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• Adam Ferguson

# BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

OF

## ADAM FERGUSON, LL.D., F.R.S.E.,

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

BY

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The Memoir now submitted to the Society, while it details the chief events in the life of a man who occupied a distinguished place in the literature of Scotland, at a period when it had attained a high reputation, cannot claim to be so complete as might be desired. His life was prolonged for several years after nearly all of his early friends had passed away; and since his death many papers have been destroyed or have fallen aside, which would now be of the greatest interest.

Whilst in this way much has been lost that might have given greater completeness to these pages, still, the recent publication of the Diary of his friend Dr CARLYLE of Inveresk, has furnished many additional details, and afforded further evidence of the estimation in which he was held by his literary associates.

Several letters selected from the lives of his distinguished friends, and from the Manuscript Collection of the University, in addition to information derived from the short notices of his life already printed, have afforded the materials for preparing this sketch of one, whose career was more varied, while his public labours and literary connections were not less important and extensive, than those of any of his contemporaries.

Dr ADAM FERGUSON, son of the Rev. ADAM FERGUSON, minister of the parish of Logierait, Perthshire, was born in the manse of that parish on the 20th of June 1723. His father was descended from an old and respectable family in Athole, to whom the estate of Dunfallandy yet pertains; and his mother was the daughter of Mr GORDON of Hallhead, in the county of Aberdeen. In the female line FERGUSON traced a connection with the noble family of ARGYLL, thus referred to in a letter addressed to him by Dr CARLYLE of Inveresk: "I am descended from the Queensberry family by two great-grandmothers—much at the same distance as you are from that of ARGYLL."\*

ADAM was the youngest son of a numerous family. His father had been minister of Crathie and Braemar from 1700 to 1714, and was long remembered with gratitude for having sheltered in his manse of Crathie some of the unfortunate Macdonalds on their flight from the treacherous massacre of Glencoe. Just before the Rebellion of 1715 he was translated to Logierait, where he passed the

\* MSS., University of Edinburgh.

remainder of a long life, discharging his ministerial duties with exemplary piety and firmness. Although the parishioners were at the period of his induction almost universally hostile to Presbyterian principles, he speedily secured general respect, which he retained till his death in 1754.

FERGUSON received his earlier education partly at home under the tuition of his father, who had soon discovered his son's superior abilities, partly at the parish school of Logierait. He was afterwards sent to Perth, where he attended the classes of Mr JAMES MARTIN, rector of the grammar school, a distinguished teacher, who had numbered amongst his pupils the great Lord MANSFIELD. There he was committed to the charge of his relation, WILLIAM FERGUSON, a merchant, and at one time chief magistrate of that city. At the Grammar School of Perth FERGUSON excelled in classical literature, and especially in the composition of essays; and we learn that his themes were not only praised at the time, but were long preserved, and shown with pride by Mr MARTIN, who declared that none of his pupils had ever surpassed the writer.

In 1738, when he had just entered on his sixteenth year, FERGUSON was enrolled at the University of St Andrews, where he studied Latin under Professor YOUNG, and Greek under Professor PRINGLE. The classes were then ably superintended by Principal TULLIDELPH, to whom FERGUSON had the advantage of being recommended by his father's friend and namesake, the minister of Moulin.

At the commencement of the session, FERGUSON gained by competition one of the foundation bursaries, which are tenable during the curriculum in the Faculty of Arts, and which entitled him to maintenance at the College table. This he owed to his previous excellent training in Latin. His attention was now given to the study of Greek, of which, hitherto, he seems to have had little knowledge; and that so successfully, that at the end of his first session he read Homer with considerable ease. During the summer recess he resolved to read one hundred lines of the Iliad daily, and in this way perused the whole poem. He obtained his degree of M.A. on the 4th May 1742, when he had nearly completed his nineteenth year; and thus finished his curriculum in arts with the reputation of being one of the best classical scholars, and perhaps the ablest mathematician and metaphysician of his time at the University.

Having been intended by his father for the church, FERGUSON entered the Divinity Hall at St Andrews in 1742, under Principal MURISON and Professors SHAW and CAMPBELL; but shortly afterwards he removed to Edinburgh, and continued his course under Professors GOWDIE and CUMMING. There he joined a number of young men who afterwards attained to eminence—amongst whom were JOHN HOME, author of 'Douglas;' WILLIAM ROBERTSON, afterwards Principal of the University; HUGH BLAIR; Mr WEDDERBURN, afterwards Lord LOUGHBOROUGH; and Dr CARLYLE—in forming a debating society. This club after-

wards became merged in the Speculative Society, which still exists in unimpaired efficiency.

FERGUSON, while not neglecting the study of divinity, applied himself less to it than to those subjects of philosophy for which he showed special aptitude, and in which he was afterwards to become so celebrated. In 1745, when he had attended divinity classes for two only, out of the full period of six, years—the time then required before obtaining license to preach—he was offered the appointment of deputy chaplain to the 42d regiment, or “Black Watch,” by Mr MURRAY (brother of Lord ELIBANK), who was principal chaplain. For this appointment his knowledge of the Gaelic language was an important qualification. The rules of the Church allowed Gaelic students to be taken on trials after four years' attendance at the Divinity Hall; but it was necessary, in FERGUSON'S case, to obtain from the General Assembly a still farther dispensation. The Assembly, in consideration of his good character and high testimonials, granted special authority for his ordination, and he was ordained by the Presbytery of Dunkeld on the 2d of July 1745. A few days after this he joined his regiment, then serving in Flanders; and in a short time he obtained, on the retirement of Mr MURRAY, the rank of principal chaplain.

We are informed by Dr CARLYLE, that it was through the influence of the Duchess Dowager of ATHOLE that FERGUSON obtained his appointment as chaplain to the 42d Regiment. “Her son, Lord JOHN MURRAY,\* had obtained the colonelcy of that regiment when he was not more than twenty-two years of age; and the Duchess had imposed the very difficult task upon FERGUSON, to be a kind of tutor or guardian to Lord JOHN,—that is to say, to gain his confidence, and keep him in peace with his officers, which it was difficult to do. This, however, he actually accomplished, by adding all the decorum belonging to the clerical character to the manners of a gentleman; the effect of which was, that he was highly respected by all the officers, and adored by his countrymen, the common soldiers.”

Shortly after FERGUSON joined his regiment, the battle of Fontenoy took place, in which he behaved with the greatest bravery. In that battle, according to the account of the French themselves, “the Highland furies rushed in upon them with more violence than ever did a sea driven by a tempest.” FERGUSON went into action at the head of the attacking column, with a drawn broad-sword in his hand, and could with difficulty be persuaded to retire to the rear.† Colonel DAVID STEWART, author of the “History of the Highlanders,” remarks, that he continued with his regiment during the whole of the action, in the hottest of the

\* Lord JOHN MURRAY—son of JOHN Duke of ATHOLE by his second marriage—was appointed colonel of the Royal Highlanders on April 25, 1745; major-general in 1753; lieut.-general in 1754; and general in 1770.

† Sir W. SCOTT'S Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. xix. p. 331.

fire, praying with the dying, attending to the wounded, and directing them to be carried to a place of safety. The Colonel further remarks, that FERGUSON, "by his fearless zeal, his intrepidity, and his friendship towards the soldiers (several of whom had been his schoolfellows at Dunkeld); his amiable and cheerful manners, checking with severity when necessary, mixing among them with ease and familiarity, and being as ready as any of them with a poem or a heroic tale, acquired an unbounded ascendancy over them; and while he was chaplain of the corps he held an equal, if not in some respects a greater, influence over the minds of the men than the commanding officer."\*

While he was connected with this regiment, he published a sermon, which was his first contribution to literature. It is entitled—*A Sermon preached, in the Ersh Language, to His Majesty's First Highland Regiment of Foot commanded by Lord JOHN MURRAY, at their Cantonment at Camberwell, on the 18th day of December 1745, being appointed as a solemn Fast. Translated into English for the Use of a Lady of Quality in Scotland, at whose desire it is now published.*†

This sermon, printed at the request of the Duchess Dowager of ATHOLE, with whom FERGUSON was a particular favourite, is more remarkable for the vigour of its patriotic exhortations than for the elegance of its language, and contains strong denunciations of the attempt made in the year 1745 to seat Prince CHARLES on the throne of Britain.

With this gallant regiment FERGUSON served during the whole of the campaign in Flanders; and on the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, he obtained leave of absence, and visited the scenes of his youth, where he spent much of his time in wandering amongst the Perthshire mountains. Writing to an intimate friend at a subsequent period, he says, "If I had not been in the Highlands of Scotland, I might be of their mind who think the inhabitants of Paris and Versailles the only polite people in the world. It is truly wonderful to see persons of every sex and age, who never travelled beyond the nearest mountain, possess themselves perfectly, perform acts of kindness with an aspect of dignity, and a perfect discernment of what is proper to oblige. This is seldom to be seen in our cities, or in our capital; but a person among the mountains, who thinks himself nobly born, considers courtesy as the test of his rank. He never saw a superior, and does not know what it is to be embarrassed. He has an ingenuous deference for those who have seen more of the world than himself; but never saw the neglect of others assumed as a mark of superiority."‡

With a desire to obtain a more permanent and more congenial sphere of usefulness, FERGUSON applied for the living of Caputh, a beautiful parish near Dunkeld, in the patronage of the Duke of ATHOLE. He was not, however, in all

\* Hist. of the Highlanders, vol. i. p. 292. † Lond., 1746. 8vo. ‡ MSS. Univ. of Edin.

respects qualified for discharging the duties of a Scottish clergyman. Although, by his polished manners and his great abilities, he took a prominent part in private society, he was deficient in the gifts necessary for the popular preacher. His sermons were elaborate disquisitions, showing more acquaintance with systems of philosophy than with the wants of common hearers.\* He was unsuccessful in his application for this living; and when the death of his father (whom he had hoped to succeed) took place shortly after this disappointment, he abandoned all intention of undertaking the duties of a parochial charge. He continued to remain attached to his regiment, during its service in Ireland, till about the year 1754, when he resigned his commission.

The knowledge of military affairs thus acquired by his service in the army enabled him to give so much distinctness and liveliness to his descriptions of war in his 'History of the Roman Republic,' that it is remarked by CARLYLE, that he was excelled, in this respect, by no historian but POLYBIUS, who was an eye-witness of so many battles. His military service also proved beneficial to him by opening up a wide field for the observation of human character, and gave him enlarged opportunities of studying the political phenomena of the period.

After resigning the chaplaincy of the 42d Regiment, FERGUSON spent some time in Holland with his friend Mr GORDON, and resolved to give up all thoughts of further exercising the clerical profession. Writing to ADAM SMITH from Groningen, in October 1754, he concludes by requesting a reply to be addressed to him at Rotterdam, "without any clerical titles, for I am a downright layman."†

Shortly after this, FERGUSON returned to Edinburgh, where he renewed his acquaintance with the friends of his youth. As DAVID HUME had at this time given up his appointment of Keeper of the Advocates' Library, he became a candidate for the office, and was appointed HUME's successor as Librarian and Clerk to the Faculty on the 8th of January 1757.

