my name will be no recommendation to the work, at least in this place, where, however, the book is very well spoken of by some who have read it. I should like to know how it takes at Edinburgh.”

* “ Paraclesis, or Consolations.”

LETTER XXIII.

DR BEATTIE TO ROBERT ARBUTHNOT, ESQ.

Aberdeen, 25th February, 1768.

“ I intended long ago to write to you ; but several pieces of business, some of them unexpected, have, from time to time, prevented me. The writing out a copy of Mr Gray’s poems for the press has employed me the last fortnight. They are to be printed at Glasgow by Foulis, with the author’s own permission, which I solicited and obtained : and he sent me four folio pages of notes and additions to be inserted in the new edition. The notes are chiefly illustrations of the two Pindaric odes, more copious, indeed, than I should have thought necessary : but, I understand, he is not a little chagrined at the complaints which have been made of their obscurity ; and he tells me, that he wrote these notes out of spite. “ The Long Story ” is left out in this edition, at which I am not well pleased ; for, though it has neither head nor tail, beginning nor end, it abounds in humorous description, and the ver-

sification is exquisitely fine. Three new poems (never before printed) are inserted: two of which are imitations from the Norwegian, and one is an imitation from the Welsh. He versified them, (he says) "because there is a wild spirit in them, which struck him." From the first of the Norwegian pieces he has taken the hint of the *web*, in the ode on the Welsh bards; but the imitation far exceeds the original. The original in his version begins in this manner:

" Now the storm begins to lower;
 " Haste, the loom of hell prepare:
 " Iron sleet of arrowy shower
 " Hurtles in the darken'd air.
 " See the grisly texture grow;
 " 'Tis of human entrails made;
 " And the weights that play below,
 " Each a gasping warrior's head.
 " Shafts, for shuttles, dipt in gore,
 " Shoot the trembling chords along;
 " Sword, that once a monarch bore,
 " Keep the tissue close and strong."

"The second Norwegian piece, is a dialogue between Odin and a prophetess in her grave, whom, by incantation, he makes to speak. One of the most remarkable passages in it, is the following description of a dog, which far exceeds every thing of the kind I have seen:

“ Him the dog of darkness spied,
“ His shaggy throat he open'd wide,
“ While from his jaws, with carnage fill'd,
“ Foam and human gore distill'd.
“ Hoarse he bays with hideous din,
“ Eyes that glow, and fangs that grin;
“ And long pursues, with fruitless yell,
“ The father of the powerful spell.”

“ I give you these passages, partly to satisfy, and partly to raise, your curiosity. I expect the book will be out in a few weeks, if Foulis be diligent, which it is his interest to be, as there is another edition of the same just now printing by Dodsley. I gave him notice of this, by Mr Gray's desire, two months ago; but it did not in the least abate his zeal for the undertaking.”

The following note to his friend Mr Tytler, accompanying the beautiful little poem “The Hermit,” has no date, but was probably written in the year 1767, at the time he was in Edinburgh. The poem itself was written in the year 1766, as he mentions it in his letter to me, 8th January, 1767, as a late production of his muse, and the occasion of it. It was a very flattering

compliment to Mr Tytler, who had composed the tune of "Pentland Hills," which the words were to accompany, in imitation of our ancient Scottish melodies, of which he was an enthusiastic admirer. For some account of Mr Tytler, whom I had the happiness to rank among the number of my intimate and most respected friends, see the Appendix [O.].

LETTER XXIV.

DR BEATTIE TO WILLIAM TYTLER, ESQ. OF
WOODHOUSELEE.

Edinburgh, Thursday, Noon.

"The above is a copy of the verses I wrote for your tune of "Pentland Hills." The sentiments, I fear, are not such as become a song; but the measure corresponds well enough with the music. I shall be glad to know your sentiments of this performance."

The following letter to his sister strongly marks the strength of Dr Beattie's filial affection.

LETTER XXV.

DR BEATTIE TO MRS VALENTINE.

Aberdeen, 27th March, 1768.

“ For some weeks past, I have been wishing to have it in my power to write to you my opinion concerning the way in which our mother's affairs are to be settled. The death of our two sisters* has produced a great alteration in her circumstances, and will, I am afraid, serve to render the remainder of her life more melancholy than could be wished. We ought, however, to endeavour, as much as possible, to prevent this, and to settle her in as comfortable a situation as we can.

* Who had lived with her.

“ Of the state of her affairs, as they are at present, and as they have been for three or four years past, I am almost wholly ignorant ; and, out of tenderness to my sister, I did not care to make too particular an enquiry. But matters are now come to that pass, that there is a necessity for doing something. I have written to my mother and brother to this purpose : but every thing I now write is but guess-work ; for I have got no particular account either of my mother’s circumstances, or of what she would wish to have done ; and this is the reason I did not write to you sooner. I wrote to my brother, desiring some information on this head. My mother’s inclinations ought to be consulted in the first place. Whatever way of life is most agreeable to her, shall be so to me. But till I know her inclinations, I can say nothing. On my part, nothing shall be wanting to render her old age as comfortable as possible.”

LETTER XXIV.

DR BEATTIE TO DR BLACKLOCK.

Aberdeen, 1st July, 1768.

“ I have at last found an opportunity of sending you the Scottish poems which I mentioned in a former letter.* The dialect is so licentious, (I mean it is so different from that of the south country, which is acknowledged the standard of broad Scotch,) that I am afraid you will be at a loss to understand it in many places. However, if you can overlook this inconvenience, together with the tediousness of some passages, and the absurdity of others, I doubt not but you will receive some amusement from the perusal. The author excels most in describing the solitary scenes of a mountainous country, and the manners and conversation of the lowest sort of our people. Whenever he attempts to step out of this sphere, he becomes absurd. This sphere is,

* The “Fortunate Shepherdess,” and other poems in the broad Scots dialect, published at Aberdeen, in 1768, by Alexander Ross of Lochlee.

indeed, the only one of which he has had any experience. He has been for these forty years a schoolmaster in one of the most sequestered parishes in the Highlands of Scotland, where he had no access either to company or books that could improve him. His circumstances and employment confine him at home the whole year long ; so that his compositions, with all their imperfections, are really surprising. My personal acquaintance with him began only two years ago, when he had occasion to come to this town, on some urgent business. He is a good-humoured, social, happy old man ; modest without clownishness, and lively without petulance. He put into my hands a great number of manuscripts in verse, chiefly on religious subjects : I believe Sir Richard Blackmore himself is not a more voluminous author. The poems now published seemed to me the best of the whole collection : indeed, many of the others would hardly bear a reading. He told me, he had never written a single line with a view to publication ; but only to amuse a solitary hour. Some gentlemen in this country set on foot a subscription for his Scottish poems ; in consequence of which they were printed, and he will clear by the publication about twenty pounds,

a sum far exceeding his most sanguine expectations ; for I believe he would thankfully have sold his whole works for five. In order to excite some curiosity about his work, I wrote some verses in the dialect of this country, which, together with an introductory letter in English prose, were published in the Aberdeen Journal ;* and the bookseller tells me, he has sold about thirty copies since they appeared. I have sent you inclosed a copy of the verses, with a glossary of the hardest words. Having never before attempted to write any thing in this way, I thought I could not have done it, and was not a little surprised to find it so easy. However, I fear I have exhausted my whole stock of Scottish words in these few lines ; for I endeavoured to make the style as broad as possible, that it might be the better adapted to the taste of those whose curiosity I wished to raise. You will observe, that Mr Ross is peculiarly unfortunate in his choice of proper names. One of his heroes is called by a woman's name, Rosalind. The injurious mountaineers he called *Sevitiens*, with a view, no doubt, to express their cruelty ; but the printer, not un-

* Vide Appendix, [P.]

derstanding Latin, has changed it into *Sevilians*. The whole is incorrectly printed.

“ The following epigram has some merit. It is said to have been written by Voltaire ; but this I doubt. I have subjoined a translation, of which I only wrote the first five lines. The three last are by Mr Charles Boyd, Lord Erroll’s brother :

EPITAPHE SUR LE ROI DE PRUSSE.

“ *Ce mortel profana tous les talens divers,*
 “ *Il charma les humains qui furent ses victimes,*
 “ *Barbare en action, et philosophe en vers,*
 “ *Il chanta les vertus, et commit tous les crimes.*
 “ *Hai du Dieu d’Amour, cher au Dieu de Combats,*
 “ *Il bagna dans le sang l’Europe et la patrie,*
 “ *Cent mille hommes par lui reçurent le trepas,*
 “ *Et pas un n’en reçut la vie.”*

“ He every human talent misemployed,
 “ And men at once delighted and destroyed ;
 “ Savage in action, but a sage in rhyme,
 “ Each virtue sung, and practised every crime ;
 “ The scorn of Venus, but of Mars the pride,
 “ He filled his country and the world with strife ;
 “ Thousands for him in honour’s bed have died,
 “ But from his own not one e’er sprung to life.”

LETTER XXVII.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

Aberdeen, 18th September, 1768.

“ You mention the new edition of Mr Gray’s poems. It came out some months ago ; and is, I think, one of the most elegant pieces of printing that the Glasgow press, or any other press, has ever produced. It does honour to every person concerned in it ; to Mr Foulis the printer, and even to me the publisher, as well as to the author. The additional pieces, though not of so much consequence as his other poems, have every kind of merit of which they are susceptible ; strength, elegance, and perspicuity of style, and exquisite harmony of numbers. But you have certainly seen them, and therefore I need not say more about them.”

LETTER XXVIII.

DR BEATTIE TO THE HON. CHARLES BOYD. *

“ I promised to give you my opinion of the “Henriade;” but I must premise, that I take it for granted you have not implicitly adopted the notions of the French critics with regard to this poem. I hear, it is accounted by them the greatest poem that ever human wit produced, in any age or nation. For my part, I judge of it without prejudice either for or against it, and as I would judge of Tasso’s “Gierusalemme,” or any other work, in whose fate I have no national concern.

“ Among the beauties of this work I would reckon its style, which, though raised above prose as much as the genius of the language will permit, is yet elegant and simple, though sometimes, to one accustomed to English poetry, it may have the appearance of being too prosaic. “ *Ou plûtôt*

* This letter has no date, but was probably written in the year 1767, as he speaks of the translation of Tasso as being recently finished. See Letter XV.

“ *en effet Valois ne regnait plus*”—“ *Henri sçait profiter de ce grand avantage*”—“ *C'est un usage antique et sacre parmi nous*”—“ *De Paris à l'instant il fait ouvrir la porte*”—and many others, have nothing to distinguish them from the flattest prose but the measure and rhyme. But I do not insist on this as a fault ; for the same objection might be made to the finest poems in the world ; and I know not whether a flatness of this kind may not sometimes have a good effect, and heighten, as it were, the relief of the more distinguished parts. The versification of the “ *Henriade*” is agreeable, and often more harmonious than one could expect, who has not a greater niceness of ear in regard to the French numbers than I can pretend to have. I know not whence it happens, that I, who am very sensible of the Greek, Latin, and Italian harmony, can never bring myself to relish that of the French, although I understand the French language as well as any of the others. Is it true, as Rousseau asserts, that this language, on account of the incessant monotony of the pronunciation, is incapable of harmony ? I should like to have your sentiments on this subject.

“ The thoughts or reflections in this poem are not too much crowded, nor affectedly introduced ; they are, in general, proper and nervous, frequently uncommon. The author evidently appears to be a man of wit, yet he does not seem to take any pains to appear so. The fable is distinct, perspicuous, and intelligible ; the character of Henry historically just ; and the description of particular objects apposite, and sometimes picturesque.

“ But his descriptions are often of too general a nature, and want that minuteness which is necessary to interest a reader. They are rather historical than poetical descriptions. This is no verbal distinction ; there is real ground for it. An historian may describe from hearsay ; a poet must describe from seeing and experience ; and this he is enabled to do by making use of the eye of imagination. What makes a description natural ? It is such a selection of particular qualities as we think that we ourselves would have made, if we had been spectators of the object. What makes a description picturesque ? It is a selection, not of every circumstance or quality, but of those which most powerfully attract the notice, and influence the affections and imagina-

tion of the spectator. In a word, a poet must, either in vision or reality, be a spectator of the objects he undertakes to describe: an historian (being confined to truth) is generally supposed to describe from hearsay; or, if he describe what he has seen, he is not at liberty to insert one circumstance, and omit another; magnify this, and diminish that; bring one forward, and throw the other into the back-ground: he must give a detail of all the circumstances, as far as he knows them, otherwise he is not a faithful historian. Now, I think, through the whole of this poem, Voltaire shows himself more of a historian than a poet; we understand well enough what he says, but his representations, for the most part, are neither picturesque nor affecting.

“To one who has read the second book of Virgil, Voltaire’s *Massacre of St Bartholomew* will appear very trifling. It is uninteresting and void of incident; the horrors of it arise only upon reflection; the imagination is not terrified, though the moral sense disapproves. The parting of Henry and Mad. D’Estrees is another passage that disappointed me; it is expressed in a few general terms, that produce no effect. The parting of Dido and Æneas, of Armida and Rinaldo, are in-

comparably fine, and do as far exceed that of Henry and his paramour, as the thunder of heaven transcends the mustard-bowl of the play-house.

“ There is hardly an attempt at character in the poem. That of Henry is purely historical; and, though well enough supported on the whole, is not placed in those difficult and trying circumstances, which draw forth into action the minuter springs of the soul. Before I get to the end of the Iliad, I am as much acquainted with Homer’s heroes as if I had been personally known to them all for many years; but of Voltaire’s hero I have only a confused notion. I know him to be brave and amorous, a lover of his country, and affectionate to his friends; and this is all I know of him, and I could have learned as much from a common newspaper.

“ I acknowledge Voltaire’s fable to be perspicuous, but I think it uninteresting, especially towards the end. We foresee the event, but our expectations are not raised by it. The catastrophe is not brought about by any striking incident, but by a series of incidents that have little or nothing in them to engage or surprise the reader. Henry’s conversion is a very poor piece of work.

Truth descends from heaven to the king's tent, with a veil over her, which she removes by little and little, till at length her whole person appears in a glorious, but undazzling lustre. This may be good philosophy, but it is very indifferent poetry. It affects not the imagination, nor reconciles the reader to the event. Henry is converted, but we know not how or why. The catastrophe of Don Quixote is similar to this. Both Cervantes and Voltaire seem to have been in a haste to conclude; and this is all the apology I can offer for them.

“ I mention not Voltaire's confusion of fabulous and real personages in his machinery; this has been remarked by others. But I cannot help observing, that his invocation to the historic muse is extremely injudicious. It warns the reader to expect nothing but truth, and consequently every appearance of fiction in the sequel must produce a bad effect, and bear the mark of improbability, which it would not have borne if our author had been content to follow the example of his predecessors. Virgil pretends no better authority than tradition, *Sit mihi fas audita loqui*; and Homer throws himself entirely upon his muse, and is satisfied in being the instrument through which

she speaks. The dream in the seventh canto (which the French critics think superior in merit to the whole Iliad) disappointed me much, though, in some few passages, it is not amiss. But heaven is not the element of poets. St Louis's prayer, in the last canto, is an odd one. He treats his Maker very cavalierly, and almost threatens him. I observed in the "Henriade" some mixed and some improper metaphors, but did not mark them. One, however, occurs—" *L'Eternal a ses vœux se laissa penetrer.*" On the whole, I am very much of Denina's mind with regard to this poem—" *Se nell' Enriade non si trovano molti passaggi pieni di affetti, nè molte orazioni forti e gagliarde, e che esprimano il carattere di chi parla, nè quella ubertà d'immagini e di tratti vivi e sorprendenti d'immaginazione, come in Omero, Virgilio, Ariosto, Tasso, e Milton, non vi son neppure le superfluità, nè le stravaganze che in alcuni di questi si notano; e chicchessia può con gusto, e soddisfazione leggere l'Enriade senza saziarsi; vantaggio, che l'autore dee riconoscere dalla vivacità e forza del suo stile, e dall' energia de' suoi versi.*"

" Reserve is the bane of friendly intercourse, the screen of error, and the support of prejudice.

I have, therefore, spoken freely on this occasion, because I would willingly embrace every opportunity of rectifying my errors, and putting myself in the way of information. If you approve of my sentiments, I shall believe them right; if not, I shall carefully review and correct them. I flatter myself I am of no country, but a citizen of the world. I have received much entertainment from the works of Voltaire; but I do not admire him much in his critical capacity. I know Mrs Boyd will support me in this; for she understands and admires Shakespeare, who seems to be the object of Voltaire's envy in a particular degree.

“The following lines from Tasso have often been quoted as an instance of the unrivalled harmony of the Italian language:

“*Chiama gli abitator dell' ombre eterne,*” &c.

“I quote these lines, that I may have an opportunity of giving you a translation of them, which I made a few days ago. I think I am as obstreperous as my original, but not so musical:

“Forthwith to summon all the tribes of hell,” &c.*

* Both the original and the translation of this stanza will be found at pp. 125, 126.

“ Here is another *morçeau*, written lately in imitation of the Italian. I attempted this, because I was dissatisfied with the common translation of it, which is given by the person who adapted “ Artaxerxes” to the English stage :

“ *L'onda dal mar divisa*
 “ *Bagna la valle, e 'l monte,*
 “ *Va passaggiera*
 “ *In fiume,*
 “ *Va prigioniera*
 “ *In fonte ;*
 “ *Mormora sempre, e geme,*
 “ *Fin che non torua al mar :*
 “ *Al mar, dov' ella nacque,*
 “ *Dove acquistò gli umori,*
 “ *Dove da' lunghi errori*
 “ *Spera di riposar.”*

METASTASIO ARTASERSE, Att. 3. sc. 1.

“ Waters, from the ocean borne,
 “ Bathe the valley and the hill,
 “ Prisoned in the fountain mourn,
 “ Warble down the winding rill ;
 “ But, wherever doomed to stray,
 “ Still they murmur and complain,
 “ Still pursue their lingering way,
 “ Till they join their native main.
 “ After many a year of woe,
 “ Many a long, long wandering past,
 “ Where, at first, they learned to flow,
 “ There they hope to rest at last.”

“ I confined myself to the measure of the old translation, because I wanted that my words should agree with the music, which, in this song, is very good.”

The following letter gives a very interesting account of Dr Beattie's motives for writing and publishing his “ Essay on Truth.”

LETTER XXIX.

DR BEATTIE TO DR BLACKLOCK.

Aberdeen, 9th January, 1769.

“ It was very kind in you to read over my “ Essay on the Immutability of Moral Sentiment” with so much attention. I wish it deserved any part of the high encomium you bestowed on it. I flatter myself it will receive considerable improvements from a second transcribing, which I intend to begin as soon as I can. Some parts of it will be enlarged, and others (perhaps) shorten-

ed: the examples from history, and authorities from ancient authors, will be more numerous; it will be regularly distributed into chapters and sections, and the language will be corrected throughout. The first part, which treats of the permanency of truth in general, is now in great forwardness; ninety pages in quarto are finished, and materials provided for as many more. The design of the whole you will guess from the part you have seen. It is to overthrow scepticism, and establish conviction in its place; a conviction not in the least favourable to bigotry or prejudice, far less to a persecuting spirit; but such a conviction as produces firmness of mind, and stability of principle, in a consistence with moderation, candour, and liberal inquiry. If I understand my own design, it is certainly this; whether I shall accomplish this design or not, the event only will determine. Meantime I go on with cheerfulness in this intricate and fatiguing study, because I would fain hope that it may do some good; harm I think it cannot possibly do any.

“ Perhaps you are anxious to know what first induced me to write on this subject; I will tell you as briefly as I can. In my younger days I

read chiefly for the sake of amusement, and I found myself best amused with the classics, and what we call the *belles lettres*. Metaphysics I disliked; mathematics pleased me better; but I found my mind neither improved nor gratified by that study. When Providence allotted me my present station, it became incumbent on me to read what had been written on the subject of morals and human nature: the works of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, were celebrated as masterpieces in this way; to them, therefore, I had recourse. But as I began to study them with great prejudices in their favour, you will readily conceive how strangely I was surprised to find them, as I thought, replete with absurdities: I pondered these absurdities; I weighed the arguments, with which I was sometimes not a little confounded; and the result was, that I began at last to suspect my own understanding, and to think that I had not capacity for such a study. For I could not conceive it possible, that the absurdities of these authors were so great as they seemed to me to be; otherwise, thought I, the world would never admire them so much. About this time, some excellent antiseptical works made their appearance, particularly Reid's "Inquiry in-

to the Human Mind." Then it was that I began to have a little more confidence in my own judgment, when I found it confirmed by those of whose abilities I did not entertain the least distrust. I reviewed my authors again, with a very different temper of mind. A very little truth will sometimes enlighten a vast extent of science. I found that the sceptical philosophy was not what the world imagined it to be, nor what I, following the opinion of the world, had hitherto imagined it to be, but a frivolous, though dangerous, system of verbal subtilty, which it required neither genius, nor learning, nor taste, nor knowledge of mankind, to be able to put together; but only a captious temper, an irreligious spirit, a moderate command of words, and an extraordinary degree of vanity and presumption. You will easily perceive that I am speaking of this philosophy only in its most extravagant state, that is, as it appears in the works of Mr Hume. The more I study it, the more am I confirmed in this opinion. But while I applauded and admired the sagacity of those who led me into, or at least encouraged me to proceed in, this train of thinking, I was not altogether satisfied with them in another respect. I could not approve that ex-

traordinary adulation which some of them paid to their arch-adversary. I could not conceive the propriety of paying compliments to a man's *heart*, at the very time one is proving that his aim is to subvert the principles of truth, virtue, and religion; nor to his *understanding*, when we are charging him with publishing the grossest and most contemptible nonsense. I thought I then foresaw, what I have since found to happen, that this controversy will be looked upon rather as a trial of skill between two logicians, than as a disquisition in which the best interests of mankind were concerned; and that the world, especially the fashionable part of it, would still be disposed to pay the greatest deference to the opinions of him who, even by the acknowledgment of his antagonists, was confessed to be the best philosopher and the soundest reasoner. All this has happened, and more. Some, to my certain knowledge, have said, that Mr Hume and his adversaries did really act in concert, in order mutually to promote the sale of one another's works; as a proof of which, they mention, not only the extravagant compliments that pass between them, but also the circumstance of Dr R.* and Dr C.†

* Dr Reid.

† Dr Campbell.

sending their manuscripts to be perused and corrected by Mr Hume before they gave them to the press. I, who know both the men, am very sensible of the gross falsehood of these reports. As to the affair of the manuscripts, it was, I am convinced, candour and modesty that induced them to it. But the world knows no such thing; and, therefore, may be excused for mistaking the meaning of actions that have really an equivocal appearance. I know likewise that they are sincere, not only in the detestation they express for Mr Hume's irreligious tenets, but also in the compliments they have paid to his talents; for they both look upon him as an extraordinary genius; a point in which I cannot agree with them. But while I thus vindicate them from imputations, which the world, from its ignorance of circumstances, has laid to their charge, I cannot approve them in every thing; I wish they had carried their researches a little farther, and expressed themselves with a little more firmness and spirit. For well I know, that their works, for want of this, will never produce that effect which (if all mankind were cool metaphysical reasoners) might be expected from them. There is another thing in which my judgment differs

considerably from that of the gentlemen just mentioned. They have great metaphysical abilities; and they love the metaphysical sciences. I do not. I am convinced, that this metaphysical spirit is the bane of true learning, true taste, and true science; that to it we owe all this modern scepticism and atheism; that it has a bad effect upon the human faculties, and tends not a little to sour the temper, to subvert good principles, and to disqualify men for the business of life. You will now see wherein my views differ from those of the other answerers of Mr Hume. I want to show the world, that the sceptical philosophy is contradictory to itself, and destructive of genuine philosophy, as well as of religion and virtue; that it is in its own nature so paltry a thing, (however it may have been celebrated by some) that to be despised it needs only to be known; that no degree of genius is necessary to qualify a man for making a figure in this pretended science; but rather a certain minuteness and suspiciousness of mind, and want of sensibility, the very reverse of true intellectual excellence; that metaphysics cannot possibly do any good, but may do, and actually have done, much harm; that sceptical philosophers, whatever they

may pretend, are the corrupters of science, the pests of society, and the enemies of mankind. I want to show, that the same method of reasoning, which these people have adopted in their books, if transferred into common life, would show them to be destitute of common sense; that true philosophers follow a different method of reasoning; and that, without following a different method, no truth can be discovered. I want to lay before the public, in as strong a light as possible, the following dilemma: our sceptics either believe the doctrines they publish, or they do not believe them; if they believe them, they are fools—if not, they are a thousand times worse. I want also to fortify the mind against this sceptical poison, and to propose certain criteria of moral truth, by which some of the most dangerous sceptical errors may be detected and guarded against.

“ You are sensible, that, in order to attain these ends, it is absolutely necessary for me to use great plainness of speech. My expressions must not be so tame as to seem to imply either a diffidence in my principles, or a coldness towards the cause I have undertaken to defend. And where is the man who can blame me for speak-

ing from the heart, and therefore speaking with warmth, when I appear in the cause of truth, religion, virtue, and mankind? I am sure my dear friend Dr Blacklock will not; he, who has set before me so many examples of this laudable ardour; he, whose style I should be proud to take for my model, if I were not aware of the difficulty, I may say, the insuperable difficulty, of imitating it with success. You need not fear, however, that I expose myself by an excess of passion or petulance. I hope I shall be animated, without losing my temper, and keen, without injury to good manners. In a word, I will be as soft and delicate as the subject and my conscience will allow. One gentleman, a friend of yours,* I shall have occasion to treat with much freedom. I have heard of his virtues. I know he

* The gentleman here alluded to by Dr Beattie, as a friend of Dr Blacklock's, was Mr Hume, who had patronised Dr Blacklock at an early period, and done him several acts of kindness, which Dr Blacklock never failed to acknowledge. But all intercourse between Mr Hume and him had ceased (through no fault on the part of Dr Blacklock) many years before the period here spoken of. In consequence of what Dr Beattie says here, of Mr Hume's being a friend of Dr Blacklock's, I find, among Dr Beattie's papers, a long letter to him from Dr Blacklock, giving a detail of the whole of the intercourse between him and Mr Hume, from its commencement to its close.

has many virtues; God forbid I should ever seek to lessen them, or wish them to be found insincere. I hope they are sincere, and that they will increase in number and merit every day. To his virtues I shall do justice; but I must also do justice to his faults, at least to those faults which are public, and which, for the sake of truth and of mankind, ought not to be concealed or disguised. Personal reflections will be carefully avoided; I hope I am in no danger of falling into them, for I bear no personal animosity against any man whatsoever; sometimes I may perhaps be keen; but I trust I shall never depart from the Christian and philosophic character.

“ A scheme like this of mine cannot be popular, far less can it be lucrative. It will raise me enemies; it will expose me to the scrutiny of the most rigid criticism; it will make me be considered by many as a sullen and illiberal bigot. I trust, however, in Providence, and in the goodness of my cause, that my attempts in behalf of truth shall not be altogether ineffectual, and that my labours shall be attended with some utility to my fellow-creatures. This, in my estimation, will do much more than counterbalance all the inconveniences I have any reason to apprehend.

