

It is well known that Warburton had a low opinion of his cotemporaries. "Learning," he says, "is in England in a most deplorable condition,—\* \* \*—the truth is, there being with us large honours for men of learned professions, and nothing for men of learning, it is no wonder that men should turn all their studies to those arts, which (to distinguish them from those termed liberal) we call *the arts of rising*. Whereas with you, there being little encouragement to the learned professions, learned men are not tempted off from letters, which is the reason why, at this time, every branch of science flourishes better in the north than in the south. For what would a warm sun signify to plants, in a country where it only nourished weeds? The most it would do, would be but making the plants degenerate into weeds." Sometime after this, Warburton says in another letter, "I am pleased too with your new choice." (That of being a preacher.)—"On another account,—you will now be at leisure\* to digest those just and noble thoughts which you have on the most important subject of antiquity, and I beg leave to urge and press you to pursue them. One who can write with that learning, precision, and force of reason, with which you confuted Campbell, ought never to have his pen out of his hand. \* \* \* What you tell me of your resolution not to write any more on the subject I so much recommend to you, gives me real concern; and will continue to do so, till you give me to understand that you have something of an important nature, though of another kind, in projection. For you have talents to be of great use in this way in God's Church; and I shall always think you misuse them, if you do not employ them in this more public method of instruction."

Dr. Erskine was licensed to preach the gospel by the Presbytery of Dunblane, in 1743.—He preached his first sermon in the Parish Church of Torricburn, of which he was afterwards patron. The text from which he preached may be held as expressive of his devoted attachment to the work on which he was now

entering:—"For a day in thy Courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."—Psalm, 84, 10. Though Dr. Erskine's family connections were sufficient to ensure him respect wherever he preached, such was his christian simplicity, that he never seemed to value himself at all, on matters of this sort. He sought to be faithful in his high calling,—the sermon he now preached was wholly of this character, and it drew to him the hearts of all classes of his hearers,—they loved him for the truth's sake that was in him. It appears that the parishioners of Tulliallan, where one of his father's estates lay, and of which he was patron, being vacant, petitioned, along with the ministers of the Presbytery, that he might be settled among them. Dr. Erskine, however, as well as his father, were both averse to it, and he soon afterwards accepted the parish of Kirkintilloch. He was ordained in May, 1744, and as might have been expected, from his motives in choosing the ministry as his profession, he was diligent in the discharge of all the duties of a parochial minister,—such as preaching the word, catechising the young, visiting the sick, and the like. But here we shall introduce a brief episode, which falls in our way, in giving a narrative of his private history.

During the first two years of his residence at the manse of Kirkintilloch, he was unmarried, and his house we are told, was the resort of the companions of his youth. Among these was a pious student of divinity, Mr. James Hall, son of Sir James Hall of Dunglas. Mr. Hall had been intended for a mercantile life, but he abandoned it to devote himself to the service of the Church of Christ. There was an identity in their studies,—their zeal for the interests of godliness was similar, and they appear to have been otherwise much attached to each other.—They had met for the last time in Edinburgh, and the commotions of 1745 having broken out, Mr. Hall asked his friend to accompany him on a visit to the celebrated Colonel Gardiner, who was then residing at Stirling Castle. Dr. Erskine was desirous of proceeding to his duties at Kirkintilloch, and declined going. It appears, however, he often spoke of this with regret, as the Colonel shortly after fell in battle! The world is aptly styled a vale of tears,—Mr. Hall was soon after taken ill and died. His sorrowing friend published a few fragments of his writings, with a memoir. We give the follow-

\* It may be doubted if it holds true in Scotland, that a minister has what may be called leisure for other studies. In that country, every parish minister is a Bishop, and requires to discharge the duties of the office personally, Church rule not allowing any curate or other delegate.