While he was connected with that Library, FERGUSON became a member of the Select Society, which had been instituted in 1754 by Mr ALLAN RAMSAY, the eminent artist. The meetings of the Society were held weekly in one of the inner apartments of the Library, and were for the purpose of literary discussion,

\* The following anecdote illustrates their character:—"Sometimes he lent or presented a sermon to his friends. One of them one day preached a very profound discourse on the superiority of personal qualities to external circumstances, that showed a very thorough acquaintance with the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle. Mr BISSET (his father's successor), in whose church the gentleman delivered this sermon, was at first greatly surprised at hearing such observations and arguments from a worthy neighbour, whom he well knew to be totally unacquainted with the philosophy of Plato, or any other, ancient or modern. When service was over, he paid the young man very high encomiums on his discourse—that it very much exceeded the highest expectations he had ever entertained of the talents of the preacher; who told him very honestly that he knew very little about these things himself, but that *he had borrowed the discourse from his friend ADAM FERGUSON.*"—*Histor. Mag.* (1799) vol. i. p. 44.

† This interesting letter is in the possession of the Rev. Mr CUNNINGHAM, Prestonpans.



philosophical inquiry, and improvement in public speaking. This Society exercised an important influence in diffusing a taste for letters in Scotland, and it has been remarked, that "the classical compositions of HUME, ROBERTSON, SMITH, and FERGUSON, the writings of JOHN HOME, of Professor WILKIE, of Lord HAILES, Lord MONBODDO, Sir JOHN DALRYMPLE, the elder Mr TYTLER, all members of the Select Society of Edinburgh, have thrown a lustre on that institution, as marking the commencement of a literary era, which it is doubtful if the succeeding times have yet seen surpassed."\*

FERGUSON, shortly after entering on his duties in the Library,† was solicited to undertake the education of the sons of Lord BUTE. HUME, in a letter to GILBERT ELLIOT, of Minto, states, that he had some scruples with regard to accepting this appointment, as he was to have the charge of more than one boy, and adds, "I hope Lord BUTE will conform himself to his delicacy, at least if he wants to have a man of sense, knowledge, taste, elegance, and morals, for a tutor to his son."

Having arranged satisfactorily the terms of his engagement with Lord BUTE, FERGUSON seems to have left his office of Librarian rather abruptly, for, according to the Minutes of the Faculty of 3d January, 1758, "it was represented to the Dean and Faculty that Mr ADAM FERGUSON, who in January last had been constituted Library-keeper and Clerk to the Faculty, had gone from this place some time ago, and had left behind him a letter demitting said offices, so that the Faculty had now neither a Librarian nor a Clerk; by whatever omission or neglect, it happened that the said letter of demission had neither been presented to the Dean nor laid before them. And the same thing being affirmed by divers members, after reasoning on the matter at good length, the Dean and Faculty declared the said offices to be vacant, notwithstanding that the said demission had never been presented."

FERGUSON was succeeded in this office by Mr WILLIAM WALLACE, advocate, elected at the meeting above referred to.

Before giving up his connection with the Advocates' Library, FERGUSON attracted considerable attention by a pamphlet which he wrote in defence of JOHN HOME, author of 'Douglas,' who had incurred the censure of the Presbytery of Edinburgh by the publication of his celebrated tragedy. This pamphlet, entitled *The Morality of Stage Plays seriously considered*,‡ was published anonymously, and was admitted on all hands "to be the only piece on that side that was written with any tolerable degree of discretion." HOME was one of FERGUSON'S most intimate friends, and it is not surprising that FERGUSON was led into taking an active part in the controversy which the publication of 'Douglas' occasioned. HOME had at this time resigned his parochial charge, to avoid the persecution to

\* Life of Lord KAMES, vol. i, p. 175.

† Like his predecessor HUME, FERGUSON enjoyed the moderate salary of L.40 per annum.

‡ Edinburgh, 1757, 8vo.

which he was subjected by the Church, while his tragedy was received on the Edinburgh stage with the most enthusiastic applause. Along with Principal ROBERTSON, DAVID HUME, and Dr. BLAIR, FERGUSON had taken a deep interest in the attempts of HOME to have his 'Douglas' properly brought before the public, and it has been stated that it was privately rehearsed by these gentlemen, in the lodgings of Mrs SARAH WARD (one of DIGGES' company), in presence of some of the most distinguished literary men of Scotland.\*

From his friendship with DAVID HUME, and ADAM SMITH, then Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Glasgow, who were well aware of his extraordinary accomplishments, it was now proposed that FERGUSON should be promoted to a Chair in one of the Scottish Universities. At this time the influence of Lord MILTON,† the political agent of ARCHIBALD Duke of Argyll, was paramount in the patronage of almost every office of emolument and dignity in Scotland. Even in the exercise of the patronage of the Chairs in the University of Edinburgh, so jealously guarded by the Town Council, the influence of Lord MILTON was so strong that Provost DRUMMOND, one of the most meritorious and public-spirited benefactors of the community over which he presided, did not find himself at liberty to promise any preferment at the disposal of the Town Council, without Lord MILTON'S consent being obtained.‡ Under such a system, it is not surprising that Professorships might not only become matters of private arrangement, but, as it would appear by the following letters, even attainable by the payment of considerable sums of money. From the terms of these letters, preserved in the Royal Society,§ it was accordingly contemplated to transfer ADAM SMITH to the Chair of the Law of Nature and Nations in the University of Edinburgh, then expected to become vacant by the retirement of Professor ABERCROMBY, and to appoint FERGUSON to the Chair occupied by SMITH at Glasgow.

“ HUME to ADAM SMITH.”

“ 8th June 1758.

“ DEAR SMITH,—I sit down to write to you, along with JOHNSTONE;|| and as we have been talking over the matter, it is probable we shall employ the same arguments. As he is the younger lawyer, I leave him to open the case, and

\* The following was the cast of the piece on that occasion:—“ *Lord Randolph*, Dr Robertson (Principal); *Glenalvon*, David Hume (Historian); *Old Norval*, Dr Carlyle (Minister of Musselburgh); *Douglas*, John Home (the Author); *Lady Randolph*, Dr Ferguson; *Anna* (the Maid), Dr Blair (Minister, High Church).”

“ The audience that day, besides Mr DIGGES and Mrs WARD, were the Right Hon. Patrick Lord ELIBANK, Lord MILTON, Lord KAMES, Lord MONBODDO (the two last were then only lawyers), the Rev. JOHN STEELE and WILLIAM HOME, ministers.”—*Edinburgh Weekly Chronicle*, 21st January, 1829. Dr CARLYLE corroborates this statement so far in his Diary, p. 311.

† It has been stated that in 1742 FERGUSON was Secretary to Lord MILTON, and lived with him in that capacity for some time, at Brunstain House, near Edinburgh.—*Chambers's Journal*, No. 60, 1855.

‡ Sommervill's Life and Times, p. 380.

§ Hume's Life by BURTON, vol. ii. p. 45.

|| Afterwards Sir WILLIAM PULTENEY.

suppose that you have read his letter first. We are certain that the settlement of you here, and of FERGUSON at Glasgow, would be perfectly easy by Lord MILTON's interest. The prospect of prevailing with ABERCROMBY is also very good; for the same statesman, by his influence over the Town Council, could oblige him either to attend, which he never would do, or dispose of the office for the money which he gave for it. The only real difficulty is then with you. Pray, then, consider that this is perhaps the only opportunity we shall ever have of getting you to town. I dare swear that you think the difference of place is worth paying something for, and yet it will really cost you nothing. You made above L.100 a-year by your class\* when in this place, though you had not the character of Professor. We cannot suppose that it will be less than L.130 after you are settled. JOHN STEVENSON; † and it is JOHN STEVENSON makes near L.150, as we are informed upon inquiry. Here is L.100 a-year for eight years' purchase; which is a cheap purchase, even considered as the way of a bargain. We flatter ourselves that you rate our company at something; and the prospect of settling FERGUSON will be an additional inducement. For, though we think of making him take up the project if you refuse it, yet it is uncertain whether he will consent; and it is attended, in his case, with many very obvious objections. I beseech you, therefore, to weigh all these motives over again. The alteration of these circumstances merit that you should put the matter again in deliberation. I had a letter from Miss HEPBURN, where she regrets very much that you are settled at Glasgow, and that we had the chance of seeing you so seldom. I am, &c."

"P.S.—Lord MILTON can with his finger stop the foul mouths of all the roarers against heresy."

"HUME to the Rev. JOHN JARDINE."

*Without date.*

"REV. SIR,—I am informed by the late Rev. Mr JOHN HOME that the still Rev. ADAM FERGUSON's affair is so far on a good footing, that it is agreed to refer the matter to the Justice Clerk, whether more shall be paid to Mr ABERCROMBY than he himself gave for that Professorship. Now, as it is obvious that in these kind of references, where the question is not of law and justice, the circumstances of the person are to be considered, I beg of you to inform my Lord of the true state of the case. FERGUSON must borrow almost the whole sum which he pays for this office. If any more, therefore, be asked than L.1000, it would be the most ruinous thing in the world for him to accept of the office. I am even of opinion, that if any other method of subsistence offered, it were preferable to this scheme of paying the length of L.1000; at least such would be my sentiments if the case were mine.

\* SMITH had lectured on Belles Lettres in Edinburgh in 1748.

† Professor of Logic.

“ If the Justice Clerk considers the matter aright, he will never agree to so unreasonable a demand as that of paying more ; and I hope you will second these arguments with all your usual eloquence, by which you so successfully confound the devices of Satan, and bring sinners to repentance.—I am, Rev. Sir, your most obsequious humble servant.”\*

The negotiations above referred to were unsuccessful, and Mr ABERCROMBY was succeeded in the Chair of the Law of Nature and Nations by Mr ROBERT BRUCE in 1759.†

The long wished for opportunity of obtaining for FERGUSON an academic appointment soon after occurred, for a vacancy took place, in 1759, by the death of Dr JOHN STEWART, Professor of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh. The Town Council, who were the patrons of this Chair, after consultation with the ministers of the city, appointed FERGUSON on the 4th of July of the same year.

FERGUSON immediately began to prepare his lectures, so as to be ready to conduct his class when the University session was opened in October. Notwithstanding the shortness of the time at his disposal, he was so successful in his teaching, that “ DAVID HUME said FERGUSON had more genius than any of them, as he had made himself so much master of a difficult science,—viz, natural philosophy, which he had never studied but when at college,—in three months, so as to be able to teach it.”‡

In 1760, FERGUSON was instigated by Dr CARLYLE to publish a little volume, to which the following quaint title was given,—*The History of the Proceedings in the Case of Margaret, commonly called Peg, only lawful sister to John Bull, Esq.*§

The object of this publication, which went through two or three editions, was to turn into ridicule the opposers of the Scotch Militia Bill, which had been rejected in the preceding session of Parliament. The Act of Parliament by which the militia of England was constituted did not apply to Scotland, as, on account of the Rebellion of 1745, and the still existing jealousy of the Jacobites, Government had felt alarm at the proposal to extend to the sister kingdom a measure which should put arms into the hands of those who might turn them to revolutionary purposes. This jealous feeling towards Scotland was the cause of con-

\* Hume's Life, by J. H. BURTON, vol. ii. p. 47.