I have already fallen on evil tongues (as Milton says), on account of this intended publication. It has been reported, that I had written a most scurrilous paper against Mr Hume, and was preparing to publish it, when a friend of mine interposed, and, with very great difficulty, prevailed on me to suppress it, because he knew it would hurt or ruin my character. Such is the treatment I have to expect from one set of people. I was so provoked when I first heard this calumny, that I deliberated whether I should not throw my papers into the fire, with a *Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur*: but I rejected that thought; for so many persons have told me, that it was my *duty* to publish these papers, that I almost begin to think so myself. Many have urged me to publish them; none ever dissuaded me. The gentleman, named in the report, read the essay, and returned it with the highest commendations; but I do not recollect that he ever spoke a syllable about publishing or suppressing it. But I have certainly tired you with so long a detail, about so trifling a matter as my works. However, I thought it necessary to say something by way of apology for them, for I find that your good opinion is of too much consequence to my peace, to

suffer me to neglect any opportunity of cultivating it.

“ I informed you, in the letter which I sent by Mr John Ross, that I was become the father of a son. Both his parents and he are much obliged to you for interesting yourselves so much in that event, and for your kind wishes. He thrives apace, and my wife is thoroughly recovered. You ask me, what are my feelings? Perhaps I shall be in a better condition to answer that question afterwards than now. He is always near me, and never has had any illness; and you know, that adversity is the only true touchstone of affection. I find my imagination recoils from the idea of such adversity as would bring my affection to the test. To tell the truth, I am at no great pains to obtrude that idea on my fancy; evils come soon enough, we need not anticipate them. At present, however, I feel enough to convince me experimentally of what I have proved from the principles of reason in my essay, that this *σοφγν* is something entirely different from that affection we feel towards dependants, as well as from that which arises from a habit of long acquaintance.

“ I long much to see your translation of the

French poem ; * pray send it as soon as you can. You need not, I think, be under any apprehensions of meeting with Mr Home's treatment. † To translate a dramatic poem, can never be made to be on a footing with composing one, and bringing it on the stage. Even Presbyterianism itself allows us to read plays ; and if so, it cannot prohibit the translating of them."

In the following letter, Dr Beattie alludes to an inscription, which I had written for a monument I was about to erect to the memory of my father, and which I wished him to take the trouble of correcting. I trust no one will object to me this piece of egotism, at least in honour of

* The French poem, here spoken of, was a translation of the play of "Cenie," by D'Happoncourt de Grafigny, which Dr Blacklock had translated, with the title of "Seraphina;" but which was never intended to be printed, far less to be brought on the stage. In a letter to Dr Beattie, Dr Blacklock, speaking of this piece, says it had been imitated, rather than translated, by Mr Philip Francis, the translator of Horace, with the title of "Eugenia," but with not much better success than his own.

† This alludes to Mr John Home's tragedy of "Douglas."

a respected parent, to whose memory I wished Dr Beattie to help me to inscribe some better memorial than I could pretend to prepare myself.

The inscription, as here given, has since been engraved on a monument of white marble, erected in the church of Kearn in Aberdeenshire, the burial-place of Lord Forbes's family, where my father's remains were deposited.

LETTER XXX.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

Aberdeen, 19th April, 1769.

* * * * * “The Christian religion, according to my creed, is a very simple thing, intelligible to the meanest capacity, and what, if we are at pains to join practice to knowledge, we may make ourselves thoroughly acquainted with, without turning over many books. It is the distinguishing excellence of this religion, that it is entirely popular, and fitted, both in its doctrines and in its evidences, to all conditions and capacities of reasonable creatures—a character, which does not

belong to any other religious or philosophical system that ever appeared in the world. I wonder to see so many men, eminent both for their piety and for their capacity, labouring to make a mystery of this divine institution. If God vouchsafes to reveal himself to mankind, can we suppose that he chooses to do so in such a manner as that none but the learned and contemplative can understand him? The generality of mankind can never, in any possible circumstances, have leisure or capacity for learning, or profound contemplation. If, therefore, we make Christianity a mystery, we exclude the greater part of mankind from the knowledge of it; which is directly contrary to the intention of its Author, as is plain from his explicit and reiterated declarations. In a word, I am perfectly convinced, that an intimate acquaintance with the scripture, particularly the gospels, is all that is necessary to our accomplishment in true Christian knowledge. I have looked into some systems of theology; but I never read one of them to an end, because I found I could never reap any instruction from them. To darken what is clear, by wrapping it up in the veil of system and science, was all the purpose that even the best of them seemed to me

to answer. True it is, there are, even in the gospels, and in the discourses of Jesus Christ himself, some things that stand in need of illustration; as when he adopts proverbial phrases peculiar to Judea, or alludes to the customs of that country and those times; but these obscurities are but few in number, and generally relate to matters of less indispensable utility; and I presume, a very moderate share of erudition is all that is necessary to make us understand them, as far as they were intended to be understood by us. As these, I am convinced, are your sentiments, you will agree with me in thinking, that it is not necessary for us, even though we were clergymen, to read a great deal of divinity, as it is called. Indeed, I am every day more and more inclined to Dr Gregory's opinion, (which, by the bye, I think was Solomon's too,) that the reading of many books of any sort is a bad thing, as it tends to withdraw a man's attention from himself, and from those amusements and contemplations, which at once sweeten the temper and cherish the health. You will do me the justice to believe, that, by the word amusements, I do not mean drinking, or gaming, or any of the fashionable modes of dissipation; I mean the study of

the works of nature, and some of the best performances in the fine arts, which I have always found the most pleasing, as well as the most salutary amusement, both to my mind and body. But I must certainly have tired you with this long disquisition.

“ I am much obliged to you for your account of Dr Hawkesworth. I want much to see his translation of *Telemachus*; but no copies of it have come to this country. The former translations were all very indifferent. I am inclined to think, that the Doctor judged right in not making his translation too poetical and figurative. His own prose style is as much ornamented as good prose can well be; and nearly as much (if I mistake not) as *Cambray's* style, even where it is most poetical. The measured prose (as they call it,) which we have in the translations from *Ossian*, would, I am afraid, become disgusting in a work so long as *Telemachus*. Besides, the style of this work is really simple, and of the narrative, or epic kind, as it ought to be; whereas the poems of the Highland bard are altogether of the lyric cast, both in the ornaments of the style, and in the arrangement and detail of the fable. I wonder how the editor of these poems took it into

his head to call them epic. They are wholly lyric, and can no more be referred to the class of epic poems, than Milton's "Paradise Lost" can be called an ode.

"The account you give me of the economy of Dr Hawkesworth's family pleases me much.* I am entirely of your mind in regard to Protestant nunneries or convents, which are much wanted in this country, and which, under proper regulations, might, as you justly observe, be productive of the best effects. Our reformers seem to have wholly forgot the old maxim, *Fas est et ab hoste doceri*. If any practice was in use among the Papists, this was enough to make them reject it; and it was almost enough to recommend any practice to them, that it was contrary to the usage of their adversaries. I wish, however, they had condescended to borrow a little church music, and somewhat of more decorum and solemnity in their public worship, even from the Papists; and that they had provided some safe and creditable asylum for ladies of small fortunes and high breeding, although this had been done in imitation of the votaries of the Romish church. It

* See Appendix, [Q.]

seems as decent, at least, to imitate the Roman Catholics as the Mahometans; and yet we (Presbyterians) seem to have imitated the latter, in banishing from our churches all music, at least all good music; that which we have retained being in general so very bad, that it is necessary for a person to have a bad ear before he can relish the worship of the church of Scotland.

“ I much approve your notion of epitaphs, and your resolution of erecting a monument to the memory of your father. The epitaph, of which you favoured me with a copy, is exceeding good, and stands in no need of being enlarged, abridged, or altered. In my opinion, it is just what it ought to be. However, to show my willingness to do what you desire, I have proposed a few alterations, corrections I cannot call them, for I have doubts about their propriety. I therefore propose this form (which, however, I heartily submit.)

*Here are deposited,
 In the firm hope of a blessed resurrection,
 The ashes of
 Sir WILLIAM FORBES, Baronet, Advocate,
 Of the family of Monynusk;*
 Who left this transitory world
 On the 12th of May, 1743, aged 36,
 Adorned with many virtues; stained with no crimes.
 With the shattered remains of paternal possessions,
 Once ample and flourishing,
 He supported through the whole of life,
 Without ostentation,
 But with dignity and spirit,
 That rank to which he was by birth entitled.
 In his death, which he long foresaw,
 He displayed equal magnanimity;
 Enduring, without complaint, the attacks of a painful distemper,
 And calmly resigning his soul to him who gave it.
 This marble is erected,
 By his only surviving Son,
 Who,
 Though deeply affected with his loss,
 Submits to the Divine wisdom,
 That saw proper to deprive him early of such a Parent,
 Before he was able to profit
 By so bright an example
 Of
 Christian virtue.*

“ Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

* The name of the paternal estate of the family, but which had been sold by his grandfather many years ago.

“ As soon as you determine upon the form of the epitaph, you will cause it be printed in capitals, and give one of the printed copies to the stone-cutter to work after: I have had some little experience in those matters, and I believe there is no other way to keep the workmen from blundering.

“ I have read both “ Zingis” and “ The Fatal Discovery:” there are good things in both, especially in the last; but I do not greatly admire either the one or the other.”

Of the warmth of Dr Beattie's affection for his friends, I cannot give a stronger proof than by transcribing part of a letter written by him to me, on occasion of the fall of the North Bridge in Edinburgh, when a gentleman and lady, and three others, were unfortunately killed.

LETTER XXXI.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

Perth, Friday, 4th August, 1769.

“ I was in great anxiety last night for a few minutes about you and Mr Arbuthnot. I had waited for you half an hour, and then went to Mr Arbuthnot’s, where Mrs Arbuthnot told me, that you and he had gone away about an hour before, in quest of me. On my arrival at Dr Gregory’s, immediately after, I heard of the terrible accident of the fall of the bridge. Your house in the New Town, and some other ideas which then occurred, brought you two so strongly in my imagination, that I should soon have been in a most anxious situation, had not a messenger luckily arrived from you, bringing Tasso’s “ Gierusalemme” to James Gregory. I shall like that excellent bard the better as long as I live. When I got home, a line was waiting me from Mr Arbuthnot, of whose safety I had no doubt after the messenger came from you ; and, by one lucky accident or other, I learned, before I went

to bed, that none of my friends or acquaintance were concerned in that sad event. Yet, alas! the persons who have perished had friends and acquaintance of more sensibility perhaps than I. But we ought not to repine at, but adore Providence in all its dispensations, whatever be their appearance, whether good or bad. Pray let me hear, as soon as you can, who are the sufferers in this calamity, for I am greatly concerned about it."

In order that the following letter may be understood, it may be proper to mention, that Dr Beattie, having now finished the manuscript of his "Essay on Truth," was desirous of selling it to a bookseller for publication; not with any view, as he had often declared, of obtaining a great price, but in order that he might avoid all risk to himself, and that the publisher might feel his own interest connected with the sale of the book, which otherwise, he feared, would never make its way in the world. Dr Beattie, therefore, committed the care of this business to Mr Arbuthnot and me, with ample authority to us,

♦

to dispose of the manuscript as we should judge proper.

On our applying, however, to the bookseller, whom we thought most likely to publish it with advantage, we were mortified by his positive refusal to purchase the manuscript, although he readily offered to publish it on Dr Beattie's account,—a mode to which, we knew, Dr Beattie would never agree. Thus there was some danger of a work being lost, the publication of which, we flattered ourselves, would do much good in the world.

In this dilemma, it occurred to me, that we might, without much artifice, bring the business to an easy conclusion by our own interposition. We therefore resolved, that we ourselves should be the purchasers, at a sum with which we knew Dr Beattie would be well satisfied, as the price of the first edition. But it was absolutely necessary that the business should be glossed over as much as possible; otherwise, we had reason to fear he would not give his consent to our taking on us a risk, which he himself had refused to run.

I therefore wrote to him, (nothing surely but the truth, although, I confess, not the whole

•

truth,) that the manuscript was sold for fifty guineas, which I remitted to him by a bank-bill; and I added, that we had stipulated with the bookseller who was to print the book, that we should be partners in the publication. On such trivial causes do things of considerable moment often depend. For had it not been for this interference of ours in this somewhat ambiguous manner, perhaps the "Essay on Truth," on which all Dr Beattie's future fortunes hinged, might never have seen the light. It also strongly marks the slender opinion entertained by the booksellers at that period, of the value of a work which has since risen into such well-merited celebrity.

LETTER XXXII.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

26th October, 1769.

" I this moment received yours of the 23d current, inclosing a bank post-bill for L. 52, 10 s. I am too much affected with a sense of your and Mr Arbuthnot's friendship on this, as on all other occasions, to say any thing in the way of thanks

or compliment. Like a man on the verge of bankruptcy, I am become almost careless in regard to the extent of the new or old debt I owe to your goodness. If you are determined to persist in heaping favours and obligations upon me, why, be it so; I shall, at least, in one respect, be even with you, or endeavour to be so; I shall try to be as grateful as you are kind. As this book had cost me a good deal of labour, and as I had brought myself to think it a pretty good book, I should have been much disappointed if I had not got it published; and I do firmly believe, that, if it had not been for you, it never would have been published. As this is the light in which I consider what you have now done for me, you will readily believe, from the nature of that attachment which all authors bear to the offspring of their brain, that I have a pretty high sense of the favour.

“ The price does really exceed my warmest expectations; nay, I am much afraid that it exceeds the real commercial value of the book; and I am not much surprised that ———— refuses to have a share in it, considering that he is one of the principal proprietors of Mr Hume’s works, and, in consequence of that, may have such a

personal regard for him, as would prevent his being concerned in any work of this nature. In a word, I am highly pleased with the whole transaction, except in this one respect, that you and Mr Arbuthnot have agreed to be partners in this publication :—this gives me real concern. I know you both despise the risk of losing any thing by it, and will despise the loss when you come to know it, of which, I am afraid, there is too great a chance : but notwithstanding, I could have wished you out of the scrape ; and if it shall afterwards appear that you are losers, I shall be tempted to regret that ever I gave you the opportunity. There are some delicacies on this subject, which embarrass me so much, that I know not how to express myself intelligibly. In a word, you will account the loss a trifle, but to me it will not have that appearance.

“ I will now fall to work, and put the last hand to my manuscript. This will take up a week or two, as several things have occurred to me, within these few days, which I think will, when added, make the book much more perfect. I will venture to say, that few authors have ever been more solicitous than I on this occasion, to make their work correct. It has undergone a most

critical examination in the hands of my two friends, Doctors Campbell and Gerard, who have both written observations on it, and who are perfect masters of all the subjects treated in it, and really, in my judgment, the most acute metaphysicians of the age. Both have given me great encouragement, and assured me, that, in their opinion, my book will do good, if people will only vouchsafe it a reading. It was but the other day I received Dr Gerard's remarks; and, on my desiring him, honestly and impartially, to give his judgment, "I think," says he, "it is " a most excellent book, and cannot fail to do " you credit with all the friends of virtue and " religion." I mention this only to show you, that, if it shall afterwards appear that I have judged wrong in thinking this book proper to be printed, I am not singular in the mistake. One thing I was particularly careful in recommending to the two gentlemen just mentioned: I desired them, above every thing, to observe, whether I had, in any place, misrepresented my adversaries, or mistaken their doctrine. They tell me, that, in their judgment, I have not, except in two or three passages of no consequence, which, however, I have carefully corrected. I

have the more confidence in their judgment in this particular, because they are perfect masters of the modern sceptical philosophy, and are particularly well acquainted with Mr Hume's writings, indeed better than any other person I know, except Dr Reid at Glasgow; to whom, however, they are no ways inferior. Much of my knowledge on these subjects I owe to their conversation and writings, as Dr Gregory very well knows. Since I am upon this subject, I shall tell you farther, that the book, now under consideration, has been my principal study these four years; I have actually written it three times over, and some parts of it oftener. I have availed myself, all I could, of reading and conversation, in order that I might be aware of all the possible objections that could be made to my doctrine. Every one of these, that has come to my knowledge, has been canvassed and examined to the bottom, at least according to the examiner's measure of understanding. If all this, joined to my natural abhorrence of misrepresentation, and to the sense I have of what my character would suffer if I could be charged with want of candour; if all this, I say, is not sufficient to make

my book correct, I must for ever despair of making it so.”

Of the warmth of affection on the part of Dr Beattie towards his friends, there is another striking proof in the following letter to Major Mercer. It likewise strongly marks the playful humour which he sometimes introduced into his correspondence with those friends whom he loved; with whom he was wont to joke in conversation, and with whom he felt himself perfectly at ease.

LETTER XXXIII.

DR BEATTIE TO CAPT. (AFTERWARDS MAJOR)
MERCER. *

Aberdeen, 26th November, 1769.

“ I shall not take up your time with enlarging on all the causes that have kept me so long from

* For some account of Major Mercer, see p. 35. and Appendix [R.]

writing. I shall only tell you, that, while the summer lasted, I went about as much as possible, and imposed on myself an abstinence from reading, writing, and thinking, with a view to shake off this vile vertigo, which, however, still sticks by me, with a closeness of attachment which I could well excuse. Since that time, I mean since the end of summer, I have delayed writing, till I should be able to inform you of the fate of the papers you were so good last winter as to read and interest yourself in. They are sold to a bookseller in Edinburgh, and are now actually in the press, and will make their public appearance, if I mistake not, in the spring. I have taken no little pains to finish them; and many additions, and illustrations, and corrections, and expunctions, and softenings, and hardenings, have been made on them. With them I intend to bid adieu to metaphysics, and all your authors of profound speculation; for, of all the trades to which that multifarious animal man can turn himself, I am now disposed to look upon intense study as the idlest, the most unsatisfying, and the most unprofitable. You cannot easily conceive with what greediness I now peruse the "Arabian Nights Entertainments," "Gulliver's Travels," "Robin-

son Crusoe," &c. I am like a man who has escaped from the mines, and is now drinking in the fresh air and light, on the top of some of the mountains of Dalecarlia. These books put me in mind of the days of former years, the romantic æra of fifteen, or the still more careless period of nine or ten: the scenes of which, as they now stand pictured in my fancy, seem to be illuminated with a sort of purple light, formed with the softest, purest gales, and painted with a verdure to which nothing similar is to be found in the degenerate summers of modern times. Here I would quote the second stanza of Gray's "Ode on Eton College," but it would take up too much room, and you certainly have it by heart.

"I hear you are likely to be a major in the army soon. I need not tell you on how many accounts I wish that event to take place. I should look on it as a forerunner of your return, which I should certainly rejoice at, even with an excess of joy, though I had not a single particle of generosity in my whole composition, my own happiness is so much interested in it. Alas! my walks now are quite solitary. No more do the banks of Dee resound to those confabulations, critical, grammatical, philosophical, sentimental,

&c. which whilom were agitated between us. I have not seen a man since you left us, whose notions of Homer and Achilles were the same with mine.

“ I was a fortnight at Edinburgh this summer, where I saw our friend Sylvester* almost every day. You would be surprised to see his outward man so little changed. His voice has the same tone (only with a little addition of the English accent) as when he went away. As to stature and *embonpoint*, he is much the same (I fear I have misapplied that word, which I believe is never used of lean people.) His complexion rather fresher and fairer than before. He speaks French, Italian, and German, with fluency, and is as fond of poetry as ever. He never drinks above two or three glasses of wine at a sitting; and, indeed, seems to have acquired a great many good qualities by his travelling, without the loss of a single one of those he formerly possessed.

“ You would see Mr Gray’s installation ode, and, if so, I am sure you have approved it. It is not equal to some other of his pieces, but it is the best ode of the panegyrical kind I have ever

* The Right Honourable Sylvester Douglas, Lord Glenberrie. Vide Appendix [S.]

seen. I had a letter from him since it came out, in which he says, "That it cannot last above a single day, or, if its existence be prolonged beyond that period, it must be by means of newspaper parodies, and witless criticism." He says, he considered himself bound, in gratitude to the D. of Grafton, to write this ode; and that he foresaw the abuse that would be thrown on him for it, but did not think it worth his while to avoid it. I am not of his mind in regard to the duration of the poem. I am much mistaken if it do not carry down the name of his patron to the latest posterity; an honour which, I fear, no other great man of this age will have the chance to receive from the hands of the muses."

I am induced to print the following letter of Dr Beattie's, in order to shew, that he was aware, before the publication of his "Essay on Truth," how much he was supposed to have employed too great a degree of acrimony in the original composition of that essay; and how far he himself entertained the belief, that he had removed all

just cause of any such complaint, before its publication. It proves, too, I think, very clearly, how much he was actuated by principle in all his writings; and that, in thus warmly expressing his sentiments on the subject, he was merely acting, as he thought, in the discharge of his duty.

LETTER XXXIV.

DR BEATTIE TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

Aberdeen, 27th November, 1769.

“The concern your lordship is pleased to take in my writings does me a great deal of honour. I should think myself very happy, if, by means of them, I could contribute any thing to the advancement of the cause of truth and virtue.

“I have not been able, since you left us, to make any considerable additions to the “*Minstrel*,” all my leisure hours being employed in putting the last hand to my “*Essay on Truth*,” which was actually put to the press about three weeks ago. It will, I think, make its public appearance in the spring. Several important alterations and additions have been made. Most of

the asperities have been struck out, and such of them as have been retained are very much softened. Still, however, there are, and must be, some strong pictures and expressions, which do not well suit the apathy and equivocating lukewarmness of this age. But my express design was, to set our sceptics in a new light, and, therefore, I found it necessary to pursue a new method. I want to show, that their reasonings and doctrines are not only false, but ridiculous; and that their talents, as philosophers and logicians, are absolutely contemptible. Your lordship will, I presume, do me the justice to believe, that I have not *affected* to treat them with more contempt than I think they deserve. I should be ashamed of myself, if, in pleading the cause of truth, I were to personate a character that is not my own. The doctrines I have maintained in this book are, every one of them, according to my real sentiments. I have added some remarks on personal identity; on the veracity of our senses in regard to extension, distance, magnitude, and those other objects of touch which are commonly referred both to that sense and to sight; on the different classes to which *certain* truths seem reducible; and I have made several other additions,

which, I hope, will render the book less exceptionable than it was when your lordship did me the honour to peruse it.

“ The ‘ Minstrel’ I intend to resume next summer. It will consist of three books; and, as it promises to be by much the best, and will probably be the last, of my poetical attempts, I propose to finish it at great leisure.”



The Earl of Buchan, being desirous of exciting an attention to classical learning at Aberdeen, established a prize * to be annually contended for among the young men educated at the Marischal College; the subject to be the best Greek exercise. In consequence of the communication of this design to Dr Beattie, Lord Buchan received from him the following letter, by order of the University.

* A silver pen, presented by Lord Buchan to the university, to which a medallion is annually appended, with the name of the successful candidate.

LETTER XXXV.

DR BEATTIE TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

Aberdeen, 15th December, 1769.

“ I laid your letter before a full meeting of our university; and have their orders to return to your lordship their most grateful acknowledgements for your attention to the interests of learning in general, and your generosity to this society in particular. We accept, with the most unfeigned sentiments of gratitude, the noble present you have done us the honour to promise us; and will most zealously endeavour to promote, to the utmost of our power, those good purposes your lordship has so much at heart. We beg to know more particularly, in what way it will be proper for us to propose the prize-subjects? and from what sciences the arguments are to be taken? what ranks of students (whether the lower or higher classes, or all, in general) are to be admitted as candidates? in what manner their performances are to be examined? and whether it will be expedient to publish, in the newspapers,

the names of such as shall be thought to have obtained the prize? In these, and in all other particulars, we would chuse to be directed by your lordship's judgment."*

LETTER XXXVI.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

Aberdeen, 4th May, 1770.

"Nothing, I think, is stirring in the literary world. All ranks are run mad with politics; and I know not whether there was any period at which it was more unseasonable to publish new books. I do not mean, that the nation has no need of instruction; I mean only, that it has neither leisure nor inclination to listen to any.

"I am a very great admirer of Armstrong's poem on "Health;" and, therefore, as soon as I heard that the same author had published two volumes of "Miscellanies," I sent a commission for them, with great expectations: but I am miserably dis-

* The annual competition for this prize still continues at Aberdeen.

appointed. I know not what is the matter with Armstrong; but he seems to have conceived a rooted aversion at the whole human race, except a few friends, who, it seems, are dead. He sets the public opinion at defiance; a piece of boldness, which neither Virgil nor Horace were ever so shameless as to acknowledge. It is very true, that living authors are often hardly dealt with by their contemporaries; witness Milton, Collins the poet, and many others: but I believe it is equally true, that no good piece was ever published, which did not, sooner or later, obtain the public approbation. How is it possible it should be otherwise! People read for amusement. If a book be capable of yielding amusement, it will naturally be read; for no man is an enemy to what gives him pleasure. Some books, indeed, being calculated for the intellects of a few, can please only a few; yet, if they produce this effect, they answer all the end the authors intended; and if those few be men of any note, which is generally the case, the herd of mankind will very willingly fall in with their judgment, and consent to admire what they do not understand. I question whether there are now in Europe two thousand, or even one thousand, persons, who understand a

word of Newton's "Principia;" yet there are in Europe many millions who extol Newton as a very great philosopher. Those are but a small number who have any sense of the beauties of Milton; yet every body admires Milton, because it is the fashion. Of all the English poets of this age, Mr Gray is most admired, and, I think, with justice; yet there are, comparatively speaking, but a few who know any thing of his, but his "Church-yard Elegy," which is by no means the best of his works. I do not think that Dr Armstrong has any cause to complain of the public: his "Art of Health" is not indeed a popular poem, but it is very much liked, and has often been printed. It will make him known and esteemed by posterity: and, I presume, he will be the more esteemed, if all his other works perish with him. In his "Sketches," indeed, are many sensible, and some striking, remarks; but they breathe such a rancorous and contemptuous spirit, and abound so much in odious vulgarisms and colloquial execrations, that in reading we are as often disgusted as pleased. I know not what to say of his "Universal Almanack:" it seems to me an attempt at humour; but such humour is either too high or too low for my comprehension.

The plan of his tragedy, called the "Forced Marriage," is both obscure and improbable; yet there are good strokes in it, particularly in the last scene.

