

or 21, and received his early education in the City of Edinburgh. He seems to have entered the University in 1783, and in addition to the public instructions of the Professors, he enjoyed the benefit of a private tutor in Mr. Robert Bryce, afterwards Minister of Dron, in Perthshire, a man eminent both for scholarship and religious principle. It appears that Dr. Erskine had been a diligent student, by the sound knowledge of classical learning he possessed in subsequent years, and by the number of commonplace books which he filled up during his educational course. He wrote these in shorthand, and he left them in this state, without any key to decypher them, a circumstance which shews the simplicity of his aim in the prosecution of his studies, though much to be regretted in preventing us having a fuller illustration of his mental history. The subjects to which the attention of the student is directed, after the languages, are logic, and moral philosophy,—and the gentlemen who occupied these chairs, while Dr. Erskine was a student, appear to have been both of them accomplished and efficient teachers. We find him, in after years, expressing his sense of the gratitude he owed them for the benefit he derived from their labours. In these days, the logic chair took cognizance not only of its own proper subject, the teaching the young men to distinguish just reasoning from false, but it embraced rhetoric and metaphysics. Dr. Stevenson was the Professor of this Chair. He delivered original lectures of his own, but besides these, he supplemented the course with various text-books, a method of great importance in enabling a teacher to reach the understandings of *all* who attend his classes. It appears, indeed, that Dr. Stevenson's mode of teaching the young men, possessed the rare excellence of imbuing their minds with the love of study, and of preparing them to engage in professional duties. "The acuteness of the students," says Dr. Erskine, "was exercised by frequent opportunities given to them to impugn a philosophical thesis, and they were taught to apply to practice the rules of composition, in discourses prescribed on subjects connected with eloquence, logic, metaphysics, and the history of philosophy." The moral philosophy appears to have been confined strictly within its own province, the philosophy

of morals or duty,\* including its application to a community,—political economy being thus a legitimate department for the labours of the Professor. As it may be a subject of interest to some of our readers, we give Dr. Erskine's account of the manner in which the Professor conducted the class.

"Dr. (afterwards Sir John) Pringle, taught at the same time the Moral Philosophy class.—His lectures were not on so large a scale. He did not enter into curious disquisitions on the foundations of morality, or on the progress of society; and he soon dispatched what he chose to say on pneumatics and natural religion. His lectures were calculated for doing good, not for a display of his talents, or for gaining applause. They led his hearers to an acquaintance with the world, and to the knowledge of their own hearts. They taught them what dispositions are good, and just, and wise, and honourable. As far as reason goes, they delineated the paths by which individuals and families may probably reach safe and innocent enjoyments, and by which states acquire and preserve their prosperity. They warned the students against the dangers to which human virtue and happiness are exposed, and recommended various means for repelling them. Generously unwilling to grasp the honour to which, in his opinion, another had a juster claim, he often illustrated and confirmed his important remarks, on morals, on government, and on police, by reading long passages from Plutarch, Montaigne, Charon, Bacon, Sydney, Harrington, Molesworth, and others.

"To those students with whose proficiency he was best satisfied, he prescribed discourses, sometimes in English, and sometimes in Latin. Every one was allowed to compose on natural religion, morals, or politics, as his genius or inclination prompted him. But the particular subject was determined by lot. Many individuals from other classes attended when these discourses were delivered. That great encourager

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\* Dr. Chalmers, in his introductory lecture at St. Andrews, in the session of 1823—24, was the first to expound the propriety of thus defining the limits of moral philosophy. We have seen also, lately, in that excellent paper, the *Halifax Guardian*, some good observations on this subject.