† It may here be mentioned, that the Professorship of the Law of Nature and Nations—the patronage of which was vested in the Crown—was then a sinecure, and was abolished in 1832. It has, however, been again revived as the Chair of Public Law, by the Universities' Commissioners of 1858.

‡ Carlyle's Diary, p. 283.

§ Lond. 1760, 12mo.—It may be interesting to those who possess this curious little volume, which (from its having been published anonymously) has sometimes been attributed to SWIFT, to have the following key to the principal characters referred to in it:—*John Bull*, England; *Sister Peg*, Scotland; *Nurse*, Lord Hardwicke; *Jowler*, Mr Pitt; *Hubble Bubble*, Duke of Newcastle; *Boy George*, George Townshend, Esq.; *Bumbo*, Lord President Dundas; *M'Lurcher*, The Highlanders; *Sir Thomas*, The King; *Gilbert*, Sir Gilbert Elliot, Bart.; *Squire Geoffrey*, The Pretender; *Small Trash*, Charles Hope Weir; *Lick Pelf*, Earl of Hopetoun; *James*, James Oswald, Esq.; *Suckfast*, General Watson.

siderable agitation in Edinburgh, and called forth several pamphlets, none of which, except that of FERGUSON, are now deserving of attention.\*

FERGUSON and the other members of the Select Society, which had been instituted in 1754 for the promotion of philosophical discussion, but which was now in a declining state, in 1762 revived it in a different form, as a means of agitating the militia question, and keeping alive the flame of patriotic feeling. To this new society was given, at the suggestion of FERGUSON, the name of the "Poker Club," which numbered among its members nearly all the *literati* of Edinburgh and its neighbourhood.†

This Club continued in existence till 1784, when from various causes it dwindled away, without achieving the object for which it was instituted,—viz., the extension of the Militia Bill to Scotland. It was not till 1793 that the Government agreed to place Scotland on the same footing as England in regard to an establishment so essential for the safety of the country.

As the salaries allowed at this time to the Professors in the University of Edinburgh were very small, it was not uncommon for them to receive into their families the sons of noblemen and gentlemen while they attended the University. From the reputation which FERGUSON had now obtained, he was, in 1763, entrusted with the education of the Honourable CHARLES and ROBERT GREVILLE, the sons of the Earl of Warwick, whose eldest son, Lord GREVILLE, had been educated under the care of Principal ROBERTSON. These young gentlemen remained with him for some years, and always retained a lively sense of the benefits they received under his care. The connection thus formed was of great service to FERGUSON, as it brought him more immediately to the notice of many persons of rank, and the fame he acquired shortly afterwards by his writings greatly extended his influence among his contemporaries.

Whilst these young noblemen were residing with him, FERGUSON employed one of his most promising students, who afterwards became a very distinguished man, to aid him in superintending their studies. This was JOHN, afterwards Sir JOHN M'PHERSON, Governor-General of India, who always acknowledged that it was to his intercourse and co-operation with FERGUSON that he owed most of his knowledge and success in life.

FERGUSON also took a warm interest in JAMES M'PHERSON, the translator of Ossian, who, in 1760, had anonymously published his "Fragments of Ancient Poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland."‡ A curious incident which occurred about this time, with reference to the Ossianic Poems, will be subsequently noticed.

\* An account of the manner in which this singular work was written is given in Carlyle's Diary, page 407; and an interesting letter of HUME, in which he avowed himself as its author, is given in his Life, by J. H. BURTON, vol. ii. page 88.

† See Carlyle's Diary, page 419.

‡ Along with Patrick Lord ELIBANK, Principal ROBERTSON, Dr BLAIR, and J. HOME, FERGU-

He continued Professor of Natural Philosophy for about five years, and conducted his class in a manner which gave universal satisfaction. By adapting his lectures to the capacities of his students, he contrived to render his subject more attractive than it had been hitherto considered, and he also published for the use of his class a short analysis of his Course.

The study of Ethical and Political Philosophy, however, in which he had distinguished himself as a young man, had always a greater attraction for FERGUSON than the physical sciences, and on the transference of Professor BALFOUR, of Pilrig, to the Chair of the Law of Nature and Nations in 1764, FERGUSON was elected his successor as Professor of Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy. About ten years before this, when Mr CLEGHORN, the predecessor of Mr BALFOUR, was on his deathbed, he urged FERGUSON to apply for this office, for which he conceived him to be particularly qualified. "Mr CLEGHORN, after expressing his regret at not having influence with the patrons to secure such an arrangement, added, as FERGUSON sometimes related with much emotion, 'I can only say of you as Hamlet did of Fortinbras, *He has my dying voice.*'" \*

On being appointed to this Chair, which had long been the object of his ambition, FERGUSON applied himself to its duties with the greatest activity, and his lectures were attended not only by the regular students, but by the most distinguished men of the country.

Within little more than a year after his appointment he published his *Essay on the History of Civil Society*,† which contributed to raise him still more in the estimation of the public. This celebrated work, a portion of which had been written several years previously, had been, in 1759, submitted in manuscript to the critical opinion of DAVID HUME, as a 'Treatise on Refinement.' HUME gave it his approval, and stated that with some amendments it would make an admirable book, "as it discovered an elegant and a singular genius."

The 'Essay' was again submitted in its finished state to HUME, who now recommended FERGUSON'S friends to prevail on him to suppress it, as likely to be injurious to his literary reputation. HUME had heard an opinion expressed, by the French philosophers HELVETIUS and SAURIN,‡ with which he at the time concurred, that the fame of MONTESQUIEU'S 'Esprit des Lois' would not be lasting. As FERGUSON'S Essay may be regarded to a certain extent as a commentary on MONTESQUIEU, HUME, perhaps, hastily adopted the same opinion with regard to the work of his friend. When he found that the general opinion was favourable to the work, he heartily joined in the congratulations which FERGUSON now received.

son made zealous efforts to induce M'PHERSON to promote his further researches for the discovery of ancient Gaelic Poetry, and he took part in a meeting convened by Dr BLAIR, in 1760, to provide funds for the purpose of enabling M'PHERSON to do so.—*Browne's Hist. of the Highlands*, vol. i. p. 43.

\* Encyc. Brit. Suppt. vol. iv. art. FERGUSON.

† Edinburgh, 1766. 8vo.

‡ Hume's Life, by J. H. BURTON, vol. ii. p. 387.

Writing to the author, in February 1767, he says:—"Dear FERGUSON,—I happen'd yesterday to visit a person three hours after a copy of your Performance was open'd for the first time in London. It was by Lord MANSFIELD. I accept the omen of its future success. He was extremely pleas'd with it; said it was perfectly well wrote; assured me that he would not stop a moment till he had finished it, and recommended it strongly to the Perusal of the Archbishop of YORK who was present. Tho' I set out with reluctance, I do not repent my journey. Direct to me at Miss ELLIOT's, in Brewer's Street. I have not seen SMITH; Judge of my hurry."\*

In another letter to FERGUSON he says, that he had "met with nobody that had read it who did not praise it. Lord MANSFIELD is very loud to that purpose in his Sunday Societies. I heard Lord CHESTERFIELD and Lord LYTTLETON express the same sentiment; and what is above all, CADDELL, I am told, is already projecting a second edition of the same quarto size." †

Writing to Dr BLAIR, HUME further remarks,—“I hear good things said of FERGUSON's book every day. Lord HOLDERNESS showed me a letter from the Archbishop of YORK, where his Grace says, that in many things it surpasses MONTESQUIEU. My friend, Mr DODWELL, says, that it is an admirable book, elegantly wrote, and with great purity of language. Pray tell to FERGUSON and to others all these things.” ‡

Writing to Principal ROBERTSON from London, on the 19th March, HUME makes the following interesting statement:—"FERGUSON's book goes on here with great success. A few days ago I saw Mrs MONTAGUE § who has just finished it with great pleasure. I asked her, Whether she was satisfied with the style? Whether it did not savour somewhat of the country? 'O yes,' she said, 'a good deal; it seems almost impossible that any one could write such a style except a Scotchman.'" ||

Dr BEATTIE of Aberdeen, writing to the Poet GRAY, on 30th March, states,—“A Professor at Edinburgh has published an Essay on the History of Civil Society, but I have not seen it. It is a fault common to almost all our Scottish authors that they are too metaphysical. I wish they would learn to speak more to the heart and less to the understanding; but alas, this is a talent which heaven only can bestow; whereas the philosophical spirit (as we call it) is merely artificial, and level to the capacity of every man who has much patience, a little learning, and no taste.” ¶

\* His hurry was so great that he apparently had not time to sign the letter. It is in the possession of D. LAING, Esq.

† Encyc. Brit. Suppl. vol. iv. art. FERGUSON.

‡ Life of Hume, by BURTON, vol. ii. p. 386.

§ The elegant author of an Essay on the genius of SHAKESPEARE.

|| Stewart's Works, vol. x. p. 223.

¶ Gray's Works, vol. ii. p. 295.

GRAY, in reply to BEATTIE, thus refers to the Essay of FERGUSON:—"I have read over (but too hastily) Mr FERGUSON'S book. There are uncommon strains of eloquence in it; and I was surprised to find not one single idiom of his country (I think) in the whole work. He has not the *fault you mention*; his application to the heart is frequent, and often successful. His love of MONTESQUIEU and TACITUS has led him into a manner of writing too short winded and too sententious, which those great men, had they lived in better times and under a better government, would have avoided."\*

Besides the interesting letters relating to the publication of this valuable work, which are to be found in the lives of HUME and Lord KAMES, the following letter from the Baron D'HOLBACH to FERGUSON is very characteristic:—

"SIR,—I receiv'd with the deepest sense of gratitude the undeserv'd favour of your kind letter dated the 3d of March; tho', your valuable work is not yet come to my hands according to the orders you were so good to give your Bookseller in London, I shall expect the favour you intended with thankfulness, and even with patience; having had the good fortune of getting the perusal of a copy belonging to an acquaintance of mine. I found it answering completely to the high opinion I had conceived of your great abilities and ingenuity, by the testimonies given of you by Mr ANDREW STEWART, Colonel CLERK, and several other gentlemen from your country, with whom I have had the pleasure of conversing in this place. Tho' you don't seem to set a high value on theory, it must necessarily precede practice, and I think that given in your grand performance, by enlightening the human mind, may contribute to render their practice better; for I don't despair of the perfectibility of mankind: I believe they have been mere children in matters the most important for them. I am of opinion that the greatest part of our distresses arise from our ignorance, and give me leave, Sir, to tell you sincerely, that I am persuaded that your valuable work is, and will be, very able to dispel the foggs that hang over our understandings. We are always indebted to great men for useful inventions, that are the fruits of their invention and theory. What they have found out with a great deal of trouble, becomes by and by popular; and by degrees truth, when become general, influences the general practice, even in spite of those who think it their interest to keep mankind in the dark. As to the virtues that preserve nations, or at least put off long their decline, I believe they must be the effects of learning; when morality shall be clear'd, or rescued from the hands of those who have made it their study to render it obscure. I think every individual will be more virtuous, and even the powerful movers of men will find it their own interest in governing according to the rules of reason. I have the honour to be, with the highest consideration, Sir, yours, &c.,

"Paris, 15th of June, 1767.†

"D'HOLBACH."