"As I know your taste and talents in painting, I cannot help communicating to you an observation, which I lately had occasion, not to make, for I had made it before, but to see illustrated in a very striking manner. I was reading the Abbé du Bos' "Reflections on Poetry and Painting." In his 13th section of the first volume, he gives some very ingenious remarks on two of Raphael's cartoons. Speaking of "Christ's charge to Peter," he says of one of the figures in the group of apostles, "*Près de lui est placé un autre Apôtre embarrassé de sa contenance; on le discerne pour être d'un temperament melancolique à la maigreur de son visage livide, à sa barbe noire et plate, à l'habitude de son corps, enfin à tous les traits que les naturalistes ont assignés à ce temperament. Il se courbe; et les yeux fixement attachés sur J. C. il est devoré d'une jalousie morne pour une choix dont il ne se plaindra point, mais dont il conservera long tems un vif ressentiment; enfin on reconnoit là Judas aussi distinctement qu'à le voir pendu au figuier, une bourse ren-*

“*versée au col. Je n'ai point prêté d'esprit a Raphael,*” &c. You see the ingenious Abbé is very positive; and yet you will immediately recollect, that the charge of “Feed my sheep,” to which this cartoon refers, was given to Peter after the resurrection, and when, consequently, Judas could not be present. (John xxi. 16.) If it be said, that this charge refers to the keys, which Peter carries in his bosom; a charge given long before: I answer, first, that the *sheep* in the back-ground is a presumption of the contrary; and, secondly, that the wounds in the feet and hands of Jesus, and the number of apostles present, which is only eleven, are a certain proof, that the fact to which this cartoon relates happened after the resurrection. The Abbé's mistake is of little moment in itself; but it serves to illustrate this observation, that the expression of painting is at the best very indefinite, and generally leaves scope to the ingenious critic *de prêter d'esprit* to the painter.”*

* I have lately met with a criticism similar to the above of Dr Beattie's on the Abbé du Bos, in the life of Raphael, in “Pilkington's Dictionary of the Lives of the Painters,” p. 501. A coincidence, however, that must have been entirely accidental, and which no way detracts from the originality of Dr Beat-

At length, in the month of May, 1770, Dr Beattie's "Essay on the nature and immutability of Truth, in opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism," made its appearance. As the manuscript had been seen by several eminent men of learning, and as the "Essay on Truth" was known to be written as a direct attack on the philosophical principles of Mr Hume, its publication had been looked for with considerable expectation. The boldness, too, of a writer so little known to the world as Beattie was at this time, (for he had merely published a few juvenile poems,) in attacking an author so formidable as Mr Hume, contributed not a little to excite the public curiosity. Mr Hume was in the zenith of his popularity. After a period of more than thirty years spent in literary pursuits, and after having acted in several respectable public situa-

tie's observation; for I am satisfied, he had never read Pilkington, otherwise he would not have sent me the remark as being his own.

tions, * to which his reputation as an author had no doubt recommended him, he had returned to Edinburgh, opulent from a pension which had been bestowed on him by government, but still more by the fruits of that plan of rigid economy, which, he tells us, he had early adopted, and steadily pursued, for the purpose of supplying his original deficiency of fortune, and rendering himself independent in the world. † Mr Hume, in his disposition, was humane and charitable; his temper was mild, and his manners pleasing; which, added to his natural abilities, as well as his great stock of acquired knowledge, made his company much sought after. The circle of society, therefore, in which he moved in Edinburgh, was not only extensive, but the most distinguished for rank and fashion, and literary merit, of

* Mr Hume attended General St Clair, in the year 1746, as secretary to his expedition on the coast of France. In 1747, he attended the general in the same station in his military embassy to the courts of Vienna and Turin. In the year 1763, he accompanied the Earl of Hertford, as secretary, on his embassy to Paris, where he was left *chargé d'affaires*, on that nobleman's going as lord-lieutenant to Ireland. And, in 1767, he was appointed by Lord Hertford's brother, General Conway, to be under secretary of state, while the general held the seals.

† Life of Mr Hume, prefixed to his works, written by himself, p. vii.

which the metropolis of Scotland could boast. Of all this I am myself a living witness; for I was well acquainted with Mr Hume, with whom I frequently met in the intercourse of social life.

Mr Hume had deservedly acquired a high reputation as an historian; and he may, with truth, be said to have been among the first to introduce into this country that dignified and classical style of composition with which we are so much delighted in his "History of England," as well as in the writings of Robertson, Orme, and other eminent authors since Mr Hume's time. His account of the British constitution, of the feudal system, and his affecting narratives of the death of Charles the First, of Lord Strafford, of Archbishop Laud, as well as other passages that might be cited, are proofs of a masterly genius, which must place Mr Hume in the first and most distinguished rank of writers of history in the English language. He had published, likewise, essays on political economy,* as well as on subjects of

* Dr Adam Smith, in his valuable work, on the "Causes of the Wealth of Nations," has acknowledged, that Mr Hume was the first writer who rightly understood, and properly explained, in his "Essays," some of the principles of political economy. Vol. ii. pp. 39, 119. ed. 3.

taste and literature; which, notwithstanding the revolutions, both in opinions and things, that an interval of upwards of half a century has produced, are still perused with pleasure by every classical scholar. Happy had it been, *si sic omnia*. But Mr Hume had unfortunately, at an early period of his life,* imbibed the principles of a cold hearted and gloomy philosophy, the direct tendency of which was to distract the mind with doubts on subjects the most serious and important, and, in fact, to undermine the best interests, and dissolve the strongest ties, of human society. When he examined Mr Hume's philosophy, and contemplated the mischief which arose from it, Dr Beattie's whole faculties rose in arms within him, to use the emphatic expression of an anonymous journalist, † in the defence of the cause of truth, and of every virtuous principle; and he resolved, without fear, to attempt to show the fallacy of a system, which he conceived to rest on no solid foundation. Such was the origin of the

* He says, in the advertisement to his "Essays," that he had projected his "Treatise on Human Nature" before he left college, and wrote and published it not long after.

† Account of the death of Dr Beattie, in the "Orthodox Churchman's Magazine and Review, for August 1803, No. 33."

“ Essay on Truth;” of which, besides what I have already inserted from his private correspondence with his friends, Dr Beattie gives, himself, the following account, in the advertisement to the edition of the “ Essay” published in quarto, in London, in the year 1776.

“ Ever since I began to attend to matters of this kind, I had heard Mr Hume’s philosophy mentioned as a system very unfriendly to religion, both revealed and natural, as well as to science; and its author spoken of as a teacher of sceptical and atheistical doctrines, and withal as a most acute and ingenious writer. I had reason to believe, that his arguments, and his influence as a great literary character, had done harm, by subverting or weakening the good principles of some, and countenancing the licentious opinions of others. Being honoured with the care of a part of the British youth; and considering it as my indispensable duty (from which, I trust, I shall never deviate) to guard their minds against impiety and error, I endeavoured, among other

studies that belonged to my office, to form a right estimate of Mr Hume's philosophy, so as not only to understand his peculiar tenets, but also to perceive their *connection* and *consequences*.

“In forming this estimate, I thought it at once the surest and the fairest method to begin with the “Treatise of Human Nature,” which was allowed, and is well known to be, the groundwork of the whole; and in which some of the principles and reasonings are more fully prosecuted, and their connection and consequences more clearly seen by an attentive reader, (notwithstanding some inferiority in point of style,) than in those more elegant republications of the system, that have appeared in the form of “Essays.” Every sound argument that may have been urged against the paradoxes of the “Treatise,” particularly against its first principles, does, in my opinion, tend to discredit the system; as every successful attempt to weaken the foundation of a building does, in effect, promote the downfall of the superstructure. Paradoxes there are in the “Treatise” which are not in the “Essays;” and, in like manner, there are licentious doctrines in these, which are not in the other: and, therefore, I have not directed *all* my batteries against

the first. And if the plan I had in view, when I published this book, had been completed, the reader would have seen, that, though I began with the "Treatise of Human Nature," it was never my intention to end with it. In fact, the "Essay on Truth" is only one part of what I projected. Another part was then in so great forwardness, that I thought its publication not very remote, and had even made proposals to a bookseller concerning it; though afterwards, on enlarging the plan, I found I had not taken so wide a view of the subject as would be necessary. In that part, my meaning was, to have applied the principles of this book to the illustration of certain truths of morality and religion, to which the reasonings of Helvetius, of Mr Hume in his "Essays," and of some other modern philosophers, seemed unfavourable. That work, however, I have been obliged, on account of my health, to lay aside; and whether I shall ever be in a condition to resume it, is at present very uncertain." *

* His want of health prevented him from prosecuting his original design of writing a second part of the "Essay on Truth." But he contrived to introduce into some of his subsequent publications, some portion of what he intended the second part should contain.

In the prosecution of this design, Dr Beattie has treated his subject in the following manner: He first endeavours to trace the several kinds of evidence and reasoning up to their first principles; with a view to ascertain the standard of truth, and explain its immutability. He shows, in the second place, that his sentiments on this head, how inconsistent soever with the genius of scepticism, and with the principles and practice of sceptical writers, are yet perfectly consistent with the genius of true philosophy, and with the practice and principles of those, whom all acknowledge to have been the most successful in the investigation of truth; concluding with some inferences, or rules, by which the more important fallacies of the sceptical philosophers may be detected by every person of common sense, even though he should not possess acuteness of metaphysical knowledge sufficient to qualify him for a logical confutation of them. In

the third place, he answers some objections, and makes some remarks, by way of estimate of scepticism, and sceptical writers. *

* Essay on Truth, p. 15.

SECTION III.

FROM THE PUBLICATION OF THE "ESSAY ON TRUTH,"
TO THE DEATH OF DR BEATTIE'S ELDEST SON, IN
THE YEAR 1790.

No sooner did the "Essay on Truth" make its appearance, than it was assailed by the admirers of Mr Hume as a violent and personal attack on that writer. Of this Dr Beattie takes notice in the following letters.

It is here necessary to mention, that, upon the publication of the "Essay on Truth," it was thought advisable, that a short analysis of the essay should be inserted in the Edinburgh newspapers, in order that something might be known of the manner in which the subject was treated. This task Dr Blacklock undertook, and executed

with much ability.* But, previous to its publication, he thought it proper to submit what he had written to Dr Beattie, who replied to Dr Blacklock as follows.

LETTER XXXVII.

DR BEATTIE TO DR BLACKLOCK.

Aberdeen, 27th May, 1770.

“ I cannot express how much I think myself indebted to your friendship, in entering so warmly into all my concerns, and in making out so readily, and at such length, the two critical articles. The shortest one was sent back, in course of post, to Mr Kincaid, † from whom you would learn the reasons that induced me to make some alterations in the analysis you had there made of my book. The other paper I return in this packet. I have made a remark or two at the end, but no alterations. Indeed, how could I? you understand my philosophy as perfectly as I do ;

* Vide Edinburgh Evening Courant, 2d June, 1770.

† The publisher.

you express it much better, and you embellish it with a great many of your own sentiments, which, though new to me, are exceedingly apposite to my subject, and set some parts of it in a fairer light than I have been able to do in my book. I need not tell you, how happy I am in the thought, that this work of mine has your approbation; for I know you too well, to impute to mere civility the many handsome things you have said in praise of it. I know you approve it, because I know you incapable to say one thing and think another; and I do assure you, I would not forego your approbation to avoid the censure of fifty Mr Humes. What do I say? Mr Hume's censure I am so far from being ashamed of, that I think it does me honour. It is, next to his conversion, (which I have no reason to look for) the most desirable thing I have to expect from that quarter. I have heard, from very good authority, that he speaks of me and my book with very great bitterness (I own, I thought he would rather have affected to treat both with contempt;) and that he says, I have not used him like a gentleman. He is quite right to set the matter upon that footing. It is an odious charge; it is an objection easily remembered, and, for that reason,

will be often repeated by his admirers; and it has this farther advantage, that being (in the present case) perfectly unintelligible, it cannot possibly be answered. The truth is, I, as a rational, moral, and immortal being, and something of a philosopher, treated him as a rational, moral, and immortal being, a sceptic, and an atheistical writer. My design was, not to make a book full of fashionable phrases and polite expressions, but to undeceive the public in regard to the merits of the sceptical philosophy, and the pretensions of its abettors. To say, that I ought not to have done this with plainness and spirit, is to say, in other words, that I ought either to have held my peace, or to have been a knave. In this case, I might perhaps have treated Mr Hume as a gentleman, but I should not have treated society, and my own conscience, as became a man and a Christian. I have all along foreseen, and still foresee, that I shall have many reproaches, and cavils, and sneers, to encounter on this occasion; but I am prepared to meet them. I am not ashamed of my cause; and, if I may believe those whose good opinion I value as one of the chief blessings of life, I need not be ashamed of my work. You are certainly right in your conjec-

ture, that it will not have a quick sale. Notwithstanding all my endeavours to render it perspicuous and entertaining, it is still necessary for the person who reads it *to think a little*; a task to which every reader will not submit. My subject too is unpopular, and my principles such as a man of the world would blush to acknowledge. How then can my book be popular! If it refund the expence of its publication, it will do as much as any person, who knows the present state of the literary world, can reasonably expect from it.

“ I am not at all surprised at your notions in regard to liberty and necessity. I have known several persons of the best understanding, and of the best heart, who could not get over the arguments in favour of necessity, even though their notions of the absurd and dangerous consequences of fatality were the same with mine. The truth is, I see no possible way of reconciling the fatalists with the liberty-men, except by supposing human liberty to be a self-evident fact, which, perhaps, the fatalists will never acknowledge, and which the staunch Arminian, who has been long in the practice of arguing the matter, would think a dangerous and unnecessary supposition. My

own sentiments of this point, I have given fairly and honestly in my book. That I am a free agent, is what I not only believe, but what I judge to be of such importance, that all morality must be founded on it, yea, and all religion too. To vindicate the ways of God to man, is not so difficult a thing when we acknowledge human liberty ; but, on the principles of fatality, it seems to me to be absolutely impossible.

“ I beg you will, from time to time, let me know what you hear of the fate of my book. Every author thinks that his works ought to engross every body’s attention. I am not such a novice as to have more of this vanity than my neighbours ; yet I think it highly probable, that my book will be the subject of some conversation, especially about Edinburgh, where Mr Hume is so well known, and where I happen to be not altogether unknown. By the bye, it was extremely well judged not to mention Mr Hume’s name, except very slightly, in the two critical articles you wrote. People will do me a great injustice, if they say or think, that my book is written solely against Mr Hume. Yet many, I am convinced, will say so ; and, therefore, it was proper

to say nothing in those articles that might encourage such a notion.”

LETTER XXXVIII.

DR JOHN GREGORY TO DR BEATTIE.

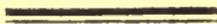
Edinburgh, 20th June, 1770.

“ Much woe has your essay wrought me. The hero of the piece is extremely angry, and so are all his friends, who are numerous. As it was known that the manuscript had been in my hands, I was taken to task for letting it go to the press as it stands. I have openly avowed every where, that I had advised you to publish your essay; that I thought the reasoning it contained both ingenious and solid; that it was not only written with great perspicuity, but with a spirit and elegance very uncommon on such subjects; that the importance of the subject justified sufficiently the warmth with which it was written; that it was no metaphysical disquisition about questions of curiosity, but a defence of principles, on which the peace of society, the virtue of individuals, and the happiness of every

one who had either feeling or imagination, depended. I wished, at the same time, some particular expressions had been softened; but denied there being any personal abuse. In one place, you say, "*What does the man mean?*" This, you know, is very contemptuous. In short, the spirit and warmth with which it is written, has got it more friends and more enemies than if it had been written with that polite and humble deference to Mr Hume's extraordinary abilities, which his friends think so justly his due. For my own part, I am so warm, not to say angry, about this subject, that I cannot entirely trust my own judgment; but I really think, that the tone of superiority assumed by the present race of infidels, and the contemptuous sneer with which they regard every friend of religion, contrasted with the timid behaviour of such as should support its cause, acting only on the defensive, seems to me to have a very unfavourable influence. It seems to imply a consciousness of truth on the one side, and a secret conviction, or at least diffidence, of the cause, on the other. What a difference from the days of Addison, Arbuthnot, Swift, Pope, &c. who treated infidelity with a scorn and indignation we are now strangers to. I am now per-

suaded the book will answer beyond your expectations. I have recommended it strongly to my friends in England.

“ I am positive in my opinion, that you should publish the first part of the “ Minstrel,” without waiting for the rest.”



Mr Hume tells us, in his life, written by himself,* that he had formed a fixed resolution, which he inflexibly maintained, never to answer any body. But from what he has been heard to say on the subject of the “ Essay on Truth,” there is some reason to suppose, that, although he affected to treat the matter in a vein of ironical pleasantry, he did not derive that consolation from Beattie’s work, which he pretends to have received † from a pamphlet attributed to Dr

* Page 9.

† “ In this interval,” says Mr Hume, “ I published my ‘ Natural History of Religion,’ along with some other small pieces. “ Its public entry was rather obscure, except only that Dr Hurd “ wrote a pamphlet against it, with all the illiberal petulance,

Hurd, the present Bishop of Worcester, against his "History of Natural Religion." This pamphlet, I believe, the Bishop afterwards disclaimed.

If, however, Dr Beattie found himself thus attacked by one set of men, he derived ample consolation from the popularity of his book, and the encomiums bestowed upon it by men of a different character. Some passages of his letters, at this time, strongly evince this success of his essay, which, indeed, far exceeded the most sanguine expectations, either of himself or his friends. But no testimony in his favour could convey to him higher gratification, than that which he derived from the following letter of that accomplished scholar and excellent man, the first Lord Lyttelton, to whom Dr Beattie had taken the liberty of presenting a copy of his "Essay on Truth," in consequence of his having been mentioned to his lordship by the late Dr Gregory.

"arrogance, and scurrility, which distinguished the Warburtonian school. This pamphlet gave me some consolation for the otherwise indifferent reception of my performance."—Page 11.

LETTER XXXIX.

LORD LYTTELTON.* TO DR BEATTIE.

Hill-Street, (London) 6th October, 1770.

“ That the author of such a work as that you have done me the favour to send me, should entertain the opinion you are pleased to express of me and my writings, is an honour to me, of which I feel the high value. Never did I read any book, in which truths of the greatest impor-

* George, Lord Lyttelton, eldest son of Sir Thomas Lyttelton of Hagley, in Worcestershire, was early distinguished by his learning, his taste, and his poetical talents, of which he has left many beautiful specimens, but no poem of any extent. Among other pieces, his plaintive Monody, on the death of the first Lady Lyttelton, is familiar to, and admired by, every reader of taste. His works in prose are numerous. His “ Persian Letters,” and his “ Dialogues of the Dead,” are well known; but, above all, his valuable “ Dissertation on the Conversion and Apostleship of St Paul,” is entitled to the highest commendation, as a masterly and convincing argument in favour of revealed religion. It is a very important fact, which we have on his own authority, that he was originally inclined to scepticism in religious opinions; but, by the effect of study and candid reflection, he became a decided and a steady believer in revelation. Lord Lyttelton also published an elaborate historical work on “ The Age of Henry the Second.” The style is void of orna-

tance to mankind are more skilfully extricated from the mazes of sophism, or where reason, wit, and eloquence, join their forces more happily, in opposition to errors of the most pernicious nature.

“ It has often given me great pain to see Bishop Berkeley, a most pious and learned man, overturn the main foundations of all religion and all knowledge, by the most extravagant scepticism concerning the real existence of matter, in some of his writings; and then fancy, that in others he could, by any force of argument, establish the evidences of Christianity, which are a

ment, but the book contains much valuable information, the result of diligent research. In his posthumous works, published by his nephew, are some very curious letters from Lord Lyttelton, while abroad, to his father, which set his filial piety in a very striking point of light.

Lord Lyttelton was distinguished as a speaker in Parliament; and, as a polite scholar and a man of taste, was one of the most accomplished characters of his time. He was the friend of Pope, of Thomson, of Shenstone: And the letter to Dr Beattie, which has given occasion to the introduction of this slight biographical sketch of Lord Lyttelton, shows how strongly that great and good man was pleased to interest himself in the fortunes of our author, even before their personal acquaintance took place, and when Dr Beattie was merely known to his lordship by his writings, and the testimony of their common friend Dr Gregory.

perpetual appeal to the truth of our senses, and grounded on a supposition, that they cannot deceive us in those things which are the proper and natural objects of them, within their due limits. Can one wonder, that the sceptics should lay hold of the former in answer to the latter? And can any more useful service be done to Christianity, than to shew the fallacy of such whimsies as would make the body of Christ, which his disciples saw and felt, no body at all? and the proof of his resurrection, from that testimony of their senses, a mere delusive idea?

“Berkeley certainly was not sensible of the consequences of these doctrines, no more than Locke of those you reprehend in his essay; but whatever respect may be due to the persons of authors, their writings must be censured, when they deserve censure, and especially on such subjects. This the friends of Mr Hume have no more right to complain of, than those of Berkeley or Locke. Nor can the censure of systems, which attempt to shake the great pillars both of natural and revealed religion, be delivered by a believer, in terms as cool as if only a speculation on the nature of electricity, or the causes of an aurora borealis, were in question. Mr Hume, as

a man, from his probity, candour, and the humanity of his manners, deserves esteem and respect; but the more authority he draws from his personal character, or from the merit of his other books, the more care should be taken to prevent the ill impressions which his sceptical writings may make on a number of readers, who, having been used to admire him, and trust in his judgment, are disposed to let him also judge for them in these points, where the being misled must be fatal.

“Go on, sir, to employ your excellent talents in a cause worthy of them, and stop the progress of that folly, which, assuming the venerable name of philosophy, tends to deprive human nature of the salutary light of its best and clearest knowledge, and throw it into a dark chaos of doubt and uncertainty.

“I beg you to present my affectionate compliments to good Dr Gregory; whom I have often been obliged to on many accounts, but never more than for the favour of procuring me your friendship, which I shall endeavour to cultivate by the best returns in my power.”

The following letter to Mrs Inglis,* at Edinburgh, is truly valuable, as it contains Dr Beattie's sentiments on the important question, which has been so much agitated, whether a public or a private education for boys is to be preferred.

LETTER XL.

DR BEATTIE TO MRS INGLIS.

Aberdeen, 24th December, 1770.

“ While I lived in your neighbourhood, I often wished for an opportunity of giving you my opinion on a subject, in which I know you are very deeply interested; but one incident or other always put it out of my power. That subject is the education of your son, whom, if I mistake not, it is

* Daughter of Colonel Gardiner, by Lady Frances Stuart, daughter of an Earl of Buchan. He was killed at the battle of Prestonpans, in Scotland, in September, 1745, fighting at the head of his regiment of dragoons.

now high time to send to some public place of education. I have thought much on this subject; I have weighed every argument, that I could think of, on either side of the question. Much, you know, has been written upon it; and very plausible arguments have been offered, both for and against a public education. I set not much value upon these; speculating men are continually disputing, and the world is seldom the wiser. I have some little experience in this way; I have no hypothesis to mislead me; and the opinion or prejudice which I first formed upon the subject, was directly contrary to that, which experience has now taught me to entertain.

“ Could mankind lead their lives in that solitude which is so favourable to many of our most virtuous affections, I should be clearly on the side of a private education. But most of us, when we go out into the world, find difficulties in our way, which good principles and innocence alone will not qualify us to encounter; we must have some address and knowledge of the world different from what is to be learned in books, or we shall soon be puzzled, disheartened, or disgusted. The foundation of this knowledge is laid in the intercourse of school-boys, or at least of young

men of the same age. When a boy is always under the direction of a parent or tutor, he acquires such a habit of looking up to them for advice, that he never learns to think or act for himself; his memory is exercised, indeed, in retaining their advice, but his invention is suffered to languish, till at last it becomes totally inactive. He knows, perhaps, a great deal of history or science, but he knows not how to conduct himself on those ever-changing emergencies, which are too minute and too numerous to be comprehended in any system of advice. He is astonished at the most common appearances, and discouraged with the most trifling (because unexpected) obstacles; and he is often at his wits end, where a boy of much less knowledge, but more experience, would instantly devise a thousand expedients. Conscious of his own superiority in some things, he wonders to find himself so much inferior in others; his vanity meets with continual rubs and disappointments, and disappointed vanity is very apt to degenerate into sullenness and pride. He despises, or affects to despise, his fellows, because, though superior in address, they are inferior in knowledge; and they, in their turn, despise that knowledge, which cannot teach the owner how to be-

have on the most common occasions. Thus he keeps at a distance from his equals, and they at a distance from him; and mutual contempt is the natural consequence.

“ Another inconvenience, attending private education, is the suppressing of the principle of emulation, without which, it rarely happens that a boy prosecutes his studies with alacrity or success. I have heard private tutors complain, that they were obliged to have recourse to flattery or bribery to engage the attention of their pupil; and I need not observe, how improper it is to set the example of such practices before children. True emulation, especially in young and ingenuous minds, is a noble principle; I have known the happiest effects produced by it; I never knew it to be productive of any vice. In all public schools, it is, or ought to be, carefully cherished. Where it is wanting, in vain shall we preach up to children the dignity and utility of knowledge: the true appetite for knowledge is wanting; and, when that is the case, whatever is crammed into the memory will rather surfeit and enfeeble, than improve the understanding. I do not mention the pleasure which young people take in the company of one ano-

ther, and what a pity it is to deprive them of it. I need not remark, that friendships of the utmost stability and importance have often been founded on school-acquaintance; nor need I put you in mind, of what vast consequence to health are the exercises and amusements which boys contrive for themselves. I shall only observe further, that, when boys pursue their studies at home, they are apt to contract either a habit of idleness, or too close an attachment to reading; the former breeds innumerable diseases, both in the body and soul; the latter, by filling young and tender minds with more knowledge than they can either retain or arrange properly, is apt to make them superficial and inattentive, or, what is worse, to strain, and consequently impair, the faculties, by over-stretching them. I have known several instances of both. The human mind is more improved by thoroughly understanding one science, one part of a science, or even one subject, than by a superficial knowledge of twenty sciences and a hundred different subjects; and I would rather wish my son to be thoroughly master of "Euclid's Elements," than to have the whole of "Chambers' Dictionary" by heart.

“ The great inconvenience of public education arises from its being dangerous to morals ; and, indeed, every condition and period of human life is liable to temptation. Nor will I deny, that our innocence, during the first part of life, is much more secure at home, than any where else ; yet even at home, when we reach a certain age, it is not perfectly secure. Let young men be kept at the greatest distance from bad company, it will not be easy to keep them from bad books, to which, in these days, all persons may have easy access at all times. Let us, however, suppose the best ; that both bad books and bad company keep away, and that the young man never leaves his parents’ or tutor’s side, till his mind be well furnished with good principles, and himself arrived at the age of reflection and caution : yet temptations must come at last ; and when they come, will they have the less strength, because they are new, unexpected, and surprising ? I fear not. The more the young man is surprised, the more apt will he be to lose his presence of mind, and consequently the less capable of self-government. Besides, if his passions are strong, he will be disposed to form comparisons between his past state of restraint and his present of liberty, very

much to the disadvantage of the former. His new associates will laugh at him for his reserve and preciseness; and his unacquaintance with their manners, and with the world, as it will render him the more obnoxious to their ridicule, will also disqualify him the more, both for supporting it with dignity, and also for defending himself against it. Suppose him to be shocked with vice at its first appearance, and often to call to mind the good precepts he received in his early days; yet when he sees others daily adventuring upon it without any apparent inconvenience; when he sees them more gay, (to appearance,) and better received among all their acquaintance than he is; and when he finds himself hooted at, and in a manner avoided and despised, on account of his singularity,—it is a wonder, indeed, if he persist in his first resolutions, and do not now at last begin to think, that though his former teachers were well meaning people, they were by no means qualified to prescribe rules for his conduct. “The world,” he will say, “is changed since their time, (and you will not easily persuade young people that it changes for the worse:) we must comply with the fashion, and live like other folks, otherwise we must give up all

“ hopes of making a figure in it.” And when he has got thus far, and begins to despise the opinions of his instructors, and to be dissatisfied with their conduct in regard to him, I need not add, that the worst consequences may not unreasonably be apprehended. A young man, kept by himself at home, is never well known, even by his parents; because he is never placed in those circumstances which alone are able effectually to rouse and interest his passions, and consequently to make his character appear. His parents, therefore, or tutors, never know his weak side, nor what particular advices or cautions he stands most in need of; whereas, if he had attended a public school, and mingled in the amusements and pursuits of his equals, his virtues and his vices would have been disclosing themselves every day; and his teachers would have known what particular precepts and examples it was most expedient to inculcate upon him. Compare those who have had a public education with those who have been educated at home; and it will not be found, in fact, that the latter are, either in virtue or in talents, superior to the former. I speak, Madam, from observation of fact,

as well as from attending to the nature of the thing.”

