

## DR. BEATTIE.

The subjoined traits of Dr. Beattie will interest the public:—

“IN the year 1767 Dr. Beattie married the daughter of Dr. James Dunn, the rector of the grammar school, by whom he had two sons, both of whom died before their father. It was soon after his marriage that he wrote the famous *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth*, which laid the foundation of the extensive reputation which he enjoyed as a man of letters, and was the means of procuring for him an introduction to royalty, and, when added to his other means, a comfortable independence for life. About this period the infidel writings of David Hume created a sensation in the country greater than perhaps any works, hostile to religion, which had previously appeared in this country, had done. Against the doctrines of Hume, Beattie wrote this essay, the object of which is, to shew that there are certain things which we must believe, though we may not be in a condition to prove their absolute truth, and that we are led to this belief by our common sense. The essay was finished in 1767, but was not given to the world till the year 1770. Between these years he had shewn it to Sir William Forbes and several others of his friends, who all highly approved of the manner and the ability with which he had handled his subject; and he himself had made various alterations and amendments upon it. The whole was ready for press by the autumn of 1769. Beattie, however, was disinclined to run the risk of publishing the work at his own expense, as he considered that it was not reasonable that he should suffer in his pecuniary interests for having been the champion of the immutability of truth; and he thought, besides, that if a bookseller should give a sum of money for the work, he would then have an interest in doing all in his power for the sale of the book. Beattie, therefore, intrusted his friends Sir William Forbes, and Mr. Arbuthnot with his manuscript, in order that they might dispose of it to a publisher. The name of the author was not then known further than as connected with a small volume of *Original Poems and Translations*, which had been published at London in the year 1760, and had attracted much notice. His friends failed in procuring any bookseller who would publish the work on his own account, though all of them were willing to do so at Beattie's risk,—a circumstance which, as Sir William Forbes says, ‘strongly marks the slender opinion entertained by the booksellers at that period of the value of a work which has risen into such well-merited celebrity.’ Though discouraged by their failure, Beattie's friends resolved not to let the world lose so valuable a defence of religion; and, after some consideration, fell upon a plan of giving it to the public, which is entitled to much credit for its ingenuity. They were aware

that Beattie not only had objections, which no arguments could overcome, to losing money by the speculation, but was also decidedly averse to doing any thing for the benefit of truth without receiving that reward to which he had felt that the advocate of the best interests of mankind was most justly entitled. They, therefore, in order to overcome his scruples, wrote to him that they had sold the work for fifty guineas, but had stipulated with the bookseller that they should be partners with him in the transaction. At the same time they transmitted fifty guineas from themselves to Beattie, who expressed his satisfaction with the sum, as exceeding ‘his warmest expectations.’ ‘On such trivial causes,’ says Sir William, ‘do things of considerable moment often depend; for had it not been for this interference, in a manner somewhat ambiguous, perhaps the *Essay on Truth*, on which all Dr. Beattie's fortunes hinged, might never have seen the light.’ In all this transaction the strict integrity of Beattie is conspicuous. He adhered to his principle of not allowing his zeal in a good cause to injure his worldly interest. He was lucky in having friends who deceived him so much to his advantage, and who acted so faithfully on the philosophy which he himself had inculcated. In a letter to Sir William, written some time before, Beattie lays it down that ‘happiness is desirable for its own sake—truth is desirable only as a means of producing happiness; for who would not prefer an agreeable delusion to a melancholy truth? What, then, is the use of the philosophy which aims to inculcate truth at the expense 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.’ The result of this manœuvre of Beattie's friends proved the wisdom of his doctrine. The publication of the essay, accomplished in this singular manner, brought honour and wealth, and respect and fame, to the author; and the devisers of the scheme do not appear to have regretted that it was by a temporary sacrifice of truth that they were enabled to establish its immutability.”

The *Essay on Truth*, it is thus shewn, was published in consequence of a *Lie!*—*Bruce's Eminent men of Aberdeen.*

## RIDICULE.

THE fatal fondness for indulging in a spirit of ridicule, and the injurious and irreparable consequences which sometimes attend the too severe reply, can never be condemned with more asperity than it deserves. Not to offend, is the first step towards pleasing. To give pain, is as much an offence against humanity as against good breeding; and surely it is well to abstain from an action because it is sinful, as because it is unpolite.—*Dr. Blair.*