\* Gray's Works, vol. ii. p. 295.

† MSS. University of Edinburgh.



The praise with which this Essay was received was well deserved, as it was the result of a great amount of research into the history of ancient and modern times, and of a remarkable knowledge of the springs of human action. The author considers the condition of man, under various forms of government, at different periods, and traces him through the several steps from his first rude efforts at civilization and arts, to a high state of politeness and refinement. The gradual efforts of the human mind, rising from the simple perceptions of sense to the heights of moral and political knowledge, are delineated in elegant and classical language. Dr REID had about two years previously published his 'Enquiry into the Human Mind;' a work which was the first systematic attempt to carry out in the study of human nature the same plan of inductive investigation which had conducted NEWTON to the properties of light and to the law of gravitation. FERGUSON was the first to applaud REID'S success, and his Essay on Civil Society is to be regarded as one of the earliest applications of the same method of research to the development of society and to national policy.\* FERGUSON was of opinion that mankind should be studied in groups, and that all speculation as to their progress should relate to entire societies, and not to single individuals. In this point of view, he discusses the subjects of self-preservation, war and dissention, intellectual powers, moral sentiments, happiness, and national felicity. In the treatment of these important subjects, FERGUSON particularly endeavours to inculcate that the happiness of man consists in the exercise of his faculties as a member of society, and with the view of promoting public utility; that the power of states depends principally on the national character and public spirit, which are counteracted and sometimes annihilated amongst modern nations by selfishness and by the spirit of commerce. Adopting the views of MONTESQUIEU, he ascribes to climate and situation a great influence on the literature, commerce, and policy of nations; and justly observes that man has always attained to the principal honours of his species under the temperate zone. He further considers the laws which ought to regulate political establishments, and is of opinion that these, while they may vary according to the diversities of character and circumstances, should not interfere with that firm and resolute spirit, with which the liberal mind is always prepared to resist indignities, and that the power of restraint should be exercised in an inverse proportion to the general knowledge and virtue of a people.

The enthusiasm of his own nature may be traced in his opposition to despotic governments and to political slavery. He viewed with solicitude the tendency to despotism which characterised some of the military governments of the continent, and he expresses his fear of a renewal of those revolutions so frequently described, which out of the ruins of several nations form those colossal powers always fatal to liberty and to the wellbeing of man.

\* Stewart's Works, x. p. 261.

On the whole, this Essay must be regarded rather as an exposition of general principles, than an application of these principles to particular instances. It is defective in so far as the subject of religion, which in every age has had so considerable an influence on society, has been omitted. But, notwithstanding its defects, it must be admitted that the disquisitions which it embraces have as much interest at the present time as they had one hundred years ago, because they trace the same affinities between man and man, generation and generation, in the delineation of common passions, affections, and desires. To say that human society is modified by our present circumstances, and affected by the progress of modern civilisation, is only to render it still more amenable to those laws of moral and intellectual symmetry which regulate the destinies of our species, and which FERGUSON has with much ingenuity attempted to evolve.

The fame which FERGUSON had now acquired, and the connection he had formed with many persons of influence, led to suggestions of higher preferment. The following letter from his friend Colonel (afterwards General) CLERK, brother of Sir JAMES CLERK of Pennicuik, shows that at this time he was regarded as a suitable person to fill some political office. The Colonel had pressed him to dedicate his Essay to Lord SHELBURNE, but this was declined, and the book appeared without any dedication :—

“ TO ADAM FERGUSON, Esq.—R. CLERK.”

“ *London, October 10th, 1766.*”

“ I have not wrote you for some time. I suppose that your book is printing. Lord SHELBURNE told me one day that he supposed Governor JOHNSON would not perhaps return to West Florida, as he is coming home, and sayd, that he saw no reason why he should not offer the government of it to you. I answered that I should write to you of his kindness for you long before it should be an object of deliberation, but that I thought you would be happier in your present situation, and more independent, for the other was uncertain, though, in the common way of thinking in the world, it was a great favour. Besides, I thought that you was of more service to mankind where you was. He laughed at me. We shall have time to consider of this. However, it shows Lord SHELBURNE'S kindness for you, and good opinion of you. You asked my opinion upon a subject which I shall give you when at leisure.—Yours affectionately.”

In 1766, FERGUSON revisited Logierait, and delighted the villagers by his recollections of themselves and their kindred, while they, in their turn, were no less proud of the distinction attained by the son of their former pastor. This was also the year of his marriage to Miss KATHERINE BURNET of Aberdeenshire, the amiable niece of Professor JOSEPH BLACK. This union was one of unmingled happiness to both, till it was broken by the death of Mrs FERGUSON in 1795.

Among the many allusions to FERGUSON, contained in the Diary of his friend Dr CARLYLE, we learn that he and FERGUSON had, about ten years before this,

paid, their addresses to the same lady, but without success. CARLYLE has not favoured us with the name of the lady, who must have possessed many attractions; but he remarks, that "after having rejected rich and poor, young and old, to the number of half a score, she gave her hand, at forty-five, to the worst tempered and most foolish of all her lovers, who had a bare competency, and which, added to her fortune, hardly made them independent. They led a miserable life, and parted, soon after which he died, and she then lived respectably to an advanced age.

In December 1766, FERGUSON received the honorary degree of LL.D. from the *Senatus Academicus* of the University of Edinburgh.

He also published, in the same year, a short syllabus of his lectures, entitled, *Analysis of Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy. For the use of the Students in the College of Edinburgh.* This work was afterwards enlarged, and published as the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*,—a book which was found so useful, that it was translated into French, German, and Russian, and was made a text-book in several foreign universities. It exhibited a clear outline of his Course.

About the close of the year 1773, FERGUSON was solicited to undertake the charge of the education of CHARLES, Earl of Chesterfield (nephew of the celebrated Earl), by his guardians Lord STANHOPE,\* Mr HEWITT, and Sir GEORGE SAVILLE. The offer of this appointment was made by Lord STANHOPE in the most complimentary terms on the recommendations of Dr ADAM SMITH,† who endeavoured with great earnestness to induce FERGUSON to accept of it. The young Earl was then in his nineteenth year; and it was proposed that he should travel on the Continent for several years, under the charge of FERGUSON, who by his care was expected to make up for the neglect of the Earl's previous instructors.

At the present time it may seem strange that such a proposal should have been seriously entertained by any one holding a Professorship in the University;

\* Editor of Dr ROBERT SIMSON's posthumous works.

† Writing to SMITH with reference to this appointment, FERGUSON alludes to BEATTIE's celebrated *Essay on Truth*, and the corpulence of HUME, in the following letter. BEATTIE's "Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth in opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism," was so popular a work, that in four years five large editions of it were sold off. It was first published in 1771; and the letter of FERGUSON refers to the 3d edition, which appeared in 1773:—

"*Edin. Sept. 2d, 1773.*

"MY DEAR SIR,—I am told that Dr BEATY, or his party, give out that he has not only refuted but killed D. HUME. I should be very glad of the first, but sorry for the other; and I have the pleasure to inform you that he is in perfect good health; if he had been otherwise I should have certainly mentioned it in some of my letters. He had a cough, and lost flesh, soon after you went from home, which we did not know what to think of, but it turned out a mere cold, and it went off without leaving any ill effects; he has still some less flesh than usual, which nobody regrets, but in point of health and spirits I never saw him better. You seemed to doubt whether I should not write to Lord STANHOPE. I had inclination enough, but was not so decided as to send my letter to himself without putting it in your power to withhold it if proper, and therefore I stayed for a frank; what is disagreeable is, laying him under the obligation to make a ceremonious answer, and, if he be gone, subjecting him to Continental postage, so you will judge. I have not seen J. FERGUSON, but he must acquiesce.—I am, dear Sir, most affectionately yours,  
ADAM FERGUSON."

but the emoluments from his Chair were at that time so small, and the terms offered by the Earl,—an allowance of L.400 a-year during the Earl's minority, and an annuity of L.200 for life—were so tempting, that FERGUSON, not without some hesitation, undertook the responsibility. His reasons are fully given in the following letter to his friend ADAM SMITH :—

*“ Edinburgh, January 23d, 1774.*

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—It has given me great pleasure that you have avoided doing anything that might tend to urge Lord STANHOPE farther than he has already gone in the proposal respecting Lord CHESTERFIELD. If I had known the part he took in that business, I should certainly at first have either frankly accepted of the offer made me, or declined it in a way that could not imply an intention to raise the terms. This is certainly the only alternative that is now left me. I have revolved the subject all night and this morning, and the possibility of my becoming a burden on Lord STANHOPE'S family weighs much, but the odds on Lord CHESTERFIELD'S life is so great as very much to reduce that consideration. My place here, a few years ago, was worth about L.300 a-year, but this and the preceding year it has fallen considerably short; and while the present alarm of the scarcity of money, and the expense of education at Edinburgh, continues, it may not rise again to its former value. To this I must add, that in case of debility or old age, I shall probably be reduced to my salary, which is no more than L.100 a-year. For these reasons I think that I can fully justify myself to my family in accepting of L.200 a-year certain, with the privilege of choosing my place and my occupations; and if my Lord CHESTERFIELD'S guardians should be of opinion that he ought, when he comes of age, not only to relieve my Lord STANHOPE of his engagement, but likewise, in case I shall have acquitted myself faithfully and properly, to make some such addition to my annuity as I mentioned, I shall then likewise think that I can justify my conduct to the world, who rate men commonly as they do horses, by the price that is put upon them. But of this I would not have the least hint to my Lord CHESTERFIELD at present. I have so far proceeded without consulting anybody, and have formed an opinion subject to correction. I mean to read your letters, and this I am writing to one or two of my friends. If they approve, it shall go to you; and if you agree with me, be so good as intimate my resolution to the guardians of my Lord CHESTERFIELD; or, if you have any objections of moment, delay it till I shall have heard from you. My own present feeling is, that I should be to blame if I omitted putting myself and family under the protection of persons so worthy and so respectable, when I have an opportunity of doing it without any real hazard to my interest. But I shall not enter on this subject, my heart, indeed, being too full, especially with respect to Lord STANHOPE. I am, &c., ADAM FERGUSON.”\*

Having, through ADAM SMITH, arranged satisfactorily the terms of his engage-

\* MSS. University of Edinburgh.

ment with Lord CHESTERFIELD, FERGUSON prepared for his travels on the Continent. He accordingly, in February 1774, wrote to the Town-Council, as Patrons of the University, requesting permission to name persons to teach his Classes during the remainder of the session, viz. Dr JAMES LIND, for the Natural Philosophy Class,\* and Professor BRUCE for that of Moral Philosophy. The Council, however, refused to consent to this arrangement, and ordered that FERGUSON should teach in person during the remainder of the session.

Notwithstanding the refusal of the Town Council, FERGUSON joined his pupil in London at the close of that winter session of the University, in the belief that the Provost and the greater part of the Council would be disposed to sanction his absence for the subsequent session.