So rapid was the sale of the “*Essay on Truth*,” that a second edition was published early in the year 1771. In this edition he made several corrections and improvements; and he subjoined a postscript, (he meant it at first for a preface,) the rough draught of which he was pleased to submit to the judgment of Dr Gregory, Mr Arbuthnot, and me. He mentions this in the following letter.

LETTER XLI.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

Aberdeen, 28th January, 1771.

“In preparing corrections and a preface for the second edition of my essay, I have laboured so hard these two months, that I had time to think of nothing else. The former were finished

three weeks ago; and of the latter I have sent you, with this, a complete copy. I must beg of you, and Dr Gregory, and Mr Arbuthnot, to set apart an hour or two, as soon as possible, to revise this discourse, and mark what you would wish to be changed or altered; for I will be entirely determined by your judgment and theirs; and I do not propose to consult, on the present occasion, with any other persons. I beg you will be very free in your censures, as I would not wish to say any thing exceptionable; at the same time, you will see, by the strain of the whole, that I want to express some things as clearly and strongly as possible, and to show that my zeal is not in the least abated. The printing of the second edition goes briskly on."

His three friends, to whom he had thus committed the important trust of judging of the style and execution of his postscript, could not but remark, that the warmth of his zeal in the cause of truth, and his desire to vindicate himself from some attacks which had been made upon him, as

he conceived most unjustly, had led him to express himself, in some instances, with a degree of acrimony which they thought had better be corrected. And they did not scruple to state to him their sentiments on this head, with the freedom which friendship permitted, and which the trust, he had done them the honour to repose in them, fully demanded. With what candour, with what kindness, Dr Beattie received their observations on this intended addition to his essay, will appear from the following letter.

LETTER XLII.

DR BEATTIE TO ROBERT ARBUTHNOT, ESQ.

Aberdeen, 12th February, 1771.

“ It is not in your power, my dear sir, or Sir William Forbes’s, or Dr Gregory’s, to offend me on any occasion. Your remonstrances, on the present occasion, against my preface, are so far from offending me, that I consider them as a most striking instance of the sincerest friendship; and as such, I should receive from them a great deal of pleasure, unmixed with any pain, if

it were not for the trouble and uneasiness which I know you must have felt on my account. I am distressed, too, at the thought of having taken up so much of your time; Dr Gregory, in particular, has too much cause to complain of me in this respect. As I well know the value of his time, you will readily believe that I cannot be entirely at ease, when I reflect on my having been the cause of his writing a letter of twelve quarto pages. All I can say for myself, is, that I did not intend to give my friends so much trouble; for, though I sent them my preface as I first wrote it, *with all its imperfections on its head*, and though I knew they would object to several passages in it, I never expected nor wished them to do more than just to mark the exceptionable parts with their pen, which would have fully satisfied me, as I had determined to follow their advice *implicitly* in every thing.

“ I hope I have, in my introduction, done justice to Mr Hume as a man, and as a historian: I certainly meant it at least. I have finished a draught of a new preface, (postscript I shall henceforth call it;) it will be sent to Sir William Forbes when finished. You must once more take the trouble to read it over; I hope you will

find nothing to blame in it, for I struck out or altered every thing that Dr Gregory marked or objected to, and many things besides. But lest there should still be any thing wrong, I will invest my friends with a dictatorial power to expunge every thing they do not like.”

In the following letter, Dr Gregory has placed in the most proper point of view, the accusation brought by the friends of Mr Hume against Dr Beattie, of having, in his “ Essay on Truth,” treated the principles of the sceptical philosophy with too much asperity.

LETTER XLIII.

DR JOHN GREGORY TO DR BEATTIE.

Edinburgh, 26th November, 1771.

“ I have no objection to your marginal note.* But I think the reason of the warmth with which you write should be strongly pointed out, and as concisely as possible. It has been said here, that you had written with great heat and asperity against Mr Hume, because you differed from him about some metaphysical subtleties, of no material consequence to mankind. This is alleged by those who never read your book, and seem never to have read Mr Hume's. You write with warmth against him, because he has endeavoured to invalidate every argument brought to prove the existence of a Supreme Being; because he has endeavoured to invalidate every argument in favour of a future state of existence; and because

* What the note here alluded to was, does not appear. It was probably some marginal note on the MS. of his postscript, then under consideration.

he has endeavoured to destroy the distinction between moral good and evil. You do not treat him with severity, because he is a bad metaphysician, but because he has expressly applied his metaphysics to the above unworthy purposes. If he has not been guilty of this; if these are only conclusions, which you yourself draw, by implication, from his writings, but conclusions which he himself disavows, then you are in the wrong; you ought to ask pardon of him, and of the public, for your mistaken zeal. But I have never heard that he, or any of his friends, have pretended, that you do him injustice in these respects. After all, I wish, for the future, that you would rather employ your wit and humour, of which you have so large a share, against these people, in the way that Addison, Pope, Swift, and Arbuthnot did. It would mortify them beyond any thing that can be said against them in the way of reasoning."

Very soon after the publication of the second edition of the "Essay on Truth," Dr Beattie published the first canto of "The Minstrel." It was printed without his name, because, as he said, it was an imperfect sketch, being only a first part.*

The very great number of editions through which this beautiful poem has passed, is a decisive proof of its merit. It is, indeed, in the hands of every reader of taste, and is therefore so universally known and admired, that it is scarcely necessary to say any thing farther in its commendation. The author tells us, in an advertisement prefixed to the first canto, that he took the idea of this poem originally from Dr Percy's (the Bishop of Dromore) "Essay on the English Minstrelsy," prefixed to the first volume of "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," published in the year

* The second canto was published, together with a new edition of the first, in the year 1774, and with the addition of his name.

1765. His design, he says, was to trace the progress of a poetical genius, born in a rude age, from the first dawning of fancy and reason, till that period at which he may be supposed capable of appearing in the world as “a Minstrel,” that is, as an itinerant poet and musician—a character which, according to the notions of our forefathers, was not only respectable, but sacred.*

He has endeavoured, he adds, to imitate Spenser in the measure of his verse, and in the harmony, simplicity, and variety of his composition. Antiquated expressions he has avoided; admitting, however, some old words, where they seemed to suit the subject: but none, he hopes, will be found that are now obsolete, or in any degree not intelligible to a reader of English poetry.

To those who may be disposed to ask, what could induce him to write in so difficult a measure, he says, he can only answer, that it pleased his ear, and seemed, from its Gothic structure and original, to bear some relation to the subject and spirit of the poem. It admits both simplicity and magnificence of sound and language, beyond any other stanza that he was acquainted

* Preface to the *Minstrel*, ed. 1771.

with. It allows the sententiousness of the couplet, as well as the more complex modulation of blank verse. What some critics have remarked of its uniformity growing at last tiresome to the ear, will be found to hold true, only when the poetry is faulty in other respects.*

Of all Dr Beattie's poetical works, "The Minstrel" is, beyond all question, the best, whether we consider the plan or the execution. The language is extremely elegant, the versification harmonious; it exhibits the richest poetic imagery, with a delightful flow of the most sublime, delicate, and pathetic sentiment. It breathes the spirit of the purest virtue, the soundest philosophy, and the most exquisite taste. In a word, it is at once highly conceived, and admirably finished.

The success of "The Minstrel" was equal to the warmest wishes of the author and his friends. It was received well by the public, and it met with much and just commendation from some of the best judges of poetical composition in the island. Of these, the highest praise Dr Beattie's "Minstrel" ever received, was from the first Lord Lyttelton, in a letter from that excellent

* Preface to the Minstrel, ed. 1771.

man and elegant critic, to Mrs Montagu, who had put "The Minstrel" into his hands on the publication of the first canto.

LETTER XLIV.

LORD LYTTTELTON TO MRS MONTAGU.

Hill-Street, 8th March, 1771.

" I read your ' Minstrel ' last night, with as much rapture as poetry, in her noblest, sweetest charms, ever raised in my soul. It seemed to me, that my once most beloved minstrel, Thomson, was come down from heaven, refined by the converse of purer spirits than those he lived with here, to let me hear him sing again the beauties of nature, and the finest feelings of virtue, not with human, but with angelic strains ! I beg you to express my gratitude to the poet for the pleasure he has given me. Your eloquence alone can do justice to my sense of his admirable genius, and the excellent use he makes of it. Would it were in my power to do him any service ! "

The letter from the friend to whom I owe the communication of this valuable manuscript of Lord Lyttelton's, contains an observation on it so extremely just, that I cannot resist the desire of transcribing it here.

“ I am very happy,” says my friend,* “ to be
“ able to send Lord Lyttelton's letter on the sub-
“ ject of ‘ The Minstrel.’ It was written upon
“ his first perusal of the first canto, and to a per-
“ son to whom his heart was open. It is very
“ seldom that the world can see *so near* the first
“ impression of a work of genius on a cultivated
“ mind; and I do not know any thing that Lord
“ Lyttelton has written, that so strongly marks
“ the sensibility and purity of his taste. The al-

* The Reverend Mr Alison, rector of Rodington, and vicar of High Ercal, and prebendary of Salisbury, whose elegant and classical “ Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste,” give us cause to regret that he does not write more. I have had the happiness, many years, of the intimate acquaintance and friendship of Mr Alison.

“ lusion to Thomson is singularly affecting, and
“ constitutes the finest praise that ever was be-
“ stowed on a poet.”

This letter of Lord Lyttelton's, Mrs Montagu transmitted to the late Dr Gregory; well knowing how much he would be gratified by such emphatic praise of his friend Dr Beattie, from so exquisite a judge of poetic merit as Lord Lyttelton.

Mrs Montagu's own letter contains some valuable strictures on poetical composition in general, which, I think, the reader will thank me for inserting here.

LETTER XLV.

MRS MONTAGU TO DR JOHN GREGORY.

London, 13th March, 1771.

“ I keep as much out of the whirling vortex of the world as I can. Sometimes I am caught up for a day, but settle into tranquillity the next. I am charmed with “ The Minstrel,” and have circulated its fame. I have enclosed a note, by which you will see how much it pleased Lord Lyttel-

ton. I have sent one into the country to Lord Chatham; and I wrote immediately to a person who serves many gentlemen and ladies with new books, to recommend it to all people of taste. I am very sorry the second edition of Dr Beattie's book is not yet in town. I have recommended it, too, to many of our bishops, and others; but all have complained this whole winter, that the booksellers deny having any of either the first or second edition. I wish you would intimate this to Dr Beattie. I dare say many hundreds would have been sold, if people could have got them. I would advise, that the book and poem might be frequently advertised. I recommended the poem this morning to Dr Percy,* who was much pleased to hear that Dr Beattie had so kindly mentioned him. I admire all the poet tells us of the infancy of the bard; but I should not have been so well satisfied, if he had not intended to give us the history of his life. General reflections, natural sentiments, representations of the passions, are things addressed to the un-

* The present Lord Bishop of Dromore, editor of "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," which first suggested to Dr Beattie the idea of "The Minstrel."

derstanding. A poet should aim at touching the heart. Strong sympathies are to be excited, and deep impressions only to be made, by interesting us for an individual; and the poet, who is a maker, as well as a tailor is,

For real Kate should make the boddice,
And not for an ideal goddess.

I am sure the reason why few, even among the lovers of belles lettres, can bear to read Spenser, is, that they cannot sympathise with imaginary beings. Our esteem of Sir Guyon, our love of Sir Calidore, our veneration for Arthur, is faint and uncertain. We are not convinced of their existence, nor acquainted with their general characters and conditions; all the sympathies with creatures of our own nature and condition are wanting. I assure you, every one is charmed with "The Minstrel."

At the same time, and of the same date with this excellent letter of Lord Lyttelton's, Dr Beattie received one from Mr Gray, with a very mi-

nute and copious criticism on the first canto of "The Minstrel," which I shall insert here. I have also, in my possession, a paper, in Dr Beattie's hand-writing, containing his own remarks on those criticisms of Mr Gray's. It is curious, as well as instructive, and it must afford pleasure to every reader of classical taste, to compare the remarks and observations of two poets of such real genius, on this beautiful poem. I shall, therefore, give Mr Gray's letter in the text, and shall subjoin, by way of notes, Dr Beattie's remarks on Mr Gray's observations.

LETTER XLVI.

MR GRAY TO DR BEATTIE.

Cambridge, 8th March, 1771.

"The 'Minstrel' came safe to my hands, and I return you my sincere thanks for so acceptable a present. In return, I shall give you my undisguised opinion of him, as he proceeds, without considering to whom he owes his birth, and sometimes without specifying my reasons; either

because they would lead me too far, or because I may not always know what they are myself.

“ I think we should wholly adopt the language of Spenser’s time, or wholly renounce it. You say, you have done the latter ; but, in effect, you retain *fared, forth, meed, wight, ween, gaude, shene, in sooth, aye, eschew*, &c. : obsolete words, at least in these parts of the island, and only known to those that read our ancient authors, or such as imitate them. *

“ St. 2. v. 5. The *obstreperous* trump of fame hurts my ear, though meant to express a jarring sound.

“ St. 3. v. 6. *And from his bending*, &c. the grammar seems deficient : yet as the mind easily fills up the ellipsis, perhaps it is an atticism, and not inelegant.

“ St. 4. and ult. *Pensions, posts, and praise*. I cannot reconcile myself to this, nor to the whole

* *To fare*, i. e. *to go*, says Dr Beattie, is used in Pope’s “*Odyssey*,” and so is *meed* ; *wight* (in a serious sense) is used by Milton and Dryden. *Ween* is used by Milton ; *gaude* by Dryden ; *shene* by Milton ; *eschew* by Atterbury ; *aye* by Milton. The poetical style in every nation (where there is a poetical style) abounds in old words.

following stanza ; especially *the plaister of thy hair*.*

“ *Surely the female heart*, &c. St. 6. The thought is not just. We cannot justify the sex from the conduct of the Muses, who are only females by the help of Greek mythology ; and then, again, how should they bow the knee in the fane of a Hebrew or Philistine devil ? Besides, I am the more severe, because it serves to introduce what I most admire. †

“ St. 7. *Rise, sons of harmony*, &c. This is charming ; the thought and the expression. I will not be so hypercritical as to add, but it is *lyrical*, and therefore belongs to a different species of poetry. Rules are but chains, good for little, except when one can break through them ; and what is fine gives me so much pleasure, that I never regard what place it is in.

“ St. 8, 9, 10. All this thought is well and freely handled, particularly, *Here peaceful are the*

* I did not intend a poem uniformly epical and solemn ; but one rather that might be lyrical, or even satirical, upon occasion.

† I meant here an ironical argument. Perhaps, however, the irony is wrong placed. Mammon has now come to signify *wealth* or *riches*, without any regard to its original meaning.

vales, &c. Know thine own worth, &c. Canst thou forego, &c.

“ St. 11. *O, how canst thou renounce, &c.* But this, of all others, is my favourite stanza. It is true poetry; it is inspiration; only (to show it is mortal) there is one blemish; the word *garniture* suggesting an idea of dress, and, what is worse, of French dress.*

“ St. 12. Very well. *Prompting th’ ungenerous wish, &c.* But do not say *rambling muse; wandering, or devious, if you please.* †

“ St. 13. *A nation fam’d, &c.* I like this compliment to your country; the simplicity, too, of the following narrative: only in st. 17. the words *artless* and *simple* are too synonymous to come so near each other.

“ St. 18. *And yet poor Edwin, &c.* This is all excellent, and comes very near the level of st. 11. in my esteem; only, perhaps, *And some believed him mad,* falls a little too flat, and rather below simplicity.

“ St. 21. *Ah, no!* By the way, this sort of in-

* I have often wished to alter this same word, but have not yet been able to hit upon a better.

† Wandering happens to be in the last line of the next stanza save one, otherwise it would certainly have been here.

terjection is rather too frequent with you, and will grow characteristic, if you do not avoid it.

“ In that part of the poem which you sent me before, you have altered several little particulars much for the better. *

“ St. 34. I believe I took notice before of this excess of alliteration. *Long, loaded, loud, lament, lonely, lighted, lingering, listening*; though the verses are otherwise very good, it looks like affectation. †

“ St. 36, 37, 38. Sure you go too far in lengthening a stroke of Edwin’s character and disposition into a direct narrative, as of a fact. In the mean time, the poem stands still, and the reader grows impatient. Do you not, in general, indulge a little too much in *description* and *reflection*? This is not my remark only, I have heard

* I had sent Mr Gray from st. 23. to st. 39. by way of specimen.

† It does so, and yet it is not affected. I have endeavoured once and again to clear this passage of those obnoxious letters, but I never could please myself. Alliteration has great authorities on its side, but I would never seek for it; nay, except on some very particular occasions, I would rather avoid it. When Mr Gray, once before, told me of my propensity to alliteration, I repeated to him one of his own lines, which is indeed one of the finest in poetry—

Nor cast one longing lingering look behind.

it observed by others; and I take notice of it here, because *these* are among the stanzas that might be spared; they are good, nevertheless, and might be laid by, and employed elsewhere to advantage. *

“ St. 42. Spite of what I have just now said, this digression pleases me so well, that I cannot spare it.

“ St. 46. v. ult. The *infuriate* flood. I would not make new words without great necessity; it is very hazardous at best. †

“ St. 49, 50, 51, 52. All this is very good; but *medium* and *incongruous*, being words of art, lose their dignity in my eyes, and savour too much of prose. I would have read the last line—‘ Presumptuous child of dust, be humble and be wise.’ But, on second thoughts, perhaps—‘ *For thou art*

* This remark is perfectly just. All I can say is, that I meant, from the beginning, to take some latitude in the composition of this poem, and not confine myself to the epical rules for narrative. In an epic poem these digressions, and reflections, &c. would be unpardonable.

† I would as soon make new coin, as knowingly make a new word, except I were to invent any art or science where they would be necessary. *Infuriate* is used by Thomson---*Summer*, 1096; and, which is much better authority, by Milton---*Par. Lost*, book vi. v. 487.

but of dust'—is better and more solemn, from its simplicity.

“ St. 53. *Where dark, &c.* You return again to the charge. Had you not said enough before? *

“ St. 54. *Nor was this ancient dame, &c.* Consider, she has not been mentioned for these six stanzas backward.

“ St. 56. v. 5. *The vernal day.* With us it rarely thunders in the spring, but in the summer frequently. †

“ St. 57, 58. Very pleasing, and has much the rhythm and expression of Milton in his youth. The last four lines strike me less by far.

“ St. 59. The first five lines charming. Might not the mind of your conqueror be checked and softened in the mid-career of his successes by some domestic misfortune, (introduced by way of episode, interesting and new, but not too long,) that Edwin’s music and its triumphs may be a little prepared, and more consistent with probability? ‡

* What I said before referred only to sophists perverting the truth; this alludes to the method by which they pervert it.

† It sometimes thunders in the latter part of spring. *Sultry day* would be an improvement perhaps.

‡ This is an excellent hint; it refers to something I had been

“ I am happy to hear of your successes in another way, because I think you are serving the cause of human nature, and the true interests of mankind. Your book is read here too, and with just applause.”*

It is also a matter of some curiosity to compare the first with the second edition of the same canto of the “ Minstrel,” in order to see where Dr Beattie has followed Mr Gray’s opinion, and where he has adhered to his own. In order to save the reader the trouble of making this comparison, I have subjoined it in the Appendix. †

The want of incident in the “ Minstrel” has often been regretted; and all that can be said, in excuse for the deficiency, is, that the poem, as we now have it, is unfinished. On my once ask-

saying in my last letter to Mr Gray, respecting the plan of what remains of the “ Minstrel.”

* Mr Gray has been very particular. I am greatly obliged to him for the freedom of his remarks, and think myself as much so for his objections as for his commendations.

† See Appendix, [T.]

ing Dr Beattie, in what manner he had intended to employ his "Minstrel," had he completed his original design, of extending the poem to a third canto, he said, he proposed to have introduced a foreign enemy as invading his country, in consequence of which the "Minstrel" was to employ himself in rousing his countrymen to arms.* It is easy to see how interesting such a plan must have become in the hands of such a poet as Dr Beattie.

In the first edition, this poem was dedicated to a male friend, although the name be left blank. † In the second edition, Mrs Montagu's name was inserted in the concluding stanza.

It is somewhat remarkable, that, although, in deference to Mr Gray's opinion, Dr Beattie has made some alterations in the second edition, which must readily be allowed to be extremely judicious, yet he has not, I think, made a single alteration in the first canto, except where suggested by Mr Gray. And in the second canto he has changed nothing, except *mild* for *wild* ‡

* He hints at this plan, in a letter to Dr Blacklock, p. 131.

† Our common friend, Mr Arbuthnot.

‡ Which, probably, had been merely a typographical error.

in the 6th stanza, and inserting the 34th, which was not in the first edition of that canto.

Mr Gray died a few months after writing this letter, consequently before the publication of the second canto, which may be justly matter of regret, as his criticisms might have improved it, as well as the former.

Those who read the "Minstrel," on its first appearance, and were acquainted, either personally, or by report, with the genius and character of the author, were instantly led to believe, that, in his description of *Edwin*, he had it in view to give his own portrait. A letter which he wrote to the Dowager Lady Forbes, in answer to one from her, in which this idea had been suggested, confirmed the opinion. As this letter contains also some striking sentiments on poetical composition, it must be very interesting to every reader of taste.

LETTER XLVII.

DR BEATTIE TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE
DOWAGER LADY FORBES. *

Aberdeen, 12th October, 1772.

“ I wish the merit of the ‘ Minstrel’ were such as would justify all the kind things you have said of it. That it has merit every body would think me a hypocrite if I were to deny ; I am willing to believe that it has even considerable merit ; and I acknowledge, with much gratitude, that it has obtained from the public a reception far more favourable than I expected. There are in it many passages, no doubt, which I admire more than others do ; and perhaps there are some passages which others are more struck with than I am. In all poetry, this, I believe, is the case, more or less ; but it is much more the case in poems of a sentimental cast, such as the ‘ Minstrel’ is, than in those of the narrative species. In epic and dramatic poesy there is a standard acknowledged,

* Mrs Dorothea Dale, widow of the Right Hon. William Lord Forbes.

by which we may estimate the merit of the piece; whether the narrative be probable, and the characters well drawn and well preserved; whether all the events be conducive to the catastrophe; whether the action is unfolded in such a way as to command perpetual attention, and undiminished curiosity—these are points of which, in reading an epic poem, or tragedy, every reader possessed of good sense, or tolerable knowledge of the art, may hold himself to be a competent judge. Common life, and the general tenor of human affairs, is the standard to which these points may be referred, and according to which they may be estimated. But of sentimental poetry, (if I may use the expression,) there is no external standard. By it the heart of the reader must be touched at once, or it cannot be touched at all. Here the knowledge of critical rules, and a general acquaintance of human affairs, will not form a true critic; sensibility, and a lively imagination, are the qualities which alone constitute a true taste for sentimental poetry. Again, your ladyship must have observed, that some sentiments are common to all men; others peculiar to persons of a certain character. Of the former sort are those which Gray has so elegantly ex-

pressed in his 'Church-yard Elegy,' a poem which is universally understood and admired, not only for its poetical beauties, but also, and perhaps chiefly, for its expressing sentiments in which every man thinks himself interested, and which, at certain times, are familiar to all men. Now the sentiments, expressed in the 'Minstrel,' being not common to all men, but peculiar to persons of a certain cast, cannot possibly be interesting, because the generality of readers will not understand nor feel them so thoroughly as to think them natural. That a boy should take pleasure in darkness or a storm, in the noise of thunder, or the glare of lightning; should be more gratified with listening to music at a distance, than with mixing in the merriment occasioned by it; should like better to see every bird and beast happy and free, than to exert his ingenuity in destroying or ensnaring them—these, and such like sentiments, which, I think, would be natural to persons of a certain cast, will, I know, be condemned as unnatural by others, who have never felt them in themselves, nor observed them in the generality of mankind. Of all this I was sufficiently aware before I published the 'Minstrel,' and, therefore, never expected

that it would be a popular poem. * Perhaps, too, the structure of the verse, (which, though agreeable to some, is not to all,) and the scarcity of incidents, may contribute to make it less relished, than it would have been, if the plan had been different in these particulars.

“ From the questions your Ladyship is pleased to propose in the conclusion of your letter, as well as from some things I have had the honour to hear you advance in conversation, I find you are willing to suppose, that, in Edwin, I have given only a picture of myself, as I was in my younger days. I confess the supposition is not groundless. I have made him take pleasure in the scenes in which I took pleasure, and entertain sentiments similar to those, of which, even in my early youth, I had repeated experience. The scenery of a mountainous country, the ocean, the sky, thoughtfulness and retirement, and sometimes melancholy objects and ideas, had charms in my eyes, even when I was a schoolboy; † and at a time when I was so far

* It is curious to remark, how much Dr Beattie was mistaken in this respect, with regard to “The Minstrel,” as well as his “Essay on Truth.” See p. 174.

† See p. 24.

from being able to express, that I did not understand my own feelings, or perceive the tendency of such pursuits and amusements; and as to poetry and music, before I was ten years old I could play a little on the violin, and was as much master of Homer and Virgil, as Pope's and Dryden's translations could make me. But I am ashamed to write so much on a subject so trifling as myself, and my own works. Believe me, madam, nothing but your Ladyship's commands could have induced me to do it."

Dr Beattie's health had suffered so severely from the intense application of thought, which he had bestowed in the composing, revising, and correcting his "Essay on Truth," that exercise and change of air were recommended to him by his physicians. As he had heard much of the favourable reception his book had met with in England, perhaps he was not displeased with having an opportunity of again visiting London, not as on the former occasion, when he was nearly unknown there, even by name; but now that

he had emerged from obscurity, and had reason to hope, that the reputation he had acquired, as the successful champion of truth, and the decided enemy of sophistry and scepticism, would procure for him the notice of some respectable characters, whose acquaintance might, at some future period, be of much service to him.