When that session, however, commenced in the following October, the Council appointed Professor BRUCE to conduct the class of Moral Philosophy, and took steps to punish the contumacy of his colleague. Accordingly, in April 1775, they passed the following act:—"The Council, considering that upon the 16th of February 1774, they had refused an application of Mr ADAM FERGUSON, Professor of Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy in this city's University, where he requested that he might be allowed to substitute proper persons in what remained of his business in the College that winter; and also considering, that notwithstanding thereof he has deserted his office, and come under engagements incompatible with his discharging the duties thereof; and the act of the 23d of May 1764, electing Mr ADAM FERGUSON into the said office being read, the Council did, and hereby do, rescind the said act of Council, with all that has followed thereupon, and declared the said office of Professor of Pneumatics and Moral Philosophy in the University of this city vacant."†

Whatever may now be thought of the propriety of this step of FERGUSON, still it had not been without precedent in the history of the University. His friends in the Senatus Academicus gave him their support, and he took measures to vindicate his conduct, and to stay the somewhat arbitrary proceedings of the Town Council. The following notes for his defence, drawn up by his friend Dr BLAIR, are interesting, as showing his warm sympathy with his colleague:—

"Mr FERGUSON, on his going away, engaged one of his colleagues, Mr BRUCE lately elected Professor of Logic, to supply his place in teaching this winter.

"He wrote a letter to the Town Council, begging leave of absence for one season, and proposing Mr BRUCE to be allowed by the Council to teach in his place. This letter, indeed, was not delivered; because the member of Council to whom it was addressed, upon its being mentioned to him, advised, as more for Mr FERGUSON'S interest, that it should not be presented.

\* On the death of his relation Mr RUSSELL, FERGUSON had undertaken the additional duty of teaching the Natural Philosophy class during sessions 1773, and 1774.

† DALZEL'S Hist. of the University of Edin., vol. ii. p. 445.

“ But by a minute of the Town Council in the beginning of winter, Mr BRUCE was appointed to teach in Mr FERGUSON'S place. As this gave the sanction of the Council to the substitute whom Mr FERGUSON proposed, it was considered by him and all his friends, as equivalent to giving him leave of absence for this session, and he had not the smallest apprehension of any intention to deprive him of his office, without at least giving him warning of his danger.

“ On Wednesday last, 5th April, just upon the close of the session, the Town Council, upon a motion made by the Provost concerning the impropriety of professors in the College strolling through the country as governours, found the office of Professor of Moral Philosophy vacant, and were desired to have their thoughts on a proper person for filling it up ; and this without any summons given to Mr FERGUSON to attend, or any intimation whatever made to him or any of his friends.

“ The Professor of Moral Philosophy, by his Commission from the Town Council, holds his office *ad vitam aut culpam* must not the *culpa*, therefore, be first properly found, and the Professor summoned to see what he can say in his defence, before he can legally be deprived of his office ?

“ The words of King James' Charter respecting the power which he gives the Magistrates over the Professors are,—‘ *cum potestate imponendi et removendi ipsos sicuti expediverit.*’ Do these words authorise every arbitrary and wanton exercise of power over the Professors ? Or does the clause *sicuti expediverit* restrain it to what is profitable, and expedient, and fit ?

“ Do not the words in the charter which immediately precede these ‘ *avisamento tamen ministrorum eorum,*’ connect with the words before quoted, and was not the *avisamentum* necessary to have been taken on this occasion ?

“ Mr FERGUSON has not only for many years, ever since he was elected Professor, regularly discharged all the duties of his office, but in the session immediately preceding this, when the Chair of Natural Philosophy became vacant in the beginning of the session, taught both the classes of Natural and Moral Philosophy.

“ Sir JOHN PRINGLE, who was a predecessor of Mr FERGUSON'S in the same Chair, went abroad when in that office as physician to the army, and for a year (or for years, uncertain which) taught his class by a substitute without quarrel, until he thought proper to demit.

“ The Professor of Mathematics has been absent for two years, and taught his class by his son without quarrel.

“ Dr DRUMMOND was elected two years ago by the Town Council, Professor of the Theory of Medicine, and has never appeared to discharge any of the duties of his office, which for two sessions have been discharged by substitutes without quarrel, and no step taken for finding the office vacant.

“ When Mr FERGUSON. after being absent only for five months, is suddenly

deprived of his office, without any requisition given him to attend, without any communication previously made to the Principal, or any members of the University, but the intention of depriving him kept profoundly secret till the moment of its execution, does not this plainly indicate that the Town Council did not seek to bring back Mr FERGUSON to the discharge of his office, but had formed a design to turn him out with a view to bestow his office on another? and can such violent and unjust proceedings towards an eminent Professor and a respectable University be warranted by law? \*

These grounds of objection to the harsh measure of the Town Council were embodied by FERGUSON, in an application to the Court of Session for a bill of suspension of the sentence of deprivation,† which had the desired effect of causing the Council to rescind their act, and restore the Professor to the peaceable enjoyment of his office.

The tour which FERGUSON made with his pupil Lord CHESTERFIELD through France and other parts of the Continent, although it brought about this disagreeable quarrel with the Town Council, proved highly advantageous to his improvement. In a letter to his friend ADAM SMITH, he thus describes the pleasure which his appointment afforded him.

*“ Geneva, June 1st, 1774.*

“ MY DEAR SMITH.—You see I have taken full benefit of the time you allowed me to form my opinion of this situation, and have the pleasure to inform you it is in most material circumstances very agreeable. I was received with great politeness, and continue to be treated with sufficient marks of regard. I have found not only vivacity and parts as I was made to expect, but likewise good dispositions and attachments, servants all of an old standing, and become friends without any improper influence or disorder that I have yet observed. I was made to expect great jealousy of control, and set out with a resolution to employ no other than what a sense of my great regard might give me. It is likely that a person of a different character was expected, and the disappointment, I believe, has had a good effect. My journey hither furnished no adventures worth relating. My Lord STANHOPE's being at Paris gave me access, for the few days I stayed, to some very respectable and agreeable company, in which I was questioned concerning you, particularly by the Duchess D'ENVILLE, who complained of your French, as she did of mine, but said that before you left Paris she had the happiness to learn your language. I likewise met with your friend, Count SANSFIELD, to whom I had great obligations, and if you write I beg that you will thank him, &c. &c.

ADAM FERGUSON.”‡

FERGUSON, and his pupil Lord CHESTERFIELD, after residing for some time at Geneva, returned to London in the Spring of 1775, and the following interesting

\* MSS. University, Edinburgh.

† Aply drawn up by ILAY CAMPBELL, afterwards Lord President.

‡ Ibid.

letter addressed to Dr CARLYLE, gives an account of their proceedings while on the Continent :—

“ *Blackheath, April 29th, 1775.*

“MY DEAR CARLYLE,—In answer to the two or three letters which you have written to me, I can give you five or six which I had written in my own mind to you, before I received any of yours. The first was from Geneva, where, having had the advantage of lodging in CALVIN'S own house, and having access to some of his most secret manuscripts, I thought myself, without vanity, qualified to give you some light into the more intricate recesses of our Church. My second was from Ferney, the seat of that renowned and pious apostle, VOLTAIRE, who saluted me with a compliment on a gentleman of my family who had civilized the Russians.\* I owned this relation, and at this and every successive visit encouraged every attempt at conversation—even jokes against Moses, Adam and Eve, and the rest of the Prophets—till I began to be considered as a person who, tho' true to my own faith, had no ill humour to the freedom of fancy in others. As my own compliment had come all the way from Russia, I wished to know how some of my friends would fare, but I found the old man in a state of perfect indifference to all authors except two sorts—one, those who write Panegyrics, another who write Invectives on himself. There is a third kind, whose names he has been used to repeat, fifty or sixty years, without knowing anything of them—such as LOCKE, BOYLE, NEWTON, &c. I forgot his competitors for fame, of whom he is always either silent, or speaks slightly. The fact is, that he reads little or none, his mind exists by reminiscence, and by doing over and over what it has been used to do. Dictates tales, dissertations, and tragedies; even the latter with all his elegance, tho' not with his former force. His conversation is among the pleasantest I ever met with; he lets you forget the superiority which the public opinion gives him, which is indeed greater than what we conceive in this Island. But he is like to make me forget all the rest of my letters. The third was from the face of a snowy mountain in Savoye, higher than all the mountains of Scotland piled upon one another, and containing more eternal ice in its recesses than is to be found in all Scotland in the hardest winter. The bottom of this ice is continually melting in the valleys, like the bottom of a roll of butter placed on end in a frying pan. It is perpetually creeping down from the mountain, where fresh snows continually fall in snotters. Masses come down from the mountains sometimes, and shake all the rocks with a force that nothing but an earthquake can imitate, and drive the air out of the narrow valleys with the force of a hurricane, that roots up trees on the opposite hills. I wrote you this letter in the full belief that you are a great natural philosopher, and disposed

\* FERGUSON'S 'Institutes of Moral Philosophy,' having been translated into Russian, was used as a Text-Book in the Russian universities.



to believe every word I say. My fourth letter was written from the innermost parts of Switzerland, on a Sunday afternoon, when I saw the militia exercise. They have uniform clothes and accoutrements all at their own expense, which is not a great hardship, for it is their only public burden. They appear to me to be a very effective military establishment, and as they were the only body of men I ever saw under arms on the true principle for which arms should be carried, I felt much secret emotion, and could have shed tears. But to conclude, my fifth and last letter was from the neighbourhood of this place, where everything, from a pair of snuffers to the Venus of Medicis, and the great Diana of the Ephesians, is better provided than anywhere else; where every one is busily enjoying, and no one thinks whence it came nor how it is to be kept. I thought to have finished all my letters here; but as a frank will carry another sheet, I shall take room, at least, to sign my name. As I have already written you five letters, and this new sheet may pass for another, you will please to observe that you are, at least, four letters in my debt. I am much obliged to you for your goodness to my wife and my bairns. If I live to return to them, we shall not part so easily again. You may believe I was much surprised at the attempt of the Town Council to shut the door against me; but am obliged to them for opening it again. I may be a great loser; but the end for which I am persecuted cannot be gained while I have it in my option to return. I have been much obliged to the general voice that was raised in my favour, as well as to the ardent zeal of particular friends. ILAY CAMPBELL has given me proofs of friendship which I can never forget. PULTENEY has behaved to me in everything, as he would have done at the beginning of the Poker Club. I have always been an advocate for mankind, and am a more determined one than ever; the fools and knaves are no more than necessary to give others something to do. I saw J. HOME in town yesterday morning, he goes on as usual. MAC\* is listening to the reports of his History. I do not live among readers, and am really ignorant of the general verdict. I have been living here above three weeks. A charming villa, in a magnificent scene, *sed quis me sistat gelidis in montibus Pentland*; and this I do not say on account of the hot weather, tho' it has been for three days the greatest I ever saw in this country.

“Remember my blessing to Mrs CARLYLE and your young ones, of whose thriving state I am happy to hear. Tell EDGAR, when you see him, that I have lately a letter from CLERK, and shall write to him—meaning EDGAR—soon. I am, dear CARLYLE, yours most affectionately,  
ADAM FERGUSON.”†

The engagement which FERGUSON had with Lord CHESTERFIELD terminated rather abruptly shortly after this; and on returning to Edinburgh, he continued his literary pursuits with renewed activity.

\* JAMES M'PHERSON (Ossian).

† MSS. University, Edinburgh.

The following interesting letter, addressed to ADAM SMITH at this time, has reference to the publication of the 'Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations:—

*“Edinburgh, April 18th, 1776.*

“MY DEAR SIR,—I have been for some time so busy reading you, and recommending and quoting you, to my students, that I have not had leisure to trouble you with letters. I suppose, however, that of all the opinions on which you have any curiosity, mine is among the least doubtful. You may believe, that on further acquaintance with your work my esteem is not a little increased. You are surely to reign alone on these subjects, to form the opinions, and I hope to govern at least the coming generations. I see no addition your work can receive except such little matters as may occur to yourself in subsequent editions. You are not to expect the run of a novel, nor even of a true history; but you may venture to assure your booksellers of a steady and continual sale, as long as people wish for information on these subjects. You have provoked, it is true, the church, the universities,\* and the merchants, against all of whom I am willing to take your part; but you have likewise provoked the militia, and there I must be against you. The gentlemen and peasants of this country do not need the authority of philosophers to make them supine and negligent of every resource they might have in themselves, in the case of certain extremities, of which the pressure, God knows, may be at no great distance. But of this more at Philippi. You have heard from BLACK of our worthy friend D. HUME. If anything in such a case could be agreeable, the easy and pleasant state of his mind and spirits would be really so. I believe he will be prevailed on at last to get in motion, and to try the effect of Bath, or anything else Sir JNO. PRINGLE may recommend. I have said more on this subject to Mr GIBBON, who, if you be found at London, will communicate to you. If not, I hope we shall soon meet here. And am, &c.

“ADAM FERGUSON.”†

For several years FERGUSON had meditated the publication of a History of the Roman Republic; and he now began with greater perseverance to collect his materials for the projected work. He was also stimulated to bring his labours on this subject to completion, as Gibbon had, in 1776, begun the publication of his 'History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire;' and the following correspondence is valuable, as showing the friendly relations which existed between these eminent men:—

*“Edinburgh, March 19th, 1776.*

“DEAR SIR,—I received, about eight days ago, after I had been reading your History, the copy which you have been so good as send me, and for which I now trouble you with my thanks. But even if I had not been thus called upon to offer you my respects, I could not have refrained from congratulating you on the

\* See 'Wealth of Nations,' book v. chap. i. part 3, art. 2.

† The original letter is in the possession of the Rev. Mr CUNNINGHAM, Prestonpans.

merit, and undoubted success, of this valuable performance. The persons of this place whose judgment you will value most, agree in opinion, that you have made a great addition to the classical literature of England, and given us what Thucydides proposed leaving with his own countrymen, *a possession in perpetuity*. Men of a certain modesty and merit always exceed the expectations of their friends; and it is with very great pleasure I tell you, that although you must have observed in me every mark of consideration and regard, that this is, nevertheless, the case, I receive your instruction, and study your model, with great deference, and join with every one else in applauding the extent of your plan, in hands so well able to execute it. Some of your readers, I find, were impatient to get at the fifteenth chapter, and began at that place. I have not heard much of their criticism, but am told that many doubt of your orthodoxy. I wish to be always of the charitable side, while I own you have proved that the clearest stream may become foul when it comes to run over the muddy bottom of human nature. I have not stayed to make any particular remarks. If any should occur on the second reading, I shall not fail to lay in my claim to a more needed and more useful admonition from you, in case I ever produce anything that merits your attention. And am, with the greatest respect, dear Sir, your most obliged, and most humble servant,

ADAM FERGUSON.\*

GIBBON'S reply to this letter was as follows:—

*“ Bentick Street, April the 1st, 1776.*

“ DEAR SIR,—I shall not pretend to deny that your approbation, and that of your literary friends at Edinburgh, has given me very great pleasure. I am not proud enough to be above vanity; and I have always looked up with the most sincere respect towards the northern part of our island, whither taste and philosophy seemed to have retired from the smoke and hurry of this immense capital. Your good opinion, in particular, I should wish to cultivate; and am pleased to understand from some passages in your letter that you are engaged in a work, which I am convinced will stand in the same proportion to my imperfect essay, as the Roman Republic may be considered to have done, if compared with the lower ages of the declining empire.

“ What an excellent work is that with which our common friend Mr ADAM SMITH has enriched the public!—an extensive science in a single book, and the most profound ideas expressed in the most perspicuous language. He proposes visiting you very soon; and I find that he means to exert his most strenuous endeavours to persuade Mr HUME to return with him to town. I am sorry to hear that the health and spirits of that truly great man are in a less favourable state than his friends could wish; and I am sure that you will join your efforts in convincing him of the benefits of exercise, dissipation, and change of air.

“ If I were not afraid of being too troublesome, I would desire you to inform me by a line of the particulars of his present condition, as well as of his intentions. I am, dear Sir, your most faithful and obedient servant, E. GIBBON.”\*

To this letter of GIBBON, FERGUSON returned the following answer:—

“ *Edin., 18th April 1776.*

“ DEAR SIR,—I should make some apology for not writing you sooner an answer to your obliging letter; but if you should honour me frequently with such requests, you will find that, with very good intentions, I am a very dilatory and irregular correspondent. I am sorry to tell you that our respectable friend, Mr HUME, is still declining in his health; he is greatly emaciated, and loses strength. He talks familiarly of his near prospect of dying. His mother, it seems, died under the same symptoms; and it appears so little necessary or proper to flatter him, that no one attempts it. I never observed his understanding more clear, or his humour more pleasant or lively. He has a great aversion to leaving the tranquillity of his own house, to go in search of health among inns and hostlers. And his friends here gave way to him for some time; but now think it necessary that he should make an effort to try what change of place and air, or anything else Sir JOHN PRINGLE may advise, can do for him. I left him this morning in the mind to comply in this article, and I hope that he will be prevailed on to set out in a few days. He is just now sixty-four. †

\* Dalzel's Hist. of the University of Edinburgh, vol. i. p. 22.

† It was principally at the desire of FERGUSON that DAVID HUME, a few days after the date of this letter, was induced to undertake a journey to London, to try the effect of change of air in mitigating the severity of his disease. FERGUSON had also written to their mutual friend ADAM SMITH, giving him an account of HUME's critical state at this time; and thus describes his condition—“ DAVID, I am afraid, loses ground. He is cheerful, and in good spirits as usual; but I confess that my hopes from the effects of the turn of the season towards spring have very much abated.” In consequence of this letter, SMITH and JOHN HOME set out from London to visit HUME at Edinburgh, and accidentally met him at Morpeth on his way south. HOME returned to London with HUME, and preserved a diary of the journey, which has been printed in his life, by MACKENZIE. In this diary is the following interesting entry:—

“ *Newcastle, Wednesday, 24th April.*

“ Mr HUME not quite so well in the morning,—says that he had set out merely to please his friends; that he would go on to please them; that FERGUSON and ANDREW STUART (about whom we had been talking) were answerable for shortening his life one week a-piece: for, says he, you will allow Xenophon to be good authority; and he lays it down, that suppose a man is dying, nobody has a right to kill him. He set out in this vein, and continued all the stage in his cheerful and talking humour. It was a fine day, and we went on to Durham—from that to Darlington, where we passed the night.”

The illness of HUME, feelingly alluded to in the above letters of GIBBON and FERGUSON, was the cause of his death on the 25th of August in the same year. The following interesting letter (belonging to Mr DAVID LAING), dated at Edinburgh, on the 9th of July before his decease, is very characteristic of the cheerfulness which he displayed up to his last moments. It is addressed to “ JOHN HUME at Kilduff, near Haddington:”—

“ MY DEAR JOHN,—I offered to give you a letter along with you, informing you how I should be on Tuesday thereafter, viz., weaker and more infirm than when you saw me. This, indeed, would have sav'd postage; and I can do no more at present than confirm the same truth, only that the matter seems now to proceed with an accelerated motion. I had yesterday a grand jury of physicians who sat upon me, the Doctors CULLEN, BLACK, and HOME. They all declare the opinion of

" I am very glad that the pleasure you give us recoils a little on yourself, through our feeble testimony. I have, as you suppose, been employed, at any intervals of leisure or rest I have had for some years, in taking notes or collecting materials for a history of the destruction that broke down the Roman Republic, and ended in the establishment of Augustus and his immediate successors. The compliment you are pleased to pay, I cannot accept of, even to my subject. Your subject now appears with advantages it was not supposed to have had, and I suspect that the magnificence of the mouldering ruin will appear more striking than the same building, when the view is perplexed with scaffolding, workmen, and disorderly lodgers, and the ear is stunned with the noise of destruction, and repairs, and the alarms of fire. The night which you begin to describe is solemn, and there are gleams of light superior to what is to be found in any other time. I comfort myself, that as my trade is the study of human nature, I could not fix on a more interesting source of it than the end of the Roman Republic. Whether my compilations should ever deserve the attention of any one beside myself, must remain to be determined after they are farther advanced. I take the liberty to trouble you with the enclosed for Mr SMITH,\* whose uncertain stay in London makes me at a loss how to direct for him. You have both such reason to be pleased with the world just now, that I hope you are pleased with each other. I am, with the greatest respect, dear Sir, your most obedient and humble servant,

ADAM FERGUSON." †

The progress of his labours, in collecting materials for the History of Rome, was, however, interrupted by circumstances which turned his attention for a time to other inquiries.

The Revolution in America had now drawn more general attention to the affairs which were passing on that great continent. It is unnecessary here to relate the different steps which led to the institution of the American Congress in 1773. It is sufficient to remark that the Congress had, in 1776, assumed the functions of sovereignty, and required all persons to abjure the British Government, and swear allegiance to the Congress itself. ‡

the English physicians absurd and erroneous. They own a small tumour in my liver; but so small and trivial, that it never could do me any material injury; and they say that I might have liv'd twenty years with it, and never have felt any inconvenience from it; each of them has had patients who have had tumours in that part ten times larger without almost complaining for years together. They have thoroughly persuaded me to be of their opinion; and, according to their united sentiments, my distemper is now a hæmorrhage as before, which is an illness that I had as lief dye of as any other. The first part of the text being now discuss'd, we proceed to the second, viz., the cure, which I leave to another opportunity. I send you a letter which my nephew opened by mistake; but finding, after he had read a few lines, that it was not meant for him, he proceeded no further.

Yours sincerely,

DAVID HUME."

In token of the long friendship which had existed between HUME and FERGUSON, HUME bequeathed him a legacy of L.200.

\* Dr ADAM SMITH.

† Gibbon's Misc. Works. By Lord Sheffield, vol. ii. p. 501.

‡ FERGUSON was in the habit of discussing from time to time in his correspondence with General CLERK, Mr JOHNSTONE (afterwards Sir WILLIAM PULTENEY), and other friends, the various

The endeavours of the Americans to throw off the yoke of the British Government, and to assert their independence, were warmly defended by Dr RICHARD PRICE, a dissenting clergyman in London, well known as the ingenious author of a 'Review of the Principal Question in Morals,' and of some works relating to the theory of annuities, and the finances of the country. PRICE had, in 1775, published his 'Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty, the Principles of Government, and the Justice and Policy of the War with America.'