He accordingly went to London in the beginning of autumn 1771. He was already known by character to several of those with whom he afterwards became personally acquainted, and he carried with him some respectable letters of introduction, by means of which he was received in the most favourable manner. In particular, he owed to the late Dr Gregory his personal acquaintance with Mrs Montagu, who, as has been seen, although they had never met, was already much prepossessed in his favour. Mrs Montagu not only honoured him with her friendship, of which she gave him many substantial proofs, and continued to carry on an epistolary correspondence with him to the close of her life; but at her house, he had the fortunate opportunity of meeting with, and becoming known to, some of the most eminent characters of that period. It is well known, that Mrs Montagu's house was,

at that time, the chosen resort of many of those, of both sexes, most distinguished for rank, as well as classical taste and literary talent in London.* In particular, Dr Beattie met at Mrs Mon-

* Mrs Elizabeth Robinson, daughter of ———— Robinson, Esq. of Horton, in the county of Kent, and wife of Edward Montagu, Esq. of Denton-hall, in Northumberland, and Sandford Priory, in Berkshire. Inheriting from nature a genius for literature, she had the good fortune to meet with an able director of her early studies, in the celebrated Dr Conyers Middleton, who was married to her grandmother, with whom she lived. Under his tuition, she acquired that learning, and formed that taste, which was so conspicuous throughout the whole of her subsequent life. Mrs Montagu had early distinguished herself as an author, first, by three Dialogues of the Dead, published along with Lord Lyttelton's; afterwards, by her classical and elegant "Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare;" in which she amply vindicated our great national dramatist from the gross, illiberal, and ignorant abuse, thrown out against him by Voltaire. The elegance of her manners, the brilliancy of her wit, and the sprightliness of her conversation, attracted to her house those who were most distinguished by their learning, their taste, and reputation, as literary characters. This society of eminent friends, who met frequently at Mrs Montagu's, for the sole purpose of conversation, differed in no respect from other parties, but that the company did not play at cards. It consisted, originally, of Mrs Montagu, Mrs Vesey, Mrs Boscawen, and Mrs Carter, Lord Lyttelton, the Earl of Bath, (better known as Mr Pulteney,) Horace Walpole, the classical owner of Strawberry Hill, afterwards Earl of Orford, and Mr Stillingfleet. The society came at last to contain a numerous assemblage of those most eminent for literature in London, or who visited it. Of these distinguished friends, Mrs Vesey, though

tagu's with Lord Lyttelton, to whose high commendation of the "Essay on Truth," and "The Minstrel," he had been so eminently indebted. For that distinguished nobleman Dr Beattie retained ever after the highest respect and venera-

less known than Mrs Montagu, was also another centre of pleasing and rational society. Without attempting to shine herself, she had the happy secret of bringing forward talents of every kind, and of diffusing over the society, the gentleness of her own character. She was the daughter of an Irish bishop, and wife of Agmondesham Vesey, Esq. a gentleman of Ireland, who, in his earlier years, had been the friend of Swift. Mrs Boscawen was the widow of the gallant admiral of that name, a woman of great talents, and, though unknown to the literary world, acceptable to every society, by the strength of her understanding, the poignancy of her humour, and the brilliancy of her wit. She died in the spring of 1805, at the advanced age of eighty-six. Mrs Carter, the learned translator of Epictetus, and the author of a volume of poems of very considerable merit, is now the only original surviving member, at the age of nearly ninety. But the gentleman, to whom this constellation of talents owed that whimsical appellation, the "Bas bleu," was Mr Stillingfleet, a man of great piety and worth, the author of some works in natural history, and of some poetical pieces in "Dodsley's Collection." Mr Stillingfleet being somewhat of an humourist in his habits and manners, and a little negligent in his dress, literally wore grey stockings; from which circumstance, Admiral Boscawen used, by way of pleasantry, to call them "The Blue-Stocking Society;" as if to indicate, that when these brilliant friends met, it was not for the purpose of forming a dressed assembly. A foreigner of distinction hearing the expression, translated it literally, "Bas bleu," by which these meetings came to be afterwards distinguished.

tion; and I have often heard him dwell with enthusiasm and delight on those more private parties, into which he had the happiness of being admitted, at Mrs Montagu's, consisting of Lord Lyttelton, Mrs Carter, and one or two other most

Mrs Hannah More,* who was herself a distinguished member of the society, has written an admirable poem, with the title of the "Bas Bleu," in allusion to this mistake of the foreigner, in which she has characterised most of the eminent personages of which it was composed. The concluding part of her prefatory memorandum to the poem, is so very apposite to my present purpose, that I cannot resist the temptation of inserting it here.

"May the author be permitted to bear her grateful testimony, which will not be suspected of flattery, now that most of the persons named in this poem are gone down to the grave, to the many pleasant and instructive hours she had the honour to pass in this company, in which learning was as little disfigured by pedantry; good taste as little tinged by affectation; and general conversation as little disgraced by calumny, levity, and the other censurable errors with which it is too commonly tainted, as has perhaps been known in any society.---*Works of Mrs H. More*, Vol. I. p. 12.

Mrs Montagu being left, by the will of her husband, in possession of his noble fortune, lived in a style of the most splendid hospitality, till her death, which happened at an advanced age, 25th August, 1800.

I had first the happiness of being acquainted with Mrs Mon-

* The excellent author of "Strictures on Female Education," "Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society," and "An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World," with other pieces.

intimate friends, who spent their evenings in an unreserved interchange of thoughts, sometimes on critical and literary subjects, sometimes on those of the most serious and interesting nature.

How delighted he was with his reception on this occasion in London, will be seen from the following letters to his friends.

LETTER XLVIII.

DR BEATTIE TO THE REV. MR WILLIAMSON.

London, 8th September, 1771.

“ I need not tell you how much it affects me to hear, that I cannot have the pleasure of seeing you in England. I hoped it might have been otherwise, and my hopes were sanguine: but I am satisfied with your reasons, and am willing to suppose, with you, that one time or other we may meet again, even in this country. My health,

tagu in the year 1766, when she passed some time on a visit to the late Dr Gregory at Edinburgh, at whose house I saw her almost every day. Ever after, when I occasionally passed some time in London, she was pleased, in a particular manner, to honour me with the most polite and gratifying attention.

though much improved since I left Scotland, is not so well established as to enable me to write a long letter; otherwise I have ten thousand things to tell you, in which I know you would be much interested. My spirits, which, when I came from home, were at the very lowest, are now raised again near to their usual pitch: for I have been as dissipated as possible of late, and have neither read nor written any thing (except now and then a very short letter) these two months. Indeed the physicians do expressly prohibit both.

“ I have been here five weeks, and shall probably continue a week or two longer. I have been extremely happy in making a great many very agreeable and very creditable acquaintance. Dr Hawkesworth, Dr Armstrong, Mr Garrick, Dr Samuel Johnson, and several others of note, have treated me, not only with politeness, but with a degree of attention and kindness that equals my warmest wishes. I wish I had longer time to pass among them; I shall find it no easy matter to force myself away. Johnson has been greatly misrepresented. I have passed several entire days with him, and found him extremely agreeable. The compliments he pays to my writings are so

high, that I have not the face to mention them. Every body I have conversed with on the subject (among whom I have the honour to reckon Lord Mansfield), approves of what I have done in respect to Mr Hume; and none of them have been able to find any personal abuse, any coarse expressions, or even any indelicacy, in what I have written against him: so, you see, I have no great reason to value what my Scottish enemies say against me. This I mention to you, because I know it will give you pleasure.

“ A letter from Utrecht, which I received since I came here, informs me, that three translations of my Essay, a French, a Dutch, and a German, will appear next winter. Some of them are now in the press.”

LETTER XLIX.

THE REV. MR MASON* TO DR BEATTIE.

York, 17th October, 1771.

“ In my late melancholy employment of reviewing and arranging the papers, which dear Mr Gray’s friendship bequeathed to my care, I have found nine letters of yours, which I meant to have returned ere this, had I found a safe opportunity by a private hand; but as no such opportunity has yet occurred, I take the liberty of troubling you with this, to enquire how I may best convey them to you. I shall continue in my residence here † till the 12th of next month, and hope, in that interval, to be favoured with a line from you upon this subject.

“ I should deprive myself of a very sincere

* Rector of Aston in Yorkshire, the well-known author of “ Caractacus,” “ Elfrida,” and other esteemed pieces, and the chosen friend of Gray.

† Mr Mason was precentor of the Cathedral of York; an office which, from its name, probably gave him the direction of the choir.

gratification, if I finished this letter, with the business that occasions it. You must suffer me to thank you for the very high degree of poetical pleasure which the first book of your "Minstrel" gave my imagination, and that equal degree of rational conviction which your "Essay on the Immutability of Truth" impressed on my understanding. I will freely own to you, that the very idea of a Scotsman's attacking Mr Hume prejudiced me so much in favour of the latter piece, that I should have approved it, if, instead of a masterly, it had been only a moderate performance.

" I shall be happy to know, that the remaining books of your "Minstrel" are likewise to be published soon. The next best thing, after instructing the world profitably, is to amuse it innocently. England has lost that man, * who, of all others in it, was best qualified for both these purposes; but who, from early chagrin and disappointment, had imbibed a disinclination to employ his talents beyond the sphere of self-satisfaction and improvement. May Scotland long possess, in you, a person both qualified and wil-

* Mr Gray.

ling to exert his, for the pleasure and benefit of society.”

LETTER L.

DR BEATTIE TO THE REV. MR WILLIAMSON.

Aberdeen, 22d December, 1771.

“ On my return from London, I passed through Cambridge; but had not the heart to stay longer than to dine, and see some of the principal curiosities. Mr Gray's death ran too much in my head. He has left all his papers to Mr Mason, from whom I have lately had two very obliging letters. He had found several letters of mine to Mr Gray; and wrote to me, desiring to know what he should do with them; paying me, at the same time, some very handsome compliments on the score of my “ Essay” and “ Minstrel.” In answer, I asked the favour that he would acquaint me what papers, in the poetical way, Mr Gray had left; and he has given me a very particular detail of them, and a character of each, and offers me the perusal of any of them I wish to see. There is an epitaph on a friend; a sonnet,

in Petrarch's manner; an address to the engraver, who published the prints annexed to the folio edition of his poems. These are finished, and all of them excellent. There is a fragment of a tragedy; a part of an essay, in verse, of ten syllables, on the influence of government and education on human happiness, finished as far as it goes, viz. 107 lines, in the highest manner; part of an ode on the vicissitude of the seasons; several other imperfect pieces; and some Latin poems. Mr Mason has not yet determined what pieces he shall publish. I fancy the public would wish to see them all, and yet perhaps they ought not. The works of Swift and Shenstone are a melancholy example of the indiscretion of friends in regard to posthumous publications. The admirers of Mr Gray will be happy to think, that he has made choice of such an able executor as Mr Mason."

On reading what Dr Beattie has said in the preceding letter, on the publication of posthumous works, it is not to be wondered, if I feel a

more than ordinary anxiety, lest I may myself have fallen into the error respecting Dr Beattie, which he so justly reprobates with regard to some former publications. All I can say on the head, is, that I have endeavoured scrupulously to adhere to the rule with which I set out,—“of
“not admitting any thing that I thought would
“hurt the feelings of others; nor any anecdote
“or opinion which Dr Beattie himself could have
“wished to have suppressed.”* If I have erred in that respect, however, as to error we are all liable, I trust I may obtain belief when I say, that I have erred unintentionally; and that if any such shall be pointed out to me, I shall be most ready to correct whatever is amiss, should this work ever arrive at a second edition.

* Introduction, p. ix.

LETTER LI.

DR BEATTIE TO DR BLACKLOCK.

Aberdeen, 23d May, 1772.

“ I am greatly obliged to you for your elegy,* which I have read with much pleasure. The plan is new, and the sentiments are proper, and often very pathetic. Where the person lamented has no remarkable peculiarities of character, it is difficult to give a new turn to the elegy; every thing that can be said on these occasions having been said so often already: yet I think in your elegy there is a great deal of novelty and originality. You say it savours strongly of the *tenth lustrum*; a circumstance which could never have prejudiced me against it; for I believe you will find, that the best human compositions have been written, or at least finished, when the author was above forty. Virgil published his “Georgics” at forty-two, if I mistake not; and Milton his “Paradise Lost” when he was more than sixty.

* What elegy is here spoken of I know not.

In youthful compositions there may be more of that romantic cast of imagination, which young people admire; but very rarely is there so much of those qualities that are universally pleasing, as in the productions of persons farther advanced in life; I mean, knowledge of human nature, good sense, mature reflection, and accuracy of plan and language."

LETTER LII.

DR BEATTIE TO MRS MONTAGU. *

"I rejoice to hear that Mr Garrick is so well as to be able to appear in tragedy. It is in vain to indulge one's self in unavailing complaints, otherwise I could rail by the hour at dame Fortune, for placing me beyond the reach of that arch-magician, as Horace would have called him. I well remember, and I think can never forget, how he once affected me in Macbeth, and made me almost throw myself over the front seat of

* This letter is imperfect, and the date is wanting; but it must have been written about this time.

the two-shilling gallery. I wish I had another opportunity of risking my neck and nerves in the same cause. To fall by the hands of Garrick and Shakespeare, would ennoble my memory to all generations. To be serious, if all actors were like this one, I do not think it would be possible for a person of sensibility to outlive the representation of Hamlet, Lear, or Macbeth; which, by the bye, seems to suggest a reason for that mixture of comedy and tragedy, of which our great poet was so fond, and which the Frenchified critics think such an intolerable outrage both against nature and decency. Against nature it is no outrage at all: the inferior officers of a court know little of what passes among kings and statesmen; and may be very merry, when their superiors are very sad; and if so, the Porter's soliloquy in Macbeth may be a very just imitation of nature. And I can never accuse of indecency the man, who, by the introduction of a little unexpected merriment, saves me from a disordered head, or a broken heart. If Shakespeare knew his own powers, he must have seen the necessity of tempering his tragic rage, by a mixture of comic ridicule; otherwise there was some danger of his running into greater excesses

than deer-stealing, by sporting with the lives of all the people of taste in these realms. Other play-wrights must conduct their approaches to the human heart with the utmost circumspection, a single false step may make them lose a great deal of ground; but Shakespeare made his way to it at once, and could make his audience burst their sides this moment, and break their hearts the next.—I have often seen Hamlet performed by the underlings of the theatre, but none of these seemed to understand what they were about. Hamlet's character, though perfectly natural, is so very uncommon, that few, even of our critics, can enter into it. Sorrow, indignation, revenge, and consciousness of his own irresolution, tear his heart; the peculiarity of his circumstances often obliges him to counterfeit madness, and the storm of passions within him often drives him to the verge of real madness. This produces a situation so interesting, and a conduct so complicated, as none but Shakespeare could have had the courage to describe, or even to invent, and none but Garrick will ever be able to exhibit.—Excuse this rambling: I know you like the subject; and, for my part, I like it so

much, that when I once get in, I am not willing to find my way out of it.

“ I have enclosed two papers; one is an epitaph which I wrote (at the Doctor's desire) for Mrs Gregory, and which has one kind of merit, not very common in these compositions, that of being perfectly true; * the other is a tune which you desired me to send you, and which, if it were what is pretended, would indeed be a very great curiosity; but I am apt to think that it has been composed in modern times, and even since the invention of the present musical system. Yet I have been told, by pretty good authority, that the Greeks believe it to be as ancient as the days of Theseus. †

“ The book of second-sight has not, I fear, given you much entertainment. ‡ The tales are ill-told, and ill-chosen, and the language so barbarous as to be in many places unintelligible, even to a Scotsman. I have heard many better stories of the second-sight, than any this author has given, attested by such persons, and accom-

* Vide Appendix [U]

† Vide Appendix [X.]

‡ Dr Beattie has introduced a disquisition on the second-sight, into his “ Essay on Poetry and Music,” Part I. Chap. VI. 3. p. 481. 4to edit.

panied by such circumstances, as to preclude contradiction, though not suspicion. All our Highlanders believe in the second-sight; but the instances in which it is said to operate, are generally so ambiguous, and the revelations supposed to be communicated by it so frivolous, that I cannot bring myself to acquiesce in it. Indeed this same historian has made me more incredulous than I was before; for his whole book betrays an excess of folly and weakness. Were its revelations important, I should be less inclined to unbelief: but to suppose the Deity working a miracle, in order to announce a marriage, or the arrival of a poor stranger, or the making of a coffin, would require such evidence as has not yet attended any of these tales, and is indeed what scarce any kind of evidence could make one suppose. These communications are all made to the ignorant, the superstitious, and generally to the young; I never heard of a man of learning, sense, or observation, that was favoured with any of them; a strong presumption against their credibility. I have been told, that the inhabitants of some parts of the Alps do also lay a claim to a sort of second-sight; and I believe the same superstition, or something like it,

may be found in many other countries, where the face of nature, and the solitary life of the natives, tend to impress the imagination with melancholy. The Highlands of Scotland are a picturesque, but gloomy region. Long tracts of solitary mountains covered with heath and rocks, and often obscured by mists; narrow vallies, thinly inhabited, and bounded by precipices that resound for ever with the fall of torrents; a soil so rugged, and a climate so dreary, as to admit neither the amusements of pasturage, nor the cheerful toils of agriculture; the mournful dashing of waves along the friths and lakes that every where intersect this country; the portentous sounds, which every change of the wind, and every increase and diminution of the waters, is apt to raise in a region full of rocks and hollow cliffs and caverns; the grotesque and ghastly appearance of such a landscape, especially by the light of the moon;—objects like these diffuse an habitual gloom over the fancy, and give it that romantic cast, that disposes to invention, and that melancholy, which inclines one to the fear of unseen things and unknown events. It is observable too, that the ancient Scottish Highlanders had scarce any other way of supporting them-

selves, than by hunting, fishing, or war; professions that are continually exposed to the most fatal accidents. Thus, almost every circumstance in their lot tended to rouse and terrify the imagination. Accordingly, their poetry is uniformly mournful; their music melancholy and dreadful, and their superstitions are all of the gloomy kind. The fairies confined their gambols to the Lowlands: the mountains were haunted with giants, and angry ghosts, and funeral processions, and other prodigies of direful import. That a people, beset with such real and imaginary bugbears, should fancy themselves dreaming, even when awake, of corpses, and graves, and coffins, and other terrible things, seems natural enough; but that their visions ever tended to any real or useful discovery, I am much inclined to doubt. Not that I mean to deny the existence of ghosts, or to call in question the accounts of extraordinary revelations, granted to individuals, with which both history and tradition abound. But in all cases, where such accounts are entitled to credit, or supported by tolerable evidence, it will be found, that they referred to something which it concerned men to know; the overthrow of kingdoms, the death of great persons, the detec-

tion of atrocious crimes, or the preservation of important lives.—But I take up too much of your time with these matters.

“ I have lately received another very kind letter from Mr Mason, in which he gives me an account of all the poetical pieces which Mr Gray has left unpublished. There is, 1. A Sonnet on the death of a friend, written 1742, of true Petrarchian pathos and delicacy. 2. Stanzas, in alternate rhyme, to Mr Bentley, on the designs he made for his poems. 3. An Epitaph on Sir William Williams, who was killed at the siege of Belleisle; perfect in its kind. 4. The opening scene of a tragedy, called Agrippina, with the first speech of the second; written much in Racine’s manner, and with many masterly strokes. 5. An unfinished Address to Ignorance, in rhyme of ten syllables; satirical. 6. One hundred and seven lines, of the same measure with the former, of the beginning of an ethical Essay on Education and Government; finished, as far as it goes, in the highest manner: the most valuable piece he has left. 7. Six eight-lined stanzas of an Ode on the vicissitude of the Seasons, nearly equal, in point of merit, allowing for its being incomplete, with the Ode on Spring;—besides some transla-

tions, epigrams, and Latin poems. Mr Mason obligingly offers me such of these pieces as I wish to see, and I have asked to see the 1. 3. 6. and 7: I heartily wish they may be printed, as they would tend to shew the universality of Gray's genius."

LETTER LIII.

DR PERCY * (NOW LORD-BISHOP OF DROMORE) TO
DR BEATTIE.

Northumberland-House, 27th May, 1772.

"I lose no time in thanking you for your most obliging letter, and the very pleasing ballad that accompanied it. Such presents, when they fall in your way, will always be most acceptable, and very gratefully acknowledged.

"I had also another reason for troubling you with so early an answer: it was to convey to you a copy of the inclosed sermons; wherein you will find very warm, but just acknowledgments, for

* The editor of "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry," to which the first part of this letter alludes.

the services you have done to the cause of truth. The author* of them is so much your admirer, that, when he knew I was writing to you, he desired me to inclose a few lines from himself. If his personal character is not known to you, I must inform you, that Dr Porteus is one of the brightest ornaments of the Church of England: He was chaplain to Archbishop Secker, who left him one of the executors to his will, and editor of his works, which he has since published. He is a man of the most engaging and amiable manners, and most distinguished abilities. The sermons here sent were preached before the King,

* The Right Reverend Dr Beilby Porteus, at that time Rector of Lambeth, afterwards Bishop of Chester, and now Lord Bishop of London. This exemplary prelate is too well known to require any encomium in this place; and the character given of him, in this letter, by the Bishop of Dromore, will be allowed by all to be strictly just. Besides what is said here of the Bishop of London's merit as a preacher, it is fully proved by his volumes of printed sermons, which have justly received the best marks of public approbation. One circumstance respecting his discourses from the pulpit, deserves, in a particular manner, to be recorded. In the year 1798, and the three following years, when the nation was carrying on the deadliest and the most important war, in which it ever was engaged; while, at the same time, too many in the upper ranks of society in London seemed to plunge deeper into every excess of dissipation, as the awful prospect of national affairs became more gloomy and interesting, the Bishop of London conceived the idea of de-

and procured the preacher a degree of reputation beyond that of any sermons preached in my remembrance. The King and whole Court talked of nothing else for many days after; the Queen personally desired to peruse them afterwards in her closet; and the Duke of Northumberland being not at Court till the Thursday after the last of them was preached, came home full of the accounts he heard from every mouth, of the impressions these sermons had made in the Chapel Royal. All this you will perhaps think very extraordinary; it is nevertheless literally true, as I can testify of my own personal knowledge.”

living lectures, every Friday, in St James's Church, during the season of Lent. He chose for his subject the Gospel of St Matthew. Those lectures, which have since been published, and are most excellent and instructive, were attended, with great devotion, by crowded audiences of the most fashionable persons of high life; and, it is piously to be hoped, not without their suitable improvement.

Dr Beattie had the happiness of becoming personally known to Dr Porteus, on his going to London in the year 1773; and, from that period, a friendship the most sincere took place between them, and a correspondence, which lasted until Dr Beattie's health no longer permitted him to carry it on.

I cannot but avail myself, with peculiar satisfaction, of this opportunity of expressing the grateful sense I shall ever entertain, of the notice with which the Bishop of London has long honoured me, and which, I am conscious, I owe to our common friend.

LETTER LIV.

DR PORTEUS (NOW LORD BISHOP OF LONDON) TO
DR BEATTIE.

Lambeth, 22d May, 1772.

“ Though I have not the pleasure of being personally known to you, I take the liberty of requesting your acceptance of a small performance of mine, which Dr Percy promises to convey to you. I have read, sir, with singular delight, both your poem called the “ Minstrel,” and your “ Essay on Truth.” It is a very uncommon thing to see so much true poetical invention, and such a talent for profound philosophical disquisition, united in the same person; and it is still more uncommon, to see such fine parts, especially in a layman, dedicated to the support of virtue and religion. I am not at all surprised to hear, that your spirited attack on the head-quarters of scepticism has drawn upon you the resentment of Mr Hume and his followers. It is nothing more than might be expected; and, in the eyes of all impartial men, it is so far from being any reproach,

that it is an honour to you. It shows that they feel the force of your arguments; for personal invective they cannot justly complain of. The keenness of your manly reproofs is directed, not against their persons, but their cause; and it falls far short of what such a cause deserves. But whatever unjust aspersions may be thrown upon you by your own countrymen, let this be your consolation, (if you need any,) that in England your book has been received with universal applause. In the range of my acquaintance, which is pretty extensive, both among the clergy and the laity, I have never yet met with a single person, of true taste and sound judgment, who did not speak of your essay in the warmest terms of approbation. In this they have always had my most hearty concurrence; and I was glad of an opportunity of giving some public testimony of my great esteem for your writings, as you will see I have done in a note, which very honestly expresses my real sentiments, and says nothing more than is justly your due.

“The two sermons, which I send you, are meant as the best return I could make, (though, I must confess, a very inadequate one,) for the great pleasure and instruction I have received

from your writings. Give me leave only to add farther, that this place (which is contiguous to London) is my constant residence, from the end of November to the beginning of June; and if either business or amusement should bring you to the metropolis, during that part of the year, I shall be extremely glad to pay my respects to you here, and to assure you how much I am, sir, yours," &c.

LETTER LV.

DR BEATTIE TO MRS MONTAGU.

Edinburgh, 6th July, 1772.

“ Your last letter, of the 5th June, reached me after I had been some days at Peterhead, endeavouring, by the use of the medicinal waters of that place, to shake off this hideous indisposition. But from that water I did not receive half so much benefit, as from the very agreeable accounts you gave me of your health and spirits. I congratulate you, madam, and myself on your recovery, and I earnestly pray it may be permanent.

“Your description of Tunbridge-wells is so very lively, that I think myself present in every part of it. I see your hills, your cattle, your carriages, your *beaux* and *belles* blended together in agreeable confusion. I am delighted while I sympathise with the feelings of those, whose imagination is refreshed and amused, by the pleasing incongruities of the scene, and whose health and spirits are restored by the freshness of the air, and the virtues of the fountain. But what interests and delights me most of all, and more than words can express, is, that by the eye of fancy I behold you, madam, looking around on this scene with an aspect, in which all your native benignity, sprightliness, and harmony of soul are heightened, with every decoration that health and cheerfulness can bestow.

“I am greatly affected with your goodness and Lord Lyttelton’s, in urging my advancement with so much zeal and perseverance. After what Lord Mansfield* has done me the honour to de-

* William Murray, son of the Lord Viscount Stormont, created Baron (afterwards Earl of) Mansfield, and Lord Chief Justice of the Court of King’s Bench, during the long period of thirty-two years. In early life, he was eminently distinguished by his eloquence at the bar, as well as afterwards in both houses of Parliament. When exalted to the bench, he rendered his

clare in my favour, I cannot doubt but your friendly endeavours will at last prove successful.

name revered, not only by the ability and uprightness of his conduct, but by the extent of his knowledge, and the comprehensiveness of his views, upon many new subjects of judicial decision. Scarcely any man of his time possessed, in an equal degree, that wonderful sagacity in detecting chicanery and artifice, in separating fallacy from truth, and sophistry from argument, which discovers, as if by intuition, the exact justice of the case. Nor was he less remarkable for his regularity, punctuality, and dispatch of business, by which the suitors in his court were relieved from the tedious anxiety of suspense, so generally complained of in a court of justice. I am informed, says Sir James Burrows, who was Clerk of the Crown in the court of King's Bench, and who therefore knew Lord Mansfield well, that at the sittings for London and Middlesex, there are not so few as eight hundred cases set down in a year, and all disposed of. Upon the last day of the last term, says Sir James, if we exclude such motions of the term, as by desire of the parties went over of course, there was not a single matter of any kind that remained undetermined, excepting one case, professedly postponed on account of the situation of America; and the same may be said of the last day of any former term for some years backwards. The same writer also informs us of the following most remarkable circumstance, respecting Lord Mansfield's decisions; that, excepting in two cases, there had not been a final difference of opinion in the court, in any case, or upon any point whatsoever, during the long period from November 1756, to May 1776, the time of Sir James's publication; and it is not less remarkable, that, except in these two cases, no judgment given in that court during the same period has been reversed, either in the Exchequer-Chamber or in Parliament. Lord Mansfield honoured Dr Beattie, in a most particular manner, with his friendly regard. He died, 18th March, 1793, aged 88.

I now see that Lord Mansfield wishes to establish me in Scotland; and I am certain, that in this, as in other matters, his judgment is founded on the best reasons. I am greatly flattered by your kind invitation to Sandleford. I would not, for any consideration, forego the hope that I shall one time or other avail myself of it; but, at present, this is not in my power.

“ The second canto of the “ Minstrel ” is nearly finished, and has been so these two years; but, till my health be better established, I must not think of making any additions to it.

“ If you have not seen Dr Porteus’s two sermons, lately published, I would recommend them to your notice, because they are, in my opinion, amongst the most elegant compositions of the kind in the English language. Dr P. did me the honour to send me a copy of them, accompanied with a very kind, and very polite letter.”

LETTER LVI.

DR BEATTIE TO DR PORTEUS, (NOW LORD BISHOP
OF LONDON.)

Aberdeen, 18th August, 1772.