This work took up the ground, that from the nature of civil liberty one country could have no power over the property or legislation of another which was not incorporated with it by a just and adequate representation. It drew, in contrast to this country, the most flattering picture of America, where, as its author observes, "we see a number of rising states, in the vigour of youth, inspired by the noblest of all sentiments, the passion for being free, and animated by piety—*Here* we see an old state, great indeed, but inflated and irreligious, enervated by luxury, encumbered with debts, and hanging by a thread. Can any one look without pain to the issue? May we not expect calamities that shall recover to reflection (perhaps to devotion) our libertines and atheists?"\* It concluded by prophesying ruin to England, through the addition of many millions to the national debt, unless some plan of reconciliation were speedily to be carried out.

The publication of these views, which had the greater weight from their author's reputation as a sound financial writer, created an immense sensation both in England and America. In the course of a few months 60,000 copies of this book were disposed of; and while PRICE was lauded by the friends of American freedom, he was subjected to abuse and misrepresentation by those who supported measures of repression.

Along with other writers of note, FERGUSON sympathised in his views with Government, and he communicated his objections to the pamphlet of PRICE in a letter to Mr GREY COOPER, one of the Secretaries of the Treasury.

Mr COOPER was so much pleased with the observations of FERGUSON, that he sent the following letter in acknowledgment:—

*"Parliament Street, March 23, 1776.*

"SIR,—It was my duty to have thanked you sooner for your letter, and the very masterly and judicious paper which accompanied it, and which I have read

political changes which were taking place at this period. The following extract from a letter addressed by General CLERK to him when he was at Geneva, in 1775, with Lord CHESTERFIELD, is interesting in connection with recent events in America. The General says: "When I saw you at Paris, you said that the American Colonies would end in military governments. You astonished me, and though I contradicted you, I had not patience to discuss it at that time, as it required the clearing up of so many points of which you and I had different opinions. However, I never doubted of its being a very disagreeable affair for us, and I think now that it has the appearance of being as bad as ever I imagined it."—*MSS. University of Edinburgh.*

\* 4th ed. p. 98.

with great attention and pleasure. Dr PRICE's pamphlet has been circulated with the same zeal that the Methodists circulate their manuals and practices of piety. Like base coin struck in times of disorder and confusion, it has had a value and a currency in the world which no other times could have given it. In that respect he deserves and demands what neither the weight of his arguments or the accuracy of his knowledge entitle him to expect—an answer from a good and able writer. I have ordered the observations to be printed by Mr STRAHAN, without its being known who is the author of them. I am happy of having this opportunity of corresponding with Professor FERGUSON; and if *idem sentire de republica* be the basis of friendship, I can very fairly pretend to yours; for I entirely concur with you in your noble sentiment, that the great object is to lay the demon of discord on both sides of the ocean; and I am, dear Sir, with great regard and esteem, your very faithful, humble servant, GREY COOPER.\*

The reply of FERGUSON was accordingly published anonymously as *Remarks on a Pamphlet lately published by Dr Price, intitled Observations on Civil Liberty, &c.*; and was acknowledged to be written with less invective and with more moderation than the publications previously issued on that side of the American question. FERGUSON contended that, although the Colonies were by their charters and original compacts bound to submit to Parliamentary taxation, their altered circumstances now required a change of policy; and suggested that, as Commissioners were to be appointed to settle all differences, negotiation should speedily take place. He was led, however, into various positions of a questionable nature, that weakened the effect which his conciliatory views would otherwise have had upon the public mind.

The British Government, which had at first treated the disputes in America with contempt, now began to take measures to vindicate their authority, and sent reinforcements to their army in that country. At the same time they appointed General HOWE and his brother, Lord HOWE, Commissioners, to settle all disputes in an amicable manner, as the feeling indicated in FERGUSON's pamphlet began to gain ground, that measures of conciliation should be attempted.

The Americans, however, flushed with several advantages gained over the British troops and by the promise of assistance from France, were determined that no proposal for reconciliation should be entertained except upon the footing of a treaty between two independent powers.

In 1778, GEORGE III., who throughout the whole of the American disputes had inflexibly opposed pacific measures, began, when too late, to yield to a more liberal policy. In that year two bills for effecting a reconciliation with America were introduced into Parliament by Lord NORTH. Commissioners were again to be sent over to treat with the Congress; and as it had been objected

\* MSS. University of Edinburgh.

that the powers of the former commissioners had been unduly restricted, the new commissioners were expressly authorised to discuss and settle every point in dispute between Great Britain and her colonies.

The commissioners were the Earl of CARLISLE; Mr EDEN, one of the Commissioners of Trade, and Under-Secretary to Lord SUFFOLK; and GEORGE JOHNSTONE, originally a captain in the navy, and at one time Governor of West Florida. With these three commissioners were conjoined Lord HOWE, and his brother General Sir WILLIAM HOWE, the members of the commission formerly appointed.

The three newly appointed commissioners met at Portsmouth in April 1778, and proceeded to open their instructions, after which they embarked at Spithead on board the Trident, and arrived at Philadelphia, on the 5th of June 1778. The appointment of a Secretary was one of their first acts on reaching America. They had expected that Mr HENRY STRACHEY, the Secretary to the former commissioners, would continue his services to the new commission, but they found that as he had already returned to England a new appointment was necessary. By virtue of their powers they elected FERGUSON as their Secretary on the 6th of June, having special confidence in his ability for discharging the difficult and delicate matters intrusted to them.

The commissioners, on proceeding to business, found many unforeseen circumstances of discouragement in an undertaking which had never been very hopeful. In consequence of the expected war with France, orders had been sent from England in March for the British troops to evacuate Philadelphia and retire to New York, and these orders, of which no previous intimation had been made to the commissioners, were in process of execution when they landed. The treaty between the Colonies and France, concluded by FRANKLIN on the 6th of February, had also arrived in America, and was the occasion of great rejoicing to the American people.

Nothing daunted by these untoward symptoms, the commissioners proceeded to open negotiations with General WASHINGTON and the Congress. They intimated to the former that it was their intention to send FERGUSON with despatches to Congress, and requested that he might receive the necessary passport for that purpose. They then drew up a letter to that body, in which they stated their powers, and expressed their desire to concur in every just arrangement for the cessation of hostilities and the restoration of free intercourse between Britain and the Colonies. This letter was ordered to be delivered to Congress by FERGUSON in person.

On reaching the outposts of the American army with this letter, FERGUSON was met by the officer commanding the piquets, who informed him that he could not be allowed to proceed to headquarters without a passport, and that the application for this document previously made could not be granted until the pleasure of Congress was known. In order, however, that the object of the com-



missioners might not suffer from unnecessary delay, it was determined to send the letter by the ordinary conveyance of the military posts, and it was accordingly delivered on the same day to the American piquets by Lord CATHCART.

The commissioners, while awaiting with considerable anxiety the reply of Congress to their conciliatory letter, in which they proposed concessions of the most liberal nature, gave an account of their proceedings to Lord GEORGE GERMAIN, Secretary of State for the American Department. In this letter they plainly informed Government of the difficult position in which they were placed by the unfortunate order for the evacuation of Philadelphia. They also admitted that, in consequence of the state in which they found the country, they had offered terms to the Americans of a more liberal nature than their instructions allowed.

These papers of the commissioners caused some dissatisfaction to the ministry, and were not at the time made public.

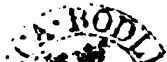
The following letter, addressed by Sir WILLIAM PULTENEY (brother of GEORGE JOHNSTONE) to FERGUSON, is interesting, as showing the state of feeling in England with reference to these proceedings of the commissioners:—

*“ London, 4th August 1778.*

DEAR FERGUSON,—I was much obliged to you for your letter of the 19th June, which arrived a fortnight ago, and was delivered by Mr MACKENZIE. I enter entirely into your sentiments, and those of my brother, concerning the unfortunate order of the 24th March. I have done all I can in consequence of the despatches I have received, and I have hopes that I have not laboured in vain. I have wrote a long letter to my brother, which will give you all the information that seems to me material. Firmness, wisdom, and exertion were never more wanted for any country than now. I approve much of the letter to Government, and the letter to the Congress, and I believe they will meet with general approbation, though the ministers do not, I guess, relish the first, and neither have been given to the public.—I am, dear FERGUSON, most affectionately yours,

“ WILLIAM PULTENEY.

“ I think it right to suggest to your private ear an observation or two. Though I am not surprised at the heat with which the commissioners took up the concealment of the order and the order itself, yet I have my doubts whether it was prudent to let it transpire in America that they disapproved of the measure, or that they were ignorant of it till they arrived. I can see many advantages which might have resulted from their appearing satisfied, but none from the contrary. It is true, the misery of the departed inhabitants and their complaints must have made it next to impossible for the commissioners not to vindicate themselves from having had any hand in the measure; but I think it right to make this observation with a view to the future.



" I also think it would have been as well if the opinions of the commissioners had been communicated by letter to fewer persons here, because I think it was a piece of knowledge which ought to have been withheld from the American Deputies at Paris, and the Court of France. By communicating only to a few proper persons, every good end of this communication might, I think, have been attained without the disadvantages. I make this observation with a view to the future.

" I have some reason to think that Dr FRANKLIN has acted a double part. From some facts I have heard, I suspect, that notwithstanding his solemn promise to me that no use should be made of what passed between us, he did from the first make use of it to urge the French Court to a further immediate treaty, to be put over and to be ratified before the commissioners should arrive, from a fear that the Americans would certainly accept our terms. The date of the last treaty will throw light upon this, when compared with the dates of my conversations with him. He was told of my arrival in Paris, and my errand on Thursday the 11th March. I saw him first on Saturday the 13th, and again on Sunday the 14th. The declaration of the French ambassador here was made on Friday the 12th. I saw him again on Sunday the 29th, and Monday the 30th, and for the last time on Saturday the 5th April.

" I am informed by ANDREW STEWART, that DA. HUME told him the following remarkable fact:—HUME went to visit Mr OSWALD of Dunnikier, then, I believe, a Lord of Trade, soon after Dr FRANKLIN came to England, which was in 1758; and as he entered the room Dr FRANKLIN was coming out. HUME took notice that FRANKLIN, who was just gone, was a very ingenious man. OSWALD said he had been with him on business relating to the Colonies, and added these remarkable words,—' He is certainly a man of genius; but if I am not much mistaken in characters, that man has more of faction in his mind than is sufficient to embroil any country in the world.' " \*

The commissioners, after despatching the letters above referred to, and feeling discouraged by the effects of the order for the evacuation of Philadelphia, re-embarked on board the vessel which had carried them to America, and set sail for New York.

While in that city they received a communication from Congress, intimating that the only ground on which they could enter on a treaty would be an acknowledgment of the independence of the States, and the withdrawal of the British force from America.

The commissioners then issued a proclamation, calling upon all persons in America to aid them in bringing the unhappy quarrel to a speedy termination.

After some correspondence with the Congress relative to the performance of

\* MSS. University, Edinburgh.

the stipulations contained in the convention of Saratoga, the commissioners found at length that the decision of the American disputes was to be left to the sword. They accordingly set sail from America about the end of November, and reached Plymouth on the 19th December 1778. The time for which they had been appointed expired on the 1st of June 1779, when they formally demitted office.