“ Your approbation of my weak endeavours in the cause of truth gives me the most sincere pleasure. How shall I thank you, sir, for having declared that approbation, so flattering to my ambition, and so favourable to my reputation and interest? Not satisfied with giving the public a favourable opinion of my late publication, and honouring my name with a place in your work, you wish to recommend me to the notice of Royalty itself, and to give to my labours such a lustre as might attract those eyes, from which many would desire to hide all merit but their own. Be assured, sir, that I shall ever retain a just sense of your candour, good nature, and generosity; and that the encouragement I have received from you, and from your noble-minded countrymen, will serve as an additional motive to employ that health and leisure, which Provi-

dence may hereafter allot me, in promoting, to the utmost of my poor abilities, the cause of truth, virtue, and mankind. This is the best return I can make to your goodness; for thus only can I, in any degree, approve myself worthy of it.

“The ‘Essay on Truth,’ according to my original plan, is only the first part of a large treatise that I had projected, on the evidences of morality and religion. I entered on my second part some years ago, and made a little progress in it. My intention there was to attempt a confutation of the errors which Hume, Helvetius, and other fashionable writers, had introduced into the moral sciences. The subject would have led me to the evidence of Christianity; and my own heart would have disposed, and my own conscience determined, me to do justice to the characters and abilities of Voltaire, and other contemporary infidels, with the same freedom, and with the same spirit, that appear in what I have written against Hume’s philosophy. But the wretched state of my health obliges me to suspend, for the present, all my literary projects. I hope, however, to get better in time; for I am

told, that these nervous disorders are seldom fatal at my age.

“ I can never forget what I owe to the candour and humanity of the English nation. To have obtained the approbation and patronage of those who have so long been, and who will, I hope, continue to the latest ages to be, the patrons of truth, and the great assertors of the rights of mankind, is an honour indeed, of which I feel the high value. While animated by this consideration, I can overlook, and almost forget, the opposition I have met with from a powerful party in this country, who, since the publication of the ‘ Essay on Truth,’ have taken no little pains to render my condition as uneasy as possible. In other countries, infidels appear but as individuals; but in Scotland they form a party, whose principle is, to discountenance and bear down religion to the utmost of their power.*

“ I am much obliged to you for speaking so favourably of the ‘ Minstrel.’ When I published the first book, the greatest part of the second was written, and I hoped to have got the whole ready (for I intend only three books) within a

* See what is said at pp. 131, 132.

year ; but since that time my health has been quite unfit for study of every kind. When I go to London, which may possibly be next summer, I will, with great pleasure, avail myself of your kind invitation, and take the first opportunity of paying my respects to you at Lambeth."

LETTER LVII.

DR BEATTIE TO MRS MONTAGU.

Aberdeen, 30th September, 1772.

" I have never seen Mr Jones's imitations of the Asiatic poetry. From what you say of them, I am sure they will entertain me ; though I am entirely of your opinion, that, if they had been translations, they would have been much more valuable, and the more literal the better. Such things deserve attention, not so much for the amusement they yield to the fancy, as for the knowledge they convey of the minds and manners of the people among whom they are produced. To those who have feelings, and are capable of observation, that poetical expression and description will be most agreeable, which corre-

sponds most exactly to their own experience. I cannot sympathise with passions I never felt; and, when objects are described in colours, shapes, and proportions, quite unlike to what I have been accustomed to, I suspect that the descriptions are not just, and that it is not *nature* that is presented to my view, but the dreams of a man who had never studied nature.

“ What is the reason, madam, that the poetry, and indeed the whole phraseology, of the eastern nations (and I believe the same thing holds of all uncultivated nations) is so full of glaring images, exaggerated metaphors, and gigantic descriptions? Is it, because that, in those countries where art has made little progress, nature shoots forth into wilder magnificence, and every thing appears to be constructed on a larger scale? Is it that the language, through defect of copiousness, is obliged to adopt metaphor and similitude, even for expressing the most obvious sentiments? Is it, that the ignorance and indolence of such people, unfriendly to liberty, disposes them to regard their governors as of supernatural dignity, and to decorate them with the most pompous and high-sounding titles, the frequent use of which comes at last to infect their whole conversation

with bombast? Or is it, that the passions of those people are really stronger, and their climate more luxuriant? Perhaps all these causes may conspire in producing this effect. Certain it is, that Europe is much indebted, for her style and manner of composition, to her ancient authors, particularly to those of Greece, by whose example and authority that simple and natural diction was happily established, which all our best authors of succeeding times have been ambitious to imitate; but whence those ancient Greek authors derived it, whether from imitating other authors, still more ancient; or from the operation of physical causes; or from the nature of their language, particularly its unrivalled copiousness and flexibility; or from some unaccountable and peculiar delicacy in their taste; or from the force of their genius, that, conscious of its own vigour, despised all adventitious support, and all foreign ornament,—it is not perhaps easy to determine.

“The fourth edition of my *Essay* is now in the press.”

LETTER LVIII.

SIR ADOLPHUS OUGHTON * TO DR BEATTIE.

London, 3d November, 1772.

“ Though your short stay at Edinburgh put it out of my power to cultivate that acquaintance with you which I wished, yet, as a lover of truth, I cannot but be warmly interested in the honour

* Lieutenant-General Sir James Adolphus Oughton, K. B. was the son of Sir Adolphus Oughton, a general officer in the British army. He received his classical education on the foundation at the Charter-house school, whence he was removed to Trinity College, Dublin. When he had finished his studies, he entered into the army, and served in Flanders, under the Duke of Cumberland, whom he accompanied to Scotland in the memorable year 1746. In the Seven-Years War, he served in Germany, under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick; and during these two wars was present at most of the battles that were fought by these two generals. In particular, at the battle of Minden, in the year 1759, he commanded, as lieutenant-colonel, one of the six British regiments, which so greatly distinguished themselves by their gallantry on that celebrated day. In the interval between the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, and the Seven-Years War, Sir Adolphus's regiment being stationed in Minorca, he had obtained leave of absence to make the tour of Italy; in all the principal parts of which he spent some time, sufficient to cultivate and improve his taste for the fine arts, in the knowledge of which he greatly excelled. On that occasion, too, he formed

and welfare of its ablest champion. You will, therefore, not be surprised, that I should take a real pleasure in communicating to you a circum-

an acquaintance with some British travellers of high rank, who continued ever after to honour him with their distinguished notice. His talent for the acquisition of languages was extraordinary; so that he not only knew those of Greece and Rome, as well as of France and Italy, but he possessed some knowledge of oriental literature, and was fond of the study of antiquities. Even at an advanced period of life, after he settled here as commander in chief of his Majesty's forces, he applied himself to the study of the Gaelic, or ancient dialect of the Highlands of Scotland: in which he made all the proficiency that could be attained, chiefly by the help of books.

To all these acquirements in knowledge, Sir Adolphus Oughton added the most estimable virtues of a true Christian, and united, in no common degree, the character of the man of piety with that of the man of the world. Obligated, by his official situation, to live almost always in the midst of company, to which he had no dislike, Sir Adolphus displayed much hospitality at his social board, yet always within the rules of the strictest temperance. He was extremely polite in his deportment; and, from his great stock of acquired knowledge, his conversation was uncommonly instructive and entertaining. In his attention to all the external observances of religion, he was most exact; and I know not that I have ever felt more forcibly the power of devotion, than when on a Sunday evening at his house, in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, collecting his guests around him, I have heard him read the church-service, from the English Liturgy, with the utmost fervour, and most graceful elocution. I was, during many years, honoured, in a particular manner, with the friendship of Sir Adolphus Oughton; and I shall ever look back with grateful satisfaction, and I hope not without advan-

stance, which has a tendency to the promoting of both. I was yesterday informed, from the very best authority, that our excellent Sovereign had read your "Essay" with the utmost attention and approbation, and expressed his intention of bestowing on you some mark of his royal favour, when a proper opportunity shall offer. Proverbial sayings, as resulting from the experience of mankind, and appealing to their common sense, have generally been received as axioms; most sorry I am, that *Regis ad exemplum* can no longer lay claim to it in our country. It is equally to be lamented, that, from the nature of our constitution, and the violence of our parties, the King's power, even of doing good, should in many instances be limited, in most obstructed. Your labours, sir, for the true interests of mankind, are free and uncontrouled: Pursue, then, the glorious task; open the eyes and amend the hearts of a deluded and dissipated people. Your generous efforts must necessarily be productive of much good; and you cannot fail of your reward, because it depends on yourself."

tage, on the many happy and instructive hours I have passed in his company. Sir Adolphus Oughton died at Bath, 14th April, 1780, in his 60th year.

LETTER LIX.

THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF YORK * TO DR BEATTIE.

Brodsworth, 19th September, 1772.

“ As my brother, Lord Kinnoull, has lately communicated to me your letter to him of August 10th, explaining your views, which certainly have not as yet been answered with success correspondent to your talents, I desired him to communicate to you my thoughts, which, at least, are the thoughts of a real friend and well-wisher, who has the highest esteem of your merit in the cause of truth.

“ I doubt, whether you would be well suited with a lay-place, or a pension, or a residence in Scotland. As far as I can judge, the ministry in the church of England would be the profession the most agreeable to your qualifications and inclination: but the prospect of fair profit in it ought to be considered; for *that* is a duty to

* The Honourable and Most Reverend Dr Robert Hay Drummond, brother to the Earl of Kinnoull.

yourself, and to your family. Give me leave, too, to say, that there is a *prior* duty, that is, to your conscience.

“ Though I was educated in the church of England, yet I have often sifted my mind with sincere and impartial reflection, and with as enlarged views as I could take in, of the great dispensations of the Deity, centering in Christ. Upon the whole, I have always thought, that the church of England is the most agreeable to Christian doctrine and discipline ; equally distant from wild conceit and implicit faith ; free, manly, and benevolent ; conducive to the cause of truth and virtue, to the happiness of society, and of every individual in it. And it is the establishment that seems to carry the fairest aspect with it, towards promoting pure Christianity, and civil order ; without overbearing, or artful, or abject means. With due Christian condescension to different opinions and modes, this is the result of frequent consideration and conviction, and is the testimony of my conscience. If it were otherwise, I would not, I could not, in honour, retain even the great emoluments with which I am favoured, for another moment.

“ It is surely unreasonable and unnecessary to trouble you with my notions. I allow it : but this is only a mode of flattering myself with the hopes, that yours are similar. If such is your opinion of the church of England, and if it is your upright intention to exercise in its ministry your most valuable abilities and knowledge for the service of true religion, I shall think your entry into it a happy acquisition. And I would endeavour to contribute, as far as my scanty patronage goes, or my friendship and influence can extend, that you should enter into it with credit, and live in it with comfort.

“ Lord Kinnoull has written to Lord Mansfield. and I shall talk with him after Christmas. I shall not leave my diocese till that time. I have written also to-day to our friend Mrs Montagu.”

LETTER LX.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

Aberdeen, 6th November, 1772.

“ I am happy to find, that the plan I have just now in view is honoured with your approbation. It is the result of the most mature deliberation ; and I hope I shall never have occasion to repent it. Whether my present views shall prove successful, is a point very uncertain. I shall endeavour, by moderating my hopes and my wishes, to prepare myself for the worst.

“ You do too much honour to the letter I wrote to the Archbishop of York. It contained nothing that could entertain you. Some time or other I shall give you, at large, my opinion of the matters contained in it ; for of the letter itself I kept no copy. It has pleased his Grace, and given great satisfaction to Lord Kinnoull.

“ Dr Gregory will show you the character of Rousseau, as it is now finished. Some years ago, I should have put more panegyric in it, and less censure ; but since that time, I have had leisure

to examine some of his theological, and some, too, of his philosophical tenets, which has lowered considerably my opinion of his candour and understanding : but my admiration of his talents, as an eloquent and pathetic writer, still remains unimpaired ; and I am confident he had originally that in him, which might have made him one of the greatest philosophers in the world. if his genius had not been perverted by the fashion of the times, and by the love of paradox. The passage I allude to, where he speaks so well of the genius of Christianity, and the character of its Divine Founder, is in the creed of the Savoyard curate, where he draws a comparison between Jesus Christ and Socrates.”

LETTER LXI.

MRS MONTAGU TO DR BEATTIE.

London, 13th December, 1772.

“ You ask me, why the eastern nations are, in their poetical compositions, so full of glaring images, and exaggerated metaphors? One reason, I presume, is, that they are little addicted

to write or read prose. Fiction and bombast are called *le Phæbus*, in the French language: the marvellous is affected in poetry more than in prose; exaggeration is a road to the marvellous. The first passage from hieroglyphic representation to imitation by words, must naturally be by images. The Greeks, by a certain subtlety of parts, and the popular character of the philosophers, addicted themselves greatly to metaphysics; this banished from the learned the grosser images. They cultivated all the parts of rhetoric; thence grew precision, and consequently the figurative style became less in use; words acquired certain and exact signification; and Socrates, the best and most modest of men, would inculcate the maxim, that the gods hate impudence, without delineating an eagle, a crocodile, a sea-horse, and a fish, as the Egyptian sages had done, to teach it. Many of the high pompous and high sounding titles you take notice of, as given to eastern princes, are verbal translations of the symbols of regal power, executive justice, &c. As to Homer, we know little about him; he seems to paint exactly from the life, as our Shakespeare did, and as the first-rate genius's will always do, where there are not established

laws of criticism, to which they must bend, and which set up a pattern and mode to work by. You will find Æschylus an hieroglyphical, symbolical, allegorical writer; his works smell of Egypt, and the mythology of his country. Sophocles saw that the historical muse of Herodotus was admired, he therefore takes a more middle flight between history and poetry. Euripides finds his countrymen still more refined, and is a moral philosopher, as well as poet. He writes to Socrates, and the disciples of Socrates. Something of the pomp and luxury of an Asiatic poet's descriptions certainly arises from the wealth and plenty of his country, and the display of gold and jewels, and the perfumes, &c. in the palaces of the great. Ossian exaggerates only the strength and valour of his heroes, and the beauty of his women. As poetry professes to please and surprise, it will always embellish and magnify. We owe much to the metaphysical turn of the Greeks, for refining our ideas, and spiritualizing them.—While only fables and panegyrics were fabricated by the poets, clear and adequate, and well-proportioned phrase, could never be established. Obscurity was necessary, exaggeration would be sought; and though Homer, who sung to the

distant posterity of Agamemnon, &c. was not under a necessity of magnifying his character beyond the ordinary proportion of human qualities, I dare say Agamemnon's family-bard, and the rest of the heroes' poets, attributed many extravagant exploits to them. As to the passions, I believe them to be much more violent in warm countries; and as the Asiatic life is more indolent, the body employed in less motion, and the mind less diverted by variety of objects, it desires what it likes with more vehement and uninterrupted attention. These are my random thoughts upon your questions; but as they are merely my own, I have no great confidence in them."

LETTER LXII.

DR BEATTIE TO MRS MONTAGU.

Aberdeen, 12th January, 1773.

"It gave me the most sincere pleasure to find, that the Archbishop of York was satisfied with the sentiments expressed in the letter I had the honour to write to him. His Grace sent my let-

ter to Lord Kinnoull, who was pleased to write to me on the occasion, and to express his approbation in very strong terms. Considering the turn that my affairs were likely to take, I wished for an opportunity of doing myself justice, by explaining my opinion of the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England; and a more favourable opportunity could not have been wished for, than that which his Grace was pleased to grant me. I am much honoured by your application in my behalf to the Duchess of Portland, and deeply sensible of the importance of her Grace's interest and favourable opinion.

“ In the new edition of my “ Essay,” I have inserted a long note, containing a character of Rousseau and his writings. This I did by the advice of Dr Gregory, who told me, that many persons, who wished me well, had signified to him their desire of knowing my reasons for thinking so favourably of that philosopher, as to place his name in the same list with Bacon, Shakespeare, and Montesquieu. I was somewhat afraid, lest, by bestowing on Rousseau those praises which I think are his due, I might offend some well-meaning people, who had read only those parts of his works that express his dissatisfaction with

some parts of the Christian doctrine : and therefore, when I sent my criticism to Dr Gregory, I desired him to consider it very seriously, and, if he thought it would give offence to any Christian, or tend to embroil me in controversy, to suppress it altogether. But, instead of suppressing, he forwarded it to the printer, and afterwards wrote to me that he entirely approved of it. I long to know your opinion of this note, and have therefore desired Mr Dilly to send you the book; you will find it at the 437th page. There is at page 330, a ludicrous note, intended to expose some of Voltaire's reasonings on the subject of necessity. These are the only additions of any consequence that are made to this new impression.

“ Mr Dilly will also send you a copy of this book, addressed to Mrs Carter, which I must beg, madam, you will take the trouble to forward to her, with some apology, to make it acceptable. It is a tribute of respect and gratitude which I owe to her extraordinary genius and virtue, and to the pleasure and instruction I have received from her writings.

“ I am greatly delighted with your account of the causes that produced the striking diversity

which appears in the poetical style of Greece and of modern Europe, compared with the style commonly called oriental. You have, in my opinion, fully accounted for this diversity. It is a great pity we know so little of Homer's history, and of the state of Grecian literature before his time. It appears to me, that the records of Greece have never gone far beyond the Trojan war; for it is observable, that most of Homer's heroes are descended from Jupiter, in the third or fourth degree only; in other words, that they could not trace their genealogy higher than the third or fourth generation: which is a proof, or at least a presumption, that they wanted letters, and had but lately emerged from barbarity. Horace makes the contemporaries of Orpheus and Amphion to have been perfect savages, till humanized by the charms of poetry and music: but perhaps he spoke only from conjectures, gathered out of the fables of those ancient times. If those conjectures be just; if the Greeks were really in a state of barbarity and ignorance, so late as the third or fourth generation before the Trojan war: it is a matter of astonishment, that, in Homer's time (about 150 years after that war,) their language should be so copious, so regular, so harmonious, so sub-

tle, in the discrimination of thought, and so wonderfully diversified in its inflections. If we did not know the thing to be impossible, we should be tempted to think that the Greek language must have been the invention of philosophers: if it arose, like other languages, from vulgar and accidental use, and yet came, in so short time, to such perfection, we cannot help thinking, that the Greeks had received from nature superior force of genius, and delicacy of taste; and that Horace spoke as a philosopher, as well as a poet, when he said. *Graius ingenium, Graius dedit ore rotundo musa loqui.*"

The following letter was written in reply to one from me, in which I informed Dr Beattie of the death of our common friend, Dr Gregory. It is expressive of the tenderest grief, at the same time full of the most pious sentiments of resignation to Divine Providence on the occasion, which, under all the calamities that befel him through life, was his chief support, and surest consolation.

LETTER LXIII.

DR BEATTIE TO SIR WILLIAM FORBES.

Aberdeen, 13th February, 1773.

“ I am deeply sensible of your goodness, in communicating to me, in so tender and soothing a manner, the news of a misfortune, which is indeed one of the severest I have ever felt. For these two months past, my spirits have been unusually depressed, so that I am but ill prepared for so terrible a stroke. Of the loss which society, and which his family have received; of the incomparable loss which I sustain, by the death of this excellent person, I can say nothing; my heart is too full, and I have not yet recovered myself so far as to think or speak coherently on this or any other subject.

“ You justly observe, that his friends may derive no small consolation from the circumstance of his death having been without pain,* and

* He was found dead in bed, probably from an attack of the gout, to which he was subject.

from the well-grounded hope we may entertain of his having made a happy change. But I find I cannot proceed; I thought I should have been able to give you some of my thoughts on this occasion; but the subject overpowers me. Write to me as soon, and as fully as you can, of the situation of his family, and whatever you may think I should wish to know. I shall endeavour to follow your kind advice, and to reconcile myself to this great affliction, as much as I am able. My reason, I trust, is fully reconciled: I am thoroughly convinced, that every dispensation of Providence is wise and good; and that by making a proper improvement of the evils of this life, we may convert them all into blessings. It becomes us, therefore, to adore the Supreme Benefactor, when he takes away, as well as when he gives; for he is wise and beneficent in both."

LETTER LXIII.

DR BEATTIE TO MRS MONTAGU.

Aberdeen, 3d May, 1773.

“ I have just now finished the business of a melancholy winter. When I wrote to you last, which was in January, my health and spirits were in a very low state. In this condition, the unexpected death of the best of men, and of friends, came upon me with a weight, which at any time I should have thought almost unsupportable, but which, at that time, was afflicting to a degree which human abilities alone could never have endured. But Providence, ever beneficent and gracious, has supported me under this heavy dispensation; and I hope, I shall in time be enabled to review it, even with that cheerful submission, which becomes a Christian, and which none but a Christian can entertain. I have a thousand things to say on this most affecting subject; but for your sake, madam, and for my own, I shall not, at present, enter upon them. Nobody can be more sensible than you

are, of the irreparable loss which not only his own family and friends, but which society in general, sustains by the loss of this excellent person: and I need not tell you, for of this too I know you are sensible, that of all his friends, (his own family excepted,) none has so much cause of sorrow, on this occasion, as I. I should never have done, if I were to enter into the particulars of his kindness to me. For these many years past, I have had the happiness to be of his intimate acquaintance. He took part in all my concerns; and, as I concealed nothing from him, he knew my heart and my character as well as I myself did; only the partiality of his friendship made him think more favourably of me than I deserved. In all my difficulties, I applied to him for advice and comfort; both which he had the art of communicating in such a way as never failed to compose and strengthen my mind. His zeal in promoting my interest and reputation is very generally known. In a word, (for I must endeavour to quit a subject, which will long be oppressive to my heart,) my inward quiet, and external prosperity, were objects of his particular and unwearied care; and he never missed any opportunity of promoting both to the utmost of

his power. I wrote to his son soon after the fatal event; and have had the comfort to hear from several hands, that he, and his sisters, and the whole family, behave with a propriety that charms every body. In continuing his father's lectures, he acquits himself to universal satisfaction."

LETTER LXIV.

DR BEATTIE TO MRS MONTAGU.

Aberdeen, 21st April, 1773.

"A book has been lately published, which makes no little noise in this country. It is an Essay on the Origin and Progress of Language; the author is Mr Burnet of Monboddo,* one of our Lords of the Session, a man of great learning, but rather too much devoted to Greek literature, particularly the Peripatetic philosophy. In the first part of his work, he gives a very learned, elaborate, and abstruse account of the origin of ideas, according to the metaphysic of Plato, and

* See p. 30.

the commentators upon Aristotle. He then treats of the origin of human society, and of language, (which he considers as a human invention,) in the way in which many of our fashionable philosophers have treated of them of late; representing men as having originally been, and continued for many ages to be, no better than beasts, and indeed in many respects worse; destitute of speech, of reason, of conscience, of social affection, and of every thing that can confer dignity upon a creature, and possessed of nothing but external sense and memory, and a capacity of improvement. The system is not a new one: it is borrowed (whatever these philosophers may pretend) from Epicurus, or rather from Lucretius, of whose account of it, Horace gives a pretty exact abridgement, in these lines: “ *Cum prorepserunt pri-*
“ *mis animalia terris, mutum et turpe pecus,*” &c. which Lord Monboddo takes for his motto, and which, he says, comprehend, in miniature, the whole history of man. In regard to facts that make for his system, (all which our author sees with microscopical eyes,) he is amazingly credulous, and equally blind and sceptical, in regard to every fact of an opposite tendency. He professes a regard for the scripture, and I believe

means it no harm; but his system cannot possibly be reconciled to it. In a word, he has gone further in brutifying human nature, than any author, ancient or modern. Yet there are many curious and good things in his book. I have been entertained, and sometimes instructed, by it; but notwithstanding this, and in spite of my regard for the author, who is truly a worthy man, and to whom I am under particular obligations, I take it up as a task, and can never read above half an hour in it at a time; so odious, so filthy, is the picture he gives of the nature of man. It pains and shocks me, as if I were witnessing the dissection of a putrid carcase. It is, however, a book, which, I believe, will do little hurt; for the vulgar, it is too abstruse and too learned: and the greater part of his readers will be moved rather to laughter than to conviction, when they hear him assert, which he does with the utmost confidence and gravity, that the Oوران-Outangs are of our species; that in the Bay of Bengal exists a nation of human creatures with tails, discovered 130 years ago, by a Swedish skipper; that the beavers and sea-cats are social and political animals, though man, by nature, is neither social nor political, nor even ra-

tional; reason, reflection, a sense of right and wrong, society, policy, and even thought, being, in the human species, according to this author, as much the effects of art, contrivance, and long experience, as writing, ship-building, or any other manufacture.

“Some years ago, I wrote a small treatise in Latin, on a subject similar to this of Lord Monboddo’s, but the conclusions I drew were widely different. From the nature of language, I proved, to my own satisfaction at least, that, if men had ever been a *mutum et turpe pecus*, they must, without supernatural assistance, have continued so to this day; that therefore man, in all ages from the beginning, must have been a speaking animal; that the first man must have received the divine gift of language from God himself, by inspiration; and that the children of our first parents, and their descendants to the present time, must have learned to speak by imitation and instruction. And for the smaller diversities in kindred languages, (such as those which took place in the French language, for instance, compared with the Italian and Spanish,) I would account from the revolutions of human affairs, and the tendency of language to alteration; and for the

greater diversities, (such as those that appear in the European languages, compared with those of China, America, &c.) I would account from the confusion of Babel; nor do I think it possible to account for them satisfactorily in any other way.”

In several of Dr Beattie's letters at this time, he had mentioned his intention of undertaking a journey to England: the cause he chiefly assigned was the broken state of his constitution, which he hoped, on the authority of his friend and physician, the late Dr Gregory, would be improved by the exercise of travelling.

In pursuance of his intention, Dr Beattie set out from Aberdeen, in the end of April, for London, accompanied by Mrs Beattie. And after paying a visit of two days to the Earl of Kinnoull, * at Dupplin-Castle, in Perthshire, he arrived in Edinburgh.

* The elder brother of the Honourable and Most Reverend Robert Hay Drummond, at that time Lord Archbishop of York.

Dr Beattie now communicated to me all the motives of his journey to London, which, besides the recovery of his health, and the paying a visit to his friends there, had a still farther object in view. So early as his former visit to London, in the year 1771, his English friends had formed an anxious wish, that some attempt should be made to procure for him a permanent provision or establishment. His fame, indeed, as an exquisite poet, and an eloquent as well as energetic philosophical writer, was considerable. He had been honoured, also, with the friendship of some of the most distinguished characters, both for rank in life, as well as reputation in the republic of letters. But except the very trifling sums, which he had received from the booksellers, for his "Essay on Truth," and his "Minstrel," so trifling as scarcely to be worth mentioning, he remained with no other property or provision for the support of his family, than the very moderate emoluments arising from his professorship of moral philosophy in the university of Aberdeen. His friends had likewise reason to believe, that neither Dr Beattie's name, nor his merits as a distinguished writer in the cause of truth, were altogether unknown to the king, whose love of literature, and

marked attention to every thing that could promote the best interests of religion and virtue, it was hoped, might procure for Dr Beattie some substantial proof of his Majesty's regard. And, in fact, the King had been pleased, not only to express his approbation of the works which Dr Beattie had published, but had even signified his intention of conferring on the author some mark of his royal favour.

In consequence of these flattering symptoms of success, in a pursuit so interesting to himself and his family, his friends in England had urged his coming to London without delay, and bringing with him such letters of introduction to those in power, as were most likely to be of use.

By Lord Kinnoull he had been made known to his brother, the Archbishop of York, and to Lord Mansfield, who were both of them much disposed to serve him. And from Sir Adolphus Oughton, Dr Beattie received, as he passed through Edinburgh, a letter of introduction to the Earl of Dartmouth, at that time secretary of state for the colonies, with whom Sir Adolphus was intimately acquainted, and who afterwards much contributed to Dr Beattie's success.

On his arrival in London, in the beginning of May 1773, he hastened to wait on those friends to whom he had become known during his former residence there, and by whom he was again received with much cordiality. Mrs Montagu, in particular, entered eagerly into his interests, and pointed out to him, what, in her opinion, was the most proper mode of proceeding, in order to have his case brought under his Majesty's immediate notice. Among others, he failed not to pay an early visit to Lord Dartmouth, in order to deliver the letter he had brought from Sir Adolphus Oughton. He experienced the most friendly reception from that nobleman, who paid him many compliments, extolled the candour with which his book¹ was written, and said, that no book, published in his time, had been more generally read, or more approved of. Lord Dartmouth told him of the King's goodwill towards him, and that Lord North* was his friend. He said he would mention his business to Lord North, and that perhaps an opportunity might offer, of

* At that time first lord of the treasury, and prime minister of Great Britain; an office which he held for twelve years, and during the arduous and eventful period of the American war.

letting the King know that he was in London. He promised, as soon as possible, to acquaint him with the result.*

Lord Dartmouth failed not to perform his promise, and in no long time sent him notice that Lord North would be glad to see him. Dr Beattie accordingly waited on the minister, and was very politely received. Lord North told him, the King had read his book, and approved it, and that he would take an early opportunity of letting his Majesty know that he was in London. †

In deliberating on the most probable mode by which some provision from government might

* I am enabled to give a circumstantial and exact account of every thing that took place, respecting Dr Beattie's obtaining his pension from the King, by having found, among his papers, a very curious and interesting Diary, which he had kept of the occurrences of this journey to London, from the time of his arrival there, to the date of his return home; in which he has recorded, with scrupulous fidelity, every event of any moment that befel him. Every visit, of any consequence, which he paid or received; every person of any note whom he met with, he has mentioned; and even many conversations, at which he was present, or in which he bore a part, he has recorded in the form of dialogue. It were tedious to insert the whole of the Diary; but I shall occasionally avail myself of it.

† MS. Diary, 21st May, 1773.

be obtained for him, various schemes had been suggested by his friends. By some it had been proposed, that he should take orders, and go into the Church of England; for which his habits of study had been by no means ill-suited, as he had originally attended the lectures of the professor of divinity, when at the university; and, at one time, he seems to have been not altogether averse from such a plan. His reasons for abandoning all ideas of that nature, however, will be seen in a subsequent letter. By others of his friends it was hoped, that he might obtain some civil appointment, suited to his talents; or, if not, some sinecure office, of which there are many in the West Indies, the duties of which are discharged by a deputy on the spot, while a certain fixed salary or emolument remains with the principal at home. But at last it was resolved, on the suggestion of the Archbishop of York, with the approbation of his other friends, that a memorial should be drawn up, expressing his services, his wants, and his wishes; which paper was to be laid before the King. This memorial he transmitted to Lord Dartmouth, by whom it was presented to his Majesty; who on that, as on other occasions, expressed himself in terms of high ap-

probation in regard to him, and his writings, and desired to see him. *

In consequence of this gracious intimation, Lord Dartmouth undertook to carry him to the levee at St James's, and present him to the King.

While Dr Beattie was thus waiting, with the hope of experiencing some more substantial mark of royal favour, than bare approbation, he continued to receive every possible proof of the kindness and attachment of his private friends; the number of whom daily increased, as the circle of society, in which he moved, became more extensive. †

* MS. Diary, 12th June, 1773.

† Among those who most eminently distinguished him by their politeness and attention, he could reckon Mrs Montagu; Lord Lyttelton; the Archbishop of York; the Earl of Dartmouth; Lord Mansfield; the Duchess-Dowager of Portland; Sir William and Lady Mayne (afterwards Lord and Lady Newhaven); Lord Carysfort; Dr Porteus, now Bishop of London; Dr Markham, at that time Bishop of Chester, now Archbishop of York; Dr Percy, now Bishop of Dromore; Dr Moss, Bishop of St Davids; the Bishop of Bristol; Lord Dartry; Dr Parker, Rector of St James's; Dr Halifax, Professor of Law at Cambridge; the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr Cornwallis); Dr Moore, at that time Dean of Canterbury, afterwards himself Lord Archbishop; Dr Douglas, now Bishop of Salisbury; Sylvester Douglas, now Lord Glenbervie; Dr Hurd, the present Bishop of Worcester; Sir Joshua Reynolds; Sir John Pringle,

From all of these he received the warmest commendations of his principles and his writings, as well as of his zealous efforts in the cause of virtue and religion.* Nor were they merely the slight and ordinary marks of formal acquaintance, that he received from so many persons of distinguished eminence. By many of those whom I have named, his society was eagerly sought for; and, at the Duchess-Dowager of Portland's house, at Bulstrode, † at Sir William Mayne's, at Arno's-Grove, and at Mrs Montagu's at Sandlesford-Priory, Mrs Beattie and he spent occasionally some days; while they were prevented from accepting similar invitations from other friends, by his judging it proper to continue in London, until the fate of his application to the King was deci-

President of the Royal Society; Mr Edmund Burke; Mr Garrick; Dr Samuel Johnson; Mr Cumberland; Mr and Mrs Vesey; Mr Langton; Mrs Carter; Mr John Hunter; Dr Majendie; Dr Goldsmith; Mr Hawkins Browne.

* MS. Diary, *passim*.

† Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, only daughter and heiress of Edward, Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, by his wife the Lady Henrietta Cavendish, the only daughter and heiress of John Holles, Duke of Newcastle. She inherited from her father a noble estate, and lived, with splendid hospitality, at Bulstrode, in Buckinghamshire; which was the resort, not only of persons of the highest rank, but of those most distinguished for

ded.* In short, I believe I should not hazard much, were I to affirm, that it is without a parallel in the annals of literature, that an author, almost totally a stranger in England, as Dr Beattie was, should, in less than the space of two years after the appearance of his 'Essay on Truth,' and his poem of the 'Minstrel,' emerge from the obscurity of his situation, in a provincial town in the north of Scotland, into such general and distinguished celebrity, without the aid of party spirit, or political faction, or any other influence than what arose from the merit of these two publications, which first brought him into notice, and his agreeable conversation, and unassuming manners, which secured to him the love of all to whom he became personally known.

talents and eminence in the literary world. To the Duchess-Dowager of Portland, posterity will ever be indebted, for securing to the public the inestimable treasures of learning contained in the noble MS. library of her father and grandfather, Earls of Oxford, now deposited in the British Museum, by the authority of Parliament, under the guardianship of the most distinguished persons of the realm, easy of access, and consequently of real use, to the philosopher, the statesman, the historian, the scholar, as well as the artist and mechanic. †

† Introduction to Astle's "Origin and Progress of Writing," p. xxi.

* MS. Diary, *passim*.

Nor must I omit some still more substantial and flattering marks of friendship, which he has gratefully recorded in his Diary. Mrs Montagu, when speaking of the object of his journey to London, told him in very explicit, though delicate terms, that if government did nothing, she would herself claim the honour of rendering his situation in life more comfortable.* To this instance of generosity and friendship, he told her, he did not know what other answer to give, except that he did, and ever should, entertain a proper sense of it.

Not long after, he received a most unexpected, and still more exalted, mark of favour from her Majesty, to whom Dr Beattie had been mentioned by Dr Majendie, † at the desire of Lady Mayne, although altogether without his knowledge. The Queen was pleased to express to Dr Majendie her high approbation of Dr Beattie and his writings, wishing that it were in her power to do him a favour, and desired Dr Majendie to ask him, whether he would be willing

* MS. Diary, 21st May, 1773.

† Prebendary of Worcester, who had at that time the honour of being instructor to the Queen in the English and French languages;—the father of the present Lord Bishop of Chester.

to receive some present from her Majesty. After expressing to Dr Majendie the high sense of the honour her Majesty had done him, and of the favour she meant to confer, Dr Beattie informed him of the applications that had been made by his friends, to procure for him a pension from the King; and concluded, by desiring him to let the Queen know, that he would, with the utmost gratitude, receive any mark of favour she should be pleased to bestow; but that he was in hopes of receiving some provision from the King, in which case he should not wish to encroach on her Majesty's bounty. If, however, his application to the crown should prove unsuccessful, any mark of the Queen's favour would be most acceptable.* From Dr Majendie he afterwards learned, that the Doctor had related to the Queen what had passed; with which her Majesty expressed herself extremely well pleased; and said, the manner in which Dr Beattie had declined her offer, was a proof of his discretion, and that she had a still better opinion of him on that account. She added, that she would take the first opportunity to speak of him to the King; and, further,

* MS. Diary, 13th June, 1773.

desired Dr Majendie to tell him, that she had read his book with great attention; that she highly approved of it, and had several times conversed upon it with the King.*

He has also recorded another instance of munificence. The Duchess of Portland, while he was on a visit at Bulstrode, desired to speak with him in private; and after regretting the expence to which this journey to England must have subjected him, requested, in the frankest manner, that he would accept, of what she called a trifle, of one hundred pounds, in bank-notes, which she held in her hand. He was greatly disconcerted, he adds, by such an extraordinary instance of generosity. But he declined to accept of her Grace's present, in a manner, as she was pleased to say, which gave her a very favourable opinion of him, and a very high idea of the liberality of his sentiments. He endeavoured to explain to her, that by frugality at home, and the price he had received for his writings, he had saved as much money as would serve to defray the expence of this expedition; adding, at the same

* MS. Diary, 15th June, 1773.

time, the probability of his soon receiving some increase of income from government. *

It will not be matter of wonder, that Dr Beattie should feel himself highly gratified, as well as flattered, by such eminent proofs of distinguished favour: a sentiment naturally increased by the very gracious reception he experienced from his Majesty, to whom he was presented by Lord Dartmouth, at the levee, where he had the honour of kissing the King's hand. His Majesty spoke to him, for four or five minutes, with the most polite and chearful affability: told him he had read his book, and approved of it greatly, as a work that was much wanted, and surely would do a great deal of good; inquired how long time it cost him to compose it; and was pleased to say, that what he greatly admired in it, was the plainness and perspicuity of the reasoning, which must make it intelligible to every body, and which seemed to be perfectly unanswerable. The King repeated what he had said to Lord Dartmouth, who stood by, and who heartily joined in the same sentiments. His Majesty then asked, if any body had ever attempted to answer it; and

* MS. Diary, 28th June, 1773.

on being told, that some anonymous writers had attacked it in the newspapers, and had abused him on account of his book, he said, that such abuse did honour to him and his work. Here the conversation ended.—The levee was exceedingly crowded, which made it the more gratifying to him, that the King should honour him with so long a conference. *

Dr Beattie was afterwards to have been presented to the Queen, and several days were fixed on between Lord Dartmouth and him for that purpose; but it so happened, that on these days the Queen held no drawing-room, and the presentation did not at this time take place.

Not a hint was dropped, however, at this time of his presentation, by the King, or by Lord North, who was at the levee, and spoke to Dr Beattie, of any intention of making some provision for him; but on the day following, he learned, with no small satisfaction, from Dr Majendie, that the Queen had informed him, that she knew it to be the King's resolution to confer on him a pension of two hundred pounds a-year; but no notice was to be taken of this, until it should be

* MS. Diary, 30th June, 1773.

announced to him in a regular form by the minister.

While he thus waited, with a very excusable degree of anxiety, for the fulfilment of this expectation, he received a mark of public approbation, of a very pleasing nature, by an honorary degree of doctor of laws being conferred on him by the University of Oxford. The first idea of his receiving this honour had been suggested to him by Mr Peckard, a clergyman, with whom he had become acquainted at Dr Porteus's house at Lambeth, and who proposed to mention the matter to Dr Markham, Bishop of Chester, and Dean of Christ-Church. *

The Bishop readily entered into the plan, to which he did not foresee that any objection could be made, as Dr Beattie's essay was well known at Oxford, and had rendered him extremely popular there. The time fixed on for his receiving this honour from the university, was the approaching installation of Lord North as Chancellor of the University, on which occasion a number of degrees were, as usual, to be conferred; and Dr Beattie was directed to repair to Oxford, to be present on the occasion.

* Now Lord Archbishop of York.

It was the original intention that it should be what is called a diploma-degree; by which he would have become entitled to all the rights and privileges of a member of the university. When the Bishop of Chester went to Oxford, however, a short time before the installation, and conversed on the subject with the vice-chancellor, it was represented as doubtful, whether a degree by diploma could, with propriety, be conferred on Dr Beattie, on account of his being a Presbyterian. On this difficulty being communicated to Dr Beattie, he laid aside all thoughts of the matter. It was, therefore, not without considerable surprise, that he received a letter from the Bishop of Chester, from Oxford, informing him, “that though the success of a diploma-degree in laws seemed doubtful, (notwithstanding that all the heads of houses in the university were as favourable as could be wished,) an honorary-degree did not seem liable to any hazard; and that his name had been put in the list of those who were to be so complimented on the present occasion. The Bishop desired him, therefore, to repair immediately to Oxford.”

Dr Beattie, who happened to come accidentally that morning from Sir William Mayne's, at

Arno's Grove, to London, set out instantly for Oxford, where he arrived the same evening. He immediately waited on the Bishop of Chester, by whom he was received with the utmost kindness, and the day following, (9th July,) the degree was conferred on him, in the theatre.*

* Some circumstances attended the conferring of this degree on Dr Beattie, which were extremely flattering to him. About fifteen persons were admitted that day to the degree of Doctor of Laws; among which number was Sir Joshua Reynolds. When it came to Dr Beattie's turn, the Professor of Civil Law, (Dr Vansittart,) whose business it is to present the graduates to the Chancellor, after mentioning his name and title, of professor of moral philosophy in the university of Aberdeen, which is all that is usually said on the occasion, to his surprise, went on with a long Latin oration, in his praise, nearly to the following purpose: "whose writings and character are too well known, to stand in need of any encomium from me. He has had the singular fortune to join together, in the happiest union, the poetical and philosophical character. He is justly considered as one of the most elegant poets of his time; and his fame, both as a philosopher and poet, will be as permanent as that truth which he has so ably defended." This is but an abridgement of the speech, which was much more elegant in its composition, as well as more extravagant in its compliment. This speech, says Mr Williamson, (who was present in the theatre, and heard it spoken,) was much taken notice of at Oxford, on this occasion. He adds, it was certainly unpremeditated, as Dr Vansittart did not know, twenty minutes before he spoke it, that Dr Beattie was among the number of the graduates; and even after he knew it, he was in the middle of a crowd, so that notwithstanding its elegance, it was a temporary effusion, proceed-

On the next day he left Oxford, and returned to London, where he continued, without hearing any

ing from the high character he had conceived of him from his writings, and which, continues Mr Williamson, I thought no study could have produced.

As soon as the degree is conferred, the graduate bows, and takes his place among the doctors, when there is generally a clap of approbation in the theatre, which is sometimes loud, and sometimes but faint. When it came to Dr Beattie's turn, the clapping of hands was so remarkably loud, and so long continued, as satisfied him, that he had more friends in the theatre, than he had any reason to expect; and that this honour was conferred on him with the heartiest good-will of all parties. Of those who received the degree at that time, Sir Joshua Reynolds and he were the only two who were distinguished by an encomium, and extraordinary applause. As soon as the ceremony was over, several of his friends bowed to him, from their seats in the theatre, particularly, Lord Dartmouth, Dr Thomas, dean of Westminster, Dr Moore, dean of Canterbury, Mr Thrale, Dr Parker, &c. &c. &c. who all, when the convocation broke up, came and paid their compliments to him; none with greater affection and politeness than Lord Dartmouth.

So great a concourse of people had been drawn to Oxford, from all quarters, to witness this installation of the prime minister, as chancellor of the university, that when Dr Beattie wished to return to London, neither carriage, nor horse, nor any mode of conveyance, was to be had on any terms; all being engaged for several days. After many fruitless attempts to get a post-chaise, he was preparing to set out on foot, as he was anxious to get back to town; when, happening to pay a visit to Mr John Pitt || and his lady, they, on hearing of his embarrass-

|| A gentleman of fortune in Dorsetshire, who honoured Dr Beattie, in a particular manner, with his friendship, and to whose kind intentions, in his favour, it will be seen hereafter, that he was much indebted.

thing farther of the pension, until the 20th August, when he received a letter from Lord North's secretary, informing him officially, by his lordship's desire, that the King had been pleased to consent to a pension of two hundred pounds a-year being paid to him.

Thus, at length, he saw happily accomplished the object of the wishes of his friends and his own, by this provision, which his Majesty had been graciously pleased to make for him, and which, though not such as to place him in great affluence, was yet amply sufficient, with the emoluments of his professorship, for all his wants; and, together with the profit to be derived from his writings, to render him independent.

If any thing could add to the satisfaction he naturally felt from this fortunate conclusion of his affairs, it was the distinguished honour he met with, before he left London, of a personal

ment, very kindly insisted on his accepting of the use of their post-chaise and four, to carry him the first stage on his road, where he could find post-horses for the rest of the way. ||

|| I state this account of the graduation of Oxford, from the MS. Diary, and from a letter to me, from Mr Williamson, who was present in the theatre on the occasion, and heard and saw the whole.

and private interview with his Majesty, at the palace at Kew.

Dr Beattie had been informed by Dr Majendie, who lived at Kew, and was often at the palace, that the King having asked some questions of the Doctor respecting him, and being told that he sometimes visited Dr Majendie there, his Majesty had desired to be informed the next time Dr Beattie was to be at Kew. What his Majesty's intentions were, Dr Majendie said he did not know ; but supposed the King intended to admit him to a private audience. A day was therefore fixed, on which Dr Beattie was to be at Dr Majendie's house, early in the morning, of which the Doctor was to give notice to his Majesty.— Of this interesting event, so honourable to Dr Beattie, I shall transcribe, in his own words, the account he has given in his Diary.

“ Tuesday, 24th August, set out for Dr Majendie's at Kew-Green. The Doctor told me, that he had not seen the King yesterday, but had left a note in writing, to intimate, that I was to be at his house to-day ; and that one of the King's pages had come to him this morning, to say, “ that his Majesty would see me a little after “ twelve.” At twelve, the Doctor and I went to

the King's house, at Kew. We had been only a few minutes in the hall, when the King and Queen came in from an airing; and, as they passed through the hall, the King called to me by name, and asked how long it was since I came from town. I answered, about an hour. "I shall see you," says he, "in a little." The Doctor and I waited a considerable time, (for the King was busy,) and then we were called into a large room, furnished as a library, where the King was walking about, and the Queen sitting in a chair. We were received in the most gracious manner possible, by both their Majesties. I had the honour of a conversation with them (nobody else being present, but Dr Majendie) for upwards of an hour, on a great variety of topics; in which both the King and Queen joined, with a degree of cheerfulness, affability, and ease, that was to me surprising, and soon dissipated the embarrassment which I felt at the beginning of the conference. They both complimented me, in the highest terms, on my "Essay," which, they said, was a book they always kept by them; and the King said he had one copy of it at Kew, and another in town, and immediately went and took it down from a shelf. I found it was the

second edition. "I never stole a book but one," said his Majesty, "and that was yours; (speaking to me) I stole it from the Queen, to give it to Lord Hertford to read." He had heard that the sale of Hume's 'Essays' had failed, since my book was published; and I told him what Mr Strahan had told me, in regard to that matter. He had even heard of my being in Edinburgh last summer, and how Mr Hume was offended on the score of my book. He asked many questions about the second part of the 'Essay,' and when it would be ready for the press. I gave him, in a short speech, an account of the plan of it; and said, my health was so precarious, I could not tell when it might be ready, as I had many books to consult before I could finish it; but, that if my health were good, I thought I might bring it to a conclusion in two or three years. He asked, how long I had been in composing my Essay? praised the caution with which it was written; and said, he did not wonder that it had employed me five or six years. He asked about my poems. I said, there was only one poem of my own, on which I set any value, (meaning the 'Minstrel') and that it was first published about the same time with the 'Essay.'

My other poems, I said, were incorrect, being but juvenile pieces, and of little consequence, even in my own opinion. We had much conversation on moral subjects; from which both their Majesties let it appear, that they were warm friends to Christianity; and so little inclined to infidelity, that they could hardly believe that any thinking man could really be an atheist, unless he could bring himself to believe, that he made himself; a thought which pleased the King exceedingly; and he repeated it several times to the Queen. He asked, whether any thing had been written against me. I spoke of the late pamphlet, of which I gave an account, telling him, that I never had met with any man who had read it, except one Quaker. This brought on some discourse about the Quakers, whose moderation, and mild behaviour, the King and Queen commended. I was asked many questions about the Scots universities; the revenues of the Scots clergy; their mode of praying and preaching; the medical college of Edinburgh; Dr Gregory, (of whom I gave a particular character,) and Dr Cullen; the length of our vacation at Aberdeen, and the closeness of our attendance during the winter; the number of students that attend my lectures; my mode of

lecturing, whether from notes, or completely written lectures; about Mr Hume, and Dr Robertson, and Lord Kinnoull, and the Archbishop of York, &c. &c. &c. His Majesty asked what I thought of my new acquaintance, Lord Dartmouth? I said, there was something in his air and manner, which I thought not only agreeable, but enchanting, and that he seemed to me to be one of the best of men; a sentiment in which both their Majesties heartily joined. "They say that Lord Dartmouth is an enthusiast," said the King, "but surely he says nothing on the subject of religion, but what every Christian may, and ought to say." He asked, whether I did not think the English language on the decline at present? I answered in the affirmative; and the King agreed, and named the 'Spectator' as one of the best standards of the language. When I told him that the Scots clergy sometimes prayed a quarter, or even half-an-hour, at a time, he asked, whether that did not lead them into repetitions? I said, it often did. "That," said he, "I don't like in prayers; and excellent as our liturgy is, I think it somewhat faulty in that respect." "Your Majesty knows," said I, "that three services are joined in one, in the ordinary

“ church-service, which is one cause of those re-
“ petitions.” “ True,” he replied, “ and that cir-
“ cumstance also makes the service too long.”
From this, he took occasion to speak of the
composition of the church-liturgy; on which
he very justly bestowed the highest commenda-
tion. “ Observe;” his Majesty said, “ how flat
“ those occasional prayers are, that are now com-
“ posed, in comparison with the old ones.” When
I mentioned the smallness of the church-livings
in Scotland, he said, “ he wondered how men of
“ liberal education would chuse to become clergy-
“ men there;” and asked, “ whether, in the re-
“ mote parts of the country, the clergy, in gene-
“ ral, were not very ignorant?” I answered, “ No,
“ for that education was very cheap in Scotland,
“ and that the clergy, in general, were men of
“ good sense, and competent learning.” He ask-
ed, whether we had any good preachers at Aber-
deen? I said, yes, and named Campbell and Ge-
rard, with whose names, however, I did not find
that he was acquainted. Dr Majendie mention-
ed Dr Oswald’s ‘ Appeal,’ with commendation;
I praised it too; and the Queen took down the
name, with a view to send for it. I was asked,
whether I knew Dr Oswald? I answered, I did

not; and said, that my book was published before I read his; that Dr O. was well known to Lord Kinnoull, who had often proposed to make us acquainted. We discussed a great many other topics; for the conversation, as before observed, lasted for upwards of an hour, without any intermission. The Queen bore a large share in it. Both the King and her Majesty showed a great deal of good sense, acuteness, and knowledge, as well as of good nature and affability. At last, the King took out his watch, (for it was now almost three o'clock, his hour of dinner,) which Dr Majendie and I took as a signal to withdraw. We accordingly bowed to their Majesties, and I addressed the King in these words: "I hope, Sir, your Majesty will pardon me, if I take this opportunity to return you my humble and most grateful acknowledgments, for the honour you have been pleased to confer upon me." He immediately answered, "I think I could do no less for a man, who has done so much service to the cause of Christianity. I shall always be glad of an opportunity to show the good opinion I have of you." The Queen sate all the while, and the King stood, sometimes walking about a little. Her Majesty speaks the English

language with surprising elegance, and little or nothing of a foreign accent. There is something wonderfully captivating in her manner; so that if she were only of the rank of a private gentlewoman, one could not help taking notice of her, as one of the most agreeable women in the world. Her face is much more pleasing than any of her pictures; and in the expression of her eyes, and in her smile, there is something peculiarly engaging. When the Doctor and I came out, "Pray," said I, "how did I behave? Tell me honestly, for I am not accustomed to conversations of this kind." "Why, perfectly well," answered he, "and just as you ought to do."—"Are you sure of that?" said I.—"As sure," he replied, "as of my own existence: and you may be assured of it too, when I tell you, that if there had been any thing in your manner or conversation, which was not perfectly agreeable, your conference would have been at an end in eight or ten minutes at most." The Doctor afterwards told me, that it was a most uncommon thing for a private man, and a commoner, to be honoured with so long an audience. I dined with Dr and Mrs Majendie, and their fa-

mily, and returned to town in the evening, very much pleased with the occurrences of the day.”*

To close the account of the honours he received, at this time, in England, I must not omit to add the very high and pleasing compliment paid to him by Sir Joshua Reynolds, who requested Dr Beattie to sit for his picture, which that eminent master of painting executed in a manner that did equal credit to himself, and to Dr Beattie. For, not contented with his portrait merely, in the usual form, Sir Joshua, whose classical taste is well known, himself suggested the idea of an allegorical painting, which he actually finished, of admirable design, and exquisite skill in the execution. In this inestimable piece, which exhibits an exact resemblance of Dr Beattie's countenance, at that period, he is represented in the gown of Doctor of Laws, with which he had been so recently invested at Oxford.

* MS. Diary, 24th August, 1773.

Close to the portrait, the artist has introduced an Angel, holding, in one hand, a pair of scales, as if weighing Truth in the balance, and, with the other hand, pushing down three hideous figures, supposed to represent, Sophistry, Scepticism, and Infidelity; * in allusion to Dr Beattie's 'Essay,' which had been the foundation of all his fame, and all the distinction that had been paid to him. The likeness of Dr Beattie was most striking; and nothing can exceed the beauty of the angel. The whole composition, as well as execution, is in the very best manner of that inimitable painter. And it has had the good fortune, not always the case with Sir Joshua's pieces, masterly as they are in every other respect, of preserving the colouring, which is as beautiful, at this distance of upwards of thirty years, as it was at first, with as much of mellowness only, as one could desire.

* Because one of these was a lean figure, and the other a fat one, people of lively imaginations pleased themselves with finding in them the portraits of Voltaire, and Mr Hume. But Sir Joshua, I have reason to believe, had no such thought, when he painted those figures. Dr Beattie, in one of his letters, says, the figures represent Prejudice, Scepticism, and Folly, who are shrinking away from the light of the Sun, that beams on the breast of the Angel.

Of this admirable performance Sir Joshua was pleased to make Dr Beattie a present, of which he was very justly proud. * Sir Joshua Reynolds, indeed, had a great friendship for Dr Beattie, and paid him much attention, frequently entertaining him, both in town, and at his house on Richmond Hill; and testifying, by every means in his power, the admiration he felt of his genius and talents, and the opinion he held of the service he had rendered to the world by his writings. While Dr Beattie, on the other hand, loved Sir Joshua, for the amiable simplicity of his manners and character, and justly admired the masterly productions of his pencil, as well as duly appreciated his merit, in the composition of those truly classical discourses, which he delivered to the students at the Royal Academy.

How properly he estimated the various talents of Sir Joshua Reynolds, will be seen by the fol-

* This fine piece of painting, which Dr Beattie preserved with the utmost care, keeping it always covered with a green silk curtain, he left to his niece, Mrs Glennie, in whose possession it now is. A mezzotinto print was done from it, by Watson, when it was first painted. And the excellent engraving, prefixed to this work, will give some faint idea of the picture, as well as of Dr Beattie, to those who have not had the opportunity of seeing the originals.

lowing character, which he has drawn of him in his diary. I transcribe it in his own words; because, being a private record, merely of his thoughts, not meant for any eye but his own, it may be relied on, as speaking the genuine language of his heart.

“ Sunday, 15th August, we proposed (Dr and Mrs Beattie) to have gone yesterday to Arno’s Grove, but Sir Joshua Reynolds insisted on it, that we should stay till to-morrow, and partake of a haunch of venison with him to-day, at his house on Richmond Hill. Accordingly, at eleven, Mrs Beattie, Miss Reynolds, Mr Barette, and Mr Palmer, set out, in Sir Joshua’s coach, for Richmond. At twelve, he and I went in a post-chaise, and by the way paid a visit to the Bishop of Chester, who was very earnest for us to fix a day for dining with him; but I could not fix one just now, on account of the present state of my affairs. After dining at Richmond, we all returned to town, about eight o’clock. This day I had a great deal of conversation with Sir Joshua Reynolds, on critical and philosophical subjects. I find him to be a man, not only of excellent taste in painting and poetry, but of an enlarged understanding, and truly philosophical mind. His no-

tions of painting are not at all the same with those that are entertained by the generality of painters and critics. Artificial and contrasted attitudes, and groupes, he makes no account of; it is the truth and simplicity of nature, which he is ambitious to imitate; and these, it must be allowed, he possesses the art of blending with the most exquisite grace, the most animated expression. He speaks with contempt of those, who suppose grace to consist in erect posture, turned-out toes, or the frippery of modern dress. Indeed, whatever account we make of the colouring of this great artist, (which some people object to,) it is impossible to deny him the praise of being the greatest 'designer' of this, or perhaps of any age. In his pictures there is a grace, a variety, an expression, a simplicity, which I have never seen in the works of any other painter. His portraits are distinguished from all others by this, that they exhibit an exact imitation, not only of the features, but also of the character of the person represented. His picture of Garrick, between tragedy and comedy, he tells me, he finished in a week."

Dr Beattie has also strongly marked his high admiration of Sir Joshua Reynolds, in his 'Essay

on Poetry and Music,* by joining his name with that of no less a painter than Raphael. Praising those two great masters, for taking their models from general nature, and avoiding, as far as possible (at least in all their great performances) those peculiarities that derive their beauty from mere fashion, he adds, "that on this account their
" works must give pleasure, and appear elegant,
" as long as men are capable of forming general
" ideas, and of judging from them. The last
" mentioned incomparable artist, (meaning Sir
" Joshua Reynolds,) is particularly observant of
" children," says Dr Beattie, " whose looks and
" attitudes, being less under the controul of art,
" and local manners, are more characteristical of
" the species, than those of men and women,
" This field of observation," Dr Beattie continues,
" supplied him with many fine figures, particular-
" ly that most exquisite one of Comedy, strug-
" gling for, and winning (for who can resist her?)
" the affections of Garrick;—a figure which
" could never have occurred to the imagination
" of a painter, who had confined his views to
" grown persons, looking and moving in all the

* Part I. ch. iii. p. 393. ed. in 4to.

“formality of polite life;—a figure which, in all ages and countries, would be pronounced natural and engaging.”

“Monday, 16th August, breakfasted with Sir Joshua Reynolds, who this day began the allegorical picture. I sate to him five hours, in which time he finished my head, and sketched out the rest of my figure. The likeness is most striking, and the execution masterly. The figure is as large as life. The plan is not yet fixed for the rest of the picture. Though I sate five hours, I was not in the least fatigued; for, by placing a large mirror opposite to my face, Sir Joshua Reynolds put it in my power to see every stroke of his pencil; and I was greatly entertained to observe the progress of the work, and the easy and masterly manner of the artist, which differs as much from that of all the other painters I have seen at work, as the execution of Giardini on the violin differs from that of a common fidler. Mrs B. and I dined with Sir Joshua.”*

* MS. Diary, 15th and 16th August, 1773. To the character of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr Johnson, whose intimate and beloved friend he was, bore the most emphatic testimony, when he declared him to be “the most invulnerable man he knew:

At length, having obtained at the Treasury the warrant for his pension, and gone down to Sandford-Priory to bid adieu to Mrs Montagu, and to Arno's Grove to take leave of Sir William and Lady Mayne, Mrs Beattie and he set out on their return to Scotland, and arrived in Aberdeen on the 30th September, 1773; after an absence of somewhat more than five months.

“whom, if he should quarrel with him, he should find the most difficulty how to abuse.”

To that great artist, and excellent man, whose house, one of our mutual friends § has well denominated “the common centre of union for the great, the accomplished, the learned, and the ingenious,” I must equally pay my grateful acknowledgments for the uninterrupted friendship with which he honoured me, as well as for an introduction to the notice of some distinguished characters, to whom I should not otherwise have had the means of being known. ||

Sir Joshua Reynolds died in London, 23d February, 1792, aged 68.

§ Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Vol. I. Ded. p. ii. iii.

|| Ditto, Vol. III. p. 83, 84. Ed. 3d. 8vo. 1790.

I shall insert here some of Dr Beattie's correspondence, during his stay in England. In these letters will be found some details, confirming the account which I have given of Dr Beattie's visit to London, but which I forbore inserting at their proper dates, that I might not interrupt the course of the narrative.

LETTER LXV.

THE DUCHESS-DOWAGER OF PORTLAND TO
DR BEATTIE.

Bullstrode, 13th July, 1773.

I take the first moment to return you my best thanks for the favour of your letter I have just received, as well as that of last week. The University have done themselves great honour, and I am glad the manner was agreeable. You must give me leave to differ from you in regard to yourself, but modesty is always the attendant on

superior merit. Lord Dartmouth is not only valuable but amiable; your success will, I dare say, give him as much pleasure as to any of your well-wishers, in which number I hope you will allow me to subscribe myself, with the greatest esteem, &c. &c. &c.

“ Mrs Delany * desires her best compliments

* Mrs Delany's maiden name was Granville, the granddaughter of the gallant Sir Bevil Granville, the faithful adherent of King Charles I.; for whose service, by his own popularity, jointly with other royalist gentlemen in Cornwall, an army was raised at their expence, which he led into the west of England; but was unfortunately killed in the battle of Lausdown, near Bath, on the 5th July, 1643. †

Mrs Delany was first married to ——— Pendarves, Esq. a Cornish gentleman. Her second husband was the Reverend Dr Delany, Dean of Down, in Ireland, and the chosen friend of Swift. She long survived her husband; and, during many years, was the esteemed and intimate companion of the Duchess-Dowager of Portland, who generally spent her evenings, when in London, at Mrs Delany's, where was an assemblage of persons, the most distinguished for rank, as well as literary accomplishments. In return, Mrs Delany passed her summers with the Duchess of Portland at Bullstrode.

From a romantic and useless stretch of, what she no doubt considered to be, disinterested friendship, she had insisted, that the Duchess of Portland should not make any provision for her in her will, notwithstanding she was far from being in opulent circumstances; so that, on the death of the Duchess, Mrs De-

† Clarendon. Vol: II. Part I. pp. 130. 281, Ed. in 8vo.

to you and Mrs Beattie; I beg you will make mine acceptable to her, and I hope that I shall soon have the pleasure of seeing you both at Bullstode."

lany found herself reduced to a very circumscribed income : But, to the credit of their Majesties, to whom Mrs Delany had the honour of being well known, by her residence at the Duchess of Portland's, whom the King and Queen often visited at Bullstode, in the course of their morning-airings from Windsor Castle, as soon as they were informed of Mrs Delany's situation, on the Duchess of Portland's death, they established her in a house at Windsor, with a pension of three hundred pounds a-year.

Mrs Delany was a woman of a cultivated understanding and refined taste, and particularly skilled in drawing and painting in oil. She executed, likewise, an herbal, or collection of plants, formed of coloured paper, so exactly resembling nature, as to be almost a deception, even to adepts in botanical science. Her collection amounted to the astonishing number of nine hundred and ninety, which it was her intention, had she lived, to have augmented to one thousand. The collection is now in the possession of her nephew, Barnard D'Ewes, Esq. of Welsburn, in Warwickshire.

Mrs Delany died in the year 1788, at the advanced age of eighty-eight.

LETTER LXVI.

. DR BEATTIE TO DR PORTEUS.

London, 23d July, 1 77

“ I have been very much hurried of late by a variety of interesting matters, otherwise I should have sooner acknowledged the receipt of your most obliging letter of the 1st of July. The many favours I have had the honour to receive at your hands, affect me with the most lively gratitude, which I would fain attempt to express in words, but find, after repeated trials, that I cannot. All therefore that I shall now say on this subject is, that I shall ever cherish a most grateful remembrance of them.

“ The business which I hinted at in my last still remains undetermined; and I, of consequence, am still confined to this town, or, at least, to the neighbourhood. I thank you for your good wishes; but I fear you far over-rate my talents when you suppose, that London is the properest theatre for exerting them in. One thing at least is in my power,—to employ, in whatever place

Providence shall allot me, those intervals of health and leisure which may fall to my share, in vindicating, to the utmost of my poor abilities, the cause of truth, virtue, and mankind. If I shall be able to do any thing good in this way, my ambition will be completely gratified; and I shall have the satisfaction to think, that I am not altogether unworthy of the kindness and attention which I have met with from you, sir, and from others of your noble-minded countrymen.

“ You have heard, perhaps, of my being at Oxford at the late installation. I went thither in consequence of a letter from the Bishop of Chester.* The university did me great honour. They were unanimous, not only in conferring the degree, but also ordering that it should be given to me free of all expence.

“ I have not seen the poem you mention. Dr Hawkesworth’s book I have seen, and read some parts of it. I do not think that the interests of science, or of mankind, will be much promoted by what I have read of this work; which, however, does not reflect on the Doctor, who was no

* Dr Markham, now Archbishop of York.

doubt obliged to tell his story in the very way in which he has told it. I am very apt to be distrustful of our modern travellers, when I find them, after a three months residence in a country, of whose language they know next to nothing, explaining the moral and religious notions of the people, in such a way as to favour the licentious theories of the age. I give them full credit for what they tell us of plants and minerals, and winds, and tides; those things are obvious enough, and no knowledge of strange language is necessary to make one understand them: but as the morality of actions depends on the motives that give rise to them; and as it is impossible to understand the motives and principles of national customs, unless you thoroughly understand the language of the people, I should suspect, that not one in ten thousand of our ordinary travellers is qualified to decide upon the moral sentiments of a new discovered country. There is not one French author of my acquaintance, that seems to have any tolerable knowledge of the English government, or of the character of the English nation:—they ascribe to us sentiments which we never entertained; they draw, from our ordinary behaviour, conclusions

directly contrary to truth;—how then is it to be supposed, that Mr Banks and Mr Solander could understand the customs, the religion, government, and morals, of the people of Otaheite?

“ Dr Hawkesworth, in his preface, has given an account of Providence, which, in spite of all my partiality in his favour, I cannot help thinking indefensible. But I need not say any thing on this subject, as you must have seen the whole passage in the newspapers. When my affairs are determined, which I hope will be soon, I shall take the liberty to write to you again.”

LETTER LXVII.

MRS MONTAGU TO DR BEATTIE.

Sandleford, 14th July, 1773.

“ It is not possible to express the pleasure I felt from your letter last night. It is not on your account alone I rejoice in the honours and marks of distinction and applause you received at Oxford: I congratulate the university, I congratulate the age, on the zeal with which they pay regard to merit.

“ I am here, at present, quite alone, which comes nearest to the happiness one finds in the society of those one loves best. Such perfect solitude is not good, but in very fine weather; solitude is a fine thing, says a French writer, but one wants a friend to whom one can say, solitude is a fine thing. The gayest place of resort is still enlivened by the presence of a friend; and a friend does not diminish the tranquillity of retirement. I am not sure, that one should not find one's self in a more uneasy state of destitution, in the midst of a great town, in which one had not any very intimate friends, than when quite alone in the country. Where there are no enemies, one does not stand in need of allies, nor, where there are no dangers, of any auxiliaries. The little natives of the woods and meadows act in constant conformity to the laws of their nature; and when you have informed yourself of the qualities of the species, you are thoroughly acquainted with each individual. Here we have no caprices of the disposition, or peculiarities of interest, to attend to, and to fear. In this security the mind is free from little cares, and at leisure to contemplate the system of infinite wisdom and goodness, whose laws equally regulate

the little course of the creeping insect, and the vast orbit of the rolling spheres. There is not any thing that more strongly impresses upon the mind a sense of the perpetual presence of the Deity, than seeing things, void of intelligence in themselves, ever progressing, without halt or deviation, error or untowardness, to complete their peculiar destination, and conspire with the laws which pervade the universal system. In these contemplations I have passed the long summer days, since I came hither, without feeling any *ennui*; yet I am not a disciple of the philosophers, *à quatre pattes*, who recommend savage life. I think it as great an abuse of philosophy, as of the human form, to stoop to the level of the brute animals. Philosophy is a holy thing, should keep erect, look up to heaven, contemplate the stars, and adore their Maker. Seasons of recess and retirement are good for the mind, and give time to reflect on what we have done, and what we ought to do. Dr Beattie will give a voice to all the mute objects I now admire, and lead me farther in virtue and wisdom than I can advance by myself; so he must excuse my being impatient to see him.

“ I wish very much for your being presented to the Queen ; I take her to be a sovereign judge of merit, and I do not doubt of her being as gracious to you as his Majesty, and with the same elegance and propriety of manner. As I have a most loyal respect for the King, I have always taken great delight in the peculiar elegance of his language. It is a very essential thing in such great personages, whose words are always remembered, often repeated. I am extremely pleased with the obliging attentions the Bishop of Chester* showed to you ; his regard does honour. He is much respected.”

LETTER LXVIII.

DR BEATTIE TO MRS MONTAGU.

Arno's Grove, 26th July, 1773.

“ Your most obliging and most excellent letter of the 14th current, bore the impression of Socrates on the outside, † but judgment, better

* The present Lord Archbishop of York.

† This letter was sealed with a head of Socrates.

than that of Socrates, spoke within. He, if I mistake not, piqued himself on having constantly resided in Athens, and used to say, that he found no instruction in stones or trees; but you, Madam, better skilled in the human heart, and more thoroughly acquainted with all its sublimer affections, do justly consider that quiet which the country affords, and those soothing and elevating sentiments which “rural sights and rural sounds” so powerfully inspire, as necessary to purify the soul, and raise it to the contemplation of the first and greatest good. Yet, I think, you rightly determine, that absolute solitude is not good for us. The social affections must be cherished, if we would keep both mind and body in good health. The virtues are all so nearly allied, and sympathise so strongly with each other, that if one is borne down, all the rest feel it, and have a tendency to pine away. The more we love one another, the more we shall love our Maker; and if we fail in duty to our Common Parent, our brethren of mankind will soon discover that we fail in duty to them also.

“In my younger days I was much attached to solitude, and could have envied even “The shepherd of the Hebride isles, placed far amid

“the melancholy main.” I wrote Odes to Retirement; and wished to be conducted to its deepest groves, remote from every rude sound, and from every vagrant foot. In a word, I thought the most profound solitude the best; but I have now changed my mind. Those solemn and incessant energies of imagination, which naturally take place in such a state, are fatal to the health and spirits, and tend to make us more and more unfit for the business of life: the soul, deprived of those ventilations of passion, which arise from social intercourse, is reduced to a state of stagnation, and, if she is not of a very pure consistence indeed, will be apt to breed within herself many “monstrous, and many prodigious things,” of which she will find it no easy matter to rid herself, even when she has become sensible of their noxious nature.”

LETTER LXIX.

DR BEATTIE TO MRS MONTAGU.

London, 21st August, 1773.

“ I have at last received a letter from Mr Robinson, * dated yesterday, in which he tells me, “ that he is desired by Lord North to inform me, “ that his Majesty has been pleased to consent, “ that a pension be paid me of two hundred “ pounds a-year.” Mr Robinson says, he will order the warrant to be made out for me immediately, and desires me to call for it at the treasury ; which I shall do on Monday.

“ And now, madam, allow me to congratulate you on the happy conclusion of this affair ; for sure I am, you will take as much pleasure in it as I do. You may believe, I shall never forget from whom this long series of applications took its rise. But I shall not at present enter on this subject. I fear it will not be in my power to set out for Sandleford till towards the end of the

* At that time secretary of the treasury.

week, as I have the warrant to get from the treasury, the court to attend, and a multitude of letters to write, to the Archbishop of York, Lord Kinnoull, Sir Adolphus Oughton, Lord North, &c. &c. As soon as I can possibly fix a time for setting out, I will write to you. Meantime, I beg to hear some account of your health.

“ It is very good in you, madam, to flatter me with the hopes, that still better things may be in reserve for me. But I assure you, I think myself rewarded above my deservings, and shall most willingly sit down contented: not to eat, or drink, or be idle, but to make such a use of the goodness of Providence, and his Majesty’s bounty, as the public has a right to require of me. What I have now got, added to the emoluments of my present office, will enable me to live independently and comfortably in Scotland, and to cultivate those connections and friendships in England, which do me so much honour. But more of this, when I have the happiness to see you.

“ I am ashamed to send you so shabby a letter, all made up of shreds and patches. It is by mistake, owing to hurry, that I write on so many bits of paper; but as the post is just going out, I

have no time to transcribe; and I would not keep back this intelligence for a single day.

“ I have another piece of news to tell you, which will give you pleasure. Sir Joshua Reynolds, with whom I formerly told you that I have the happiness to be particularly acquainted, and whose talents, both as a painter, and as a critic and philosopher, I take to be of the very first rate, has planned out a sort of allegorical picture, representing the triumph of truth over scepticism and infidelity. At one corner of the picture, in the foreground, stands your humble servant, as large as life, arrayed in a doctor of laws' gown and band, with his “ Essay on Truth” under his arm. At some little distance appears “ Truth,” habited as an angel, with a sun on her breast, who is to act such a part with respect to the sceptic and infidel, as shall show, that they are not willing to see the light, though they have the opportunity. My face (for which I sat) is finished, and is a most striking likeness; only, I believe, it will be allowed, that Sir Joshua is more liberal in the articles of *spirit* and *elegance* than his friend Nature thought proper to be. The angel also is finished, and is an admirable figure: and Sir Joshua is determined to complete

the whole with all expedition, and to have a print done from it. He is very happy in this invention, which is entirely his own. Indeed, if I had been qualified to give any hints on the subject, (which is not at all the case) you will readily believe, that I would not be instrumental in forwarding a work that is so very flattering to me. The picture will appear at the Exhibition; but whether Sir Joshua means to keep it, or dispose of it, is not, I believe, determined."

LETTER LXX.

DR BEATTIE TO THE EARL OF KINNOULL.

London, 29th August, 1773.

"Mrs Montagu's state of health is very indifferent; she complains of a feverish disorder, which has haunted her the greatest part of the summer. She is greatly afflicted at the death of our great and good friend, Lord Lyttelton. This event was unexpected; it is little better than a fortnight since I received a very kind letter from him. The loss to his friends, and to society, is unspeakable, and irreparable: to himself his death

is infinite gain; for whether we consider what he felt here, or what he hoped for hereafter, we must admit, that no man ever had more reason to wish for a dismissal from the evils of this transitory life. His lordship died, as he lived, a most illustrious example of every Christian virtue. His last breath was spent in comforting and instructing his friends. “Be good and virtuous,” said he, to Lord Valentia, * “for know that to this you must come.” The devout and chearful resignation that occupied his mind during his illness, did not forsake him in the moment of dissolution, but fixed a smile on his lifeless countenance. I sincerely sympathise with your Lordship on the loss of this excellent man. Since I came last to town, I have had the honour and happiness to pass many an hour in his company, and to converse with him on all subjects: and I hope I shall be the better, while I live, for what I have seen, and what I have heard, of Lord Lyttelton.”

* His son-in-law.

LETTER LXXI.

THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF YORK * TO DR BEATTIE.

Brodsworth, September 11th, 1773.

“ Your letter, which gave me the pleasure of hearing of his Majesty’s benevolence to you, went to Scotland, just as I left it, and came back here, t’other day; otherwise I should appear very tardy, in expressing the sensible satisfaction which I have, in your being rewarded, though not to the full of your merit, yet by a personal mark of the King’s favour, and well-grounded opinion.

“ I look upon this, not only as a distinguished reward of your merit, in the cause of virtue and truth, but as a beacon to those who are tossed about among the waves of infidelity. I believe, as I hope, that it will, in a *general* light, *do good*; and *that* is the great purpose of the King; which he declared *to me*, when he first came to the crown; and you are one happy instrument, that carries

* The Honourable and Most Reverend Dr Robert Hay Drummond, brother to the Earl of Kinnoull, at that time Lord Archbishop of York.

this purpose forward, by your constant labours in defence of truth.

“ I hope this pension will make you tolerably easy; whether it will so far procure your comfort, as that you should relinquish other views, you best know. I am clear, that this was the right plan at present, as the circumstances and opportunities presented themselves.

“ I wrote to Lord Kinnoull, as soon as I got your letter, and it will give him great pleasure. I have since seen ————— who is much pleased, both upon your account, and the service it may do to many people, particularly in Scotland, who run astray.

“ I am sorry you give so indifferent an account of my excellent friend, Mrs Montagu; and rather a poor one of your own, and Mrs Beattie's health.

“ Don't drop your correspondence, which will be always agreeable to me.”

LETTER LXXII.

DR BEATTIE TO MRS MONTAGU.

Aberdeen, 15th October, 1773.

“ I purposely delayed for a few days to answer your letter, that I might be at leisure to think seriously, before I should venture to give my opinion, in regard to the important matter, about which you did me the honour to consult me. A religious education is indeed the greatest of all earthly blessings to a young man; especially in these days, when one is in such danger of receiving impressions of a contrary tendency. I hope, and earnestly wish, that this, and every other blessing, may be the lot of your nephew, who seems to be accomplished, and promising, far beyond his years.

“ I must confess, I am strongly prepossessed in favour of that mode of education that takes place in the English universities. I am well aware, at the same time, that in those seminaries, there are, to some young men, many more temptations to idleness and dissipation, than in our

colleges in Scotland; but there are also, if I mistake not, better opportunities of study to a studious young man, and the advantages of a more respectable and more polite society, to such as are discreet and sober. The most valuable parts of human literature, I mean the Greek and Latin classics, are not so completely taught in Scotland as in England; and I fear it is no advantage, I have sometimes known it a misfortune, to those young men of distinction that come to study with us, that they find too easy, and too favourable an admittance to balls, assemblies, and other diversions of a like kind, where the fashion not only permits, but requires, that a particular attention be paid to the younger part of the female world. A youth of fortune, with the English language, and English address, soon becomes an object of consideration to a raw girl; and equally so, perhaps, though not altogether on the same account, to her parents. Our long vacations, too, in the colleges in Scotland, though a convenience to the native student, (who commonly spends those intervals at home with his parents,) are often dangerous to the students from England; who being then set free from the restraints of academical discipline, and at a dis-

tance from their parents or guardians, are too apt to forget, that it was for the purpose of study, not of amusement, they were sent into this country.

“ All, or most of these inconveniences, may be avoided at an English university, provided a youth have a discreet tutor, and be himself of a sober and studious disposition. There, classical erudition receives all the attentions and honours it can claim; and there the French philosophy, of course, is seldom held in very high estimation; there, at present, a regard to religion is fashionable; there, the recluseness of a college-life, the wholesome severities of academical discipline, the authority of the university, and several other circumstances I could mention, prove very powerful restraints to such of the youth as have any sense of true honour, or any regard to their real interest.

“ We, in Scotland, boast of our professors, that they give regular lectures in all the sciences, which the students are obliged to attend; a part of literary economy which is but little attended to in the universities of England. But I will venture to affirm, from experience, that if a professor does no more than deliver a set of lectures,

his young audience will be little the wiser for having attended him. The most profitable part of my time is that which I employ in examinations, or in Socratical dialogue with my pupils, or in commenting upon ancient authors, all which may be done by a tutor in a private apartment, as well as by a professor in a public school. Lectures indeed I do, and must give; in order to add solemnity to the truths I would inculcate; and partly too, in compliance with the fashion, and for the sake of my own character; (for this, though not the most difficult part of our business, is that which shows the speaker to most advantage,) but I have always found the other methods, particularly the Socratic form of dialogue, much more effectual in fixing the attention, and improving the faculties of the student.

“ I will not, madam, detain you longer with this comparison: it is my duty to give you my real sentiments, and you will be able to gather them from these imperfect hints. If it is determined that your nephew shall be sent to a university in Scotland, he may, I believe, have as good a chance for improvement at Edinburgh or Glasgow, as at any other: if the law is to form any part of his studies, he ought, by all means,

to go to one or other of these places ; as we have no law-professors in any other part of this kingdom, except one in King's College, Aberdeen, whose office has been a sinecure for several generations. Whether he should make choice of Edinburgh or of Glasgow, I am at a loss to say : I was formerly well enough acquainted with the professors of both those societies, but, *tempora mutantur*. Dr Reid is a very learned, ingenious, and worthy man, so is Dr Blair ; they are both clergymen ; so that, I am confident, your nephew might lodge safely and profitably with either. Whether they would choose to accept of the office of tutor to any young gentleman, they themselves only can determine ; some professors would decline it, on account of the laboriousness of their office : it is partly on this account, but chiefly on account of my health, that I have been obliged to decline every offer of this sort."

LETTER LXXIII.

MRS MONTAGU * TO DR BEATTIE.

Sandleford, September 5th, 1772.

“ Pray have you met with Mr Jones’s imitations of the Asiatic poetry? He possesses the oriental languages in a very extraordinary manner, and he seems to me a great master of versification. I wish he had given us translations, rather than imitations, as one is curious to see the manner of thinking of a people born under so different a climate, educated in such a different manner, and subjects of so different a government. There is a gaiety and splendour in the poems, which is naturally derived from the happy soil and climate of the poets, and they breathe Asiatic luxury, or else Mr Jones is himself a man of a most splendid imagination. The descriptions are so fine, and all the objects so brilliant, *that the sense akes at them*, and I wished that Os-

* This letter should have been inserted at p. 302. before Letter LVII. which is in answer to it.

sian's Poems had been laying by me, that I might sometimes have turned my eyes, from the dazzling splendour of the eastern noonday, to the moonlight picture of a bleak mountain. Every object in these Asiatic pieces is blooming and beautiful; every plant is odoriferous; the passions, too, are of the sort which belong to paradise. These things, as rarities brought from Arabia Felix, would give one great pleasure; but, when I am not sure they are not the dreams of a man, who is shivering under a hawthorn hedge, in a north-east wind, I cannot resign myself enough to the delusion, to sympathise with them. Mr Jones has written some critical dissertations at the end of his poems, which, I think, shew him a man of good taste."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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