They had the honour to receive a formal intimation of the royal approbation of their services, through Lord GEORGE GERMAIN, who also expressed his regret that his correspondence with them, from which he had received so much information, had come to a conclusion.

On his return to Edinburgh in 1779, FERGUSON resumed the charge of his class, which had been conducted during his absence by Mr DUGALD STEWART, and continued the preparation of his 'Roman History.' But before that work made its appearance, a serious illness befell its author. Towards the end of 1780, FERGUSON had an attack of paralysis, probably occasioned by his free manner of living. His recovery from this illness is still quoted by medical authors as one of the most remarkable on record.

Under the treatment of his distinguished relative Dr BLACK,\* the symptoms gradually became more favourable, and FERGUSON was able, after some months, to undertake a journey to Bath. But he did not receive so much benefit from the use of the waters there as from the Pythagorean course of diet which he adopted, and which brought about a complete restoration. During the long period of thirty-six years that elapsed between his paralytic attack and his death, FERGUSON enjoyed remarkably good health. The occasional ailments he had seem to have been in no way connected with the disorder from which he made so wonderful a recovery.

Of his many sympathising friends, no one was more sincere than Sir JOHN M'PHERSON, now about to proceed to India as a member of the Supreme Council. The following letter expresses his feelings on this occasion:—

*“ Kensington Gore, 13th January 1781.*

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—Though your illness has not filled me with despondency, the first reports I had of it took away the happiness I should naturally have had in announcing to you my India appointment. The truth is, I was so little disposed to mention that event to any of my friends in Scotland—while I under-

\* The resemblance between this case and the attack which ultimately proved fatal to M. DE SAUSSURE in 1799 rendered that eminent French philosopher anxious to learn the mode of treatment employed by Dr BLACK, under which FERGUSON had recovered. DE SAUSSURE'S physician, Dr ODIER, accordingly requested Dr MARCET, then a student at the University of Edinburgh, to obtain from Dr BLACK the desired information. Dr MARCET, accompanied by Professor DUGALD STEWART, waited on Dr BLACK, who, after a long and interesting conversation, delivered to him, in writing, for transmission to DE SAUSSURE, an account of the case and its treatment, which has been printed in the 'Medico-Chirurgical Transactions' (vol. vii. p. 230), and is the more interesting, as it is, perhaps, the only existing memorial of the medical practice of that distinguished chemist.

stood you were in a situation not to communicate it to them first—that I never wrote to any person here of it; and the only correspondence I have had with your capital of late, is an answer which I thought myself obliged to send to the Duke of GORDON. I have likewise written to the Duchess this night.

“ Dr CARLYLE’S letter of to-day has set my mind more at ease. You have naturally a good constitution; and I place every hope in your Highland stamina, your philosophy, and knowledge of nature.

“ My friend CARLYLE has written me, with an interest in your welfare, and all that belongs to you, that adds, if possible, to my attachment to him. There is a circumstance which, with all his love for you and me, he is not fully known to—it is that I met you when I lost my father, and that your children and I are of but one family.—Farewell. May the power of affection be a power to give health and happiness! If you do not recover your health before I leave this country, I leave it with half my spring of satisfaction and soul.—Yours ever,

JOHN M’PHERSON.\*”

The intimate friendship between FERGUSON and Sir JOHN M’PHERSON has already been mentioned. It began in 1763, when the Honourable CHARLES and ROBERT GREVILLE, sons of the Earl of WARWICK, were attending the University. Sir JOHN was son of the minister of Sleat, in Skye, and, when a student, had been private tutor to these young noblemen while they lived under FERGUSON’S care.

A circumstance occurred at that time (1765) which singularly enough gave rise to a controversy in 1781 between FERGUSON and the celebrated Dr PERCY, Dean of Carlisle, afterwards Bishop of Dromore. The occasion of this controversy was the keen discussion regarding the authenticity of the poems of Ossian, in which the most eminent literary men were at this time engaged.

As is well known, JAMES M’PHERSON, the translator of “Ossian,” first published his “Fragments of Ancient Poetry” in 1760. The work was anonymous; but as it professed to give a specimen of a great amount of ancient Celtic poetry still existing in the mainland and isles of Scotland, it was received with the utmost enthusiasm. M’PHERSON made a tour to obtain further materials, after which he gave to the world ‘Fingal,’ an ancient epic poem in six books; shortly afterwards followed by ‘Temora,’ in eight books, with other poems of ‘Ossian.’

These productions caused an immense sensation, and were translated into several European languages, while M’PHERSON was hailed as the preserver of these relics of ancient culture. A few years later, however, a suspicion began to be entertained that these poems were not authentic, and their genuineness became the subject of as warm a controversy as ever was waged in the annals of literature.

\* MSS. University of Edinburgh.

From JAMES M'PHERSON'S friendship with FERGUSON, BLAIR, and Principal ROBERTSON, and from the high approval which these eminent men bestowed on his labours, they were subjected along with M'PHERSON to various attacks and misrepresentations. In particular, FERGUSON and BLAIR were, in 1781, charged by Dr PERCY with having perpetrated upon him a practical joke relative to the poems of Ossian, when he visited Dr BLAIR at Edinburgh in 1765.

The immediate cause of this matter being revived so long after the time when it happened was the publication, in 1781, of 'An Enquiry into the Authenticity of the Poems ascribed to Ossian,' by WILLIAM SHAW, the author of various Gaelic works.

From the several letters written on the occasion, we learn that in October 1765 Dr PERCY, when travelling in Scotland, had been for a few days the guest of Dr BLAIR, at the time an enthusiastic admirer of the Ossianic poems. BLAIR, according to PERCY'S statement, carried him to FERGUSON'S house, that he might have an opportunity of hearing some of the original Gaelic of the poem of Fingal recited to him by a native of the Highlands. After the recitation took place, Dr PERCY was called upon by BLAIR to mention in print this circumstance, as a proof of the genuineness of the Gaelic poetry of Scotland. The Doctor, who was then preparing for the press the second edition of his famous 'Reliques of English Poetry,' accordingly inserted the following paragraph:—"Concerning the bards of Gaul . . . no remains of their poetry are now extant; but as for those of Britain and Ireland, they have been more fortunate. . . . For an account of the Irish bards, the curious reader may consult O'CONNOR'S 'Dissertations on the History of Ireland,' Dublin, 1776; SPENCER'S 'View of the State of Ireland,' &c. &c. But no pieces of their poetry have been translated, unless their claim may be allowed to those beautiful pieces of Erse poetry which were lately given to the world in an English dress by Mr M'PHERSON; several fragments of which the editor of this book has heard sung in the original language, and translated *vivâ voce* by a native of the Highlands, who had at the time no opportunity of consulting Mr M'PHERSON'S book."\*

In 1781, when the controversy regarding the genuineness of Ossian was at its height, this statement of Dr PERCY was adduced in favour of M'PHERSON, by the Rev. JOHN SMITH, minister of Kilbrandon, in his 'Gallic Antiquities,' a work which contained, among other matters, a 'Dissertation on the authenticity of the Poems of Ossian.' In this dissertation the author stated, that "amidst the general wreck to which our traditions and poems have fallen for some time back, many pieces of Ossian are still remaining, and are found to correspond with the translation. A Highlander may perhaps be suspected of partiality in making this assertion; but several gentlemen of candour from other countries have made

\* "Reliques," 2d ed.; vol. i. p. 45.

the experiment, by causing such as had never had any access to see the translation, to give the meaning of those pieces which they repeated; and they declare that, on comparing the Gaelic and the English, they were entirely satisfied with the justness of the translation. Mr PERCY, in his preface to 'Reliques of old English Poetry,' tells, that he himself had often done this, and found the interpretation which he had got *extempore* correspond with the English translation, with which they had no access to be acquainted. Either these persons were inspired, or Ossian's Poems are authentic."\*

In the bitter attack on M'PHERSON by SHAW, that writer refers to this statement of SMITH as follows;—"Mr SMITH mentions Dr PERCY's '*Reliques of Ancient Poetry*,' in which he says the Doctor confesseth, that he himself heard pieces of it recited; and being compared with the *translation*, exactly corresponded. Dr PERCY does not understand a syllable of the Erse, and therefore could be no judge. The truth is, Dr BLAIR and Professor FERGUSON, when Dr PERCY was at Edinburgh, took care to introduce a young student from the Highlands, who repeated some verses, of which Professor FERGUSON said, such and such sentences in Fingal were the *translation*. Mr SMITH, if he looks into the second and third editions of the '*Reliques*,' will find the observations there no longer; and that Dr PERCY, on reflection, had just reason to suspect that this young student had previously been taught the part he recited, and the lines might as readily be any common song as the original of Fingal; for they knew it was impossible for an Englishman to detect it."†

This treatise gave FERGUSON some annoyance, and on the 21st of July 1781, he gave a formal denial to SHAW's statement, in the public prints.

In his advertisement, he quoted the passage from SHAW, and added, "to prevent any inferences which might be drawn from my silence, I think it material to declare that the above passage, so far as it relates to me, is altogether false; and that I never was present at the repetition of verses to Dr PERCY by a young student from the Highlands."

When the pamphlet of SHAW and the advertisement of FERGUSON were brought under the notice of Dr PERCY, he also wished to vindicate himself. Being, however, at a distance from his papers, he could only trust to his recollection at the time, and wrote the following letter to Dr BLAIR, enclosing the draft of an advertisement which he proposed to insert in the newspapers.

"Alnwick Castle, 17th August 1781.

"DEAR SIR,—I have at length gained a few moments of leisure, and will now endeavour to give you a full and true account of what may have occasioned the indecent liberty which has been taken with our names in the pamphlet you mention.

"In autumn 1765 I spent a week with you most agreeably at Edinburgh,

\* Gallic Antiquities, p. 96.

† Shaw's Inquiry, p. 25.

when, among other kind instances of your friendship, you introduced me to many worthy and ingenious men, and among the rest to Mr Professor FERGUSON. I believe you mentioned to him, that I had entertained doubts of the authenticity of Ossian's Poems, to remove which, he sent for a student that was a native of the Highlands, who told me he had heard lines of the original sung by the servants and country people there; and being asked if he could repeat any lines himself, he recited some passages in Earse, which being then translated to me, contained part of the description of Fingal's Chariot (a part of the poem of which I had entertained the greatest doubt). You then desired me, in a future edition of my 'Reliques of Ancient Poetry,' &c., to testify what I had heard. To this I could not reasonably object, and accordingly, in my second edition, 1767, I related in a note what had occurred. Some years after, I became acquainted with a gentleman, who is also intimately so with Mr M'PHERSON; but whose name I will now never mention, because I will not expose him to the inconvenience of being dragged before the public, as I have unfortunately been myself. This gentleman, in the most solemn manner, assured me (as one perfectly well informed) that the Poems of Ossian were almost all the productions of Mr M'PHERSON's own genius; that what was really original hardly exceeded in quantity our ballad of Chevy Chase. When I urged to him the transaction, at which I myself had been present, he assured me I had been imposed on, and advised me to suppress the note in my next edition, which accordingly I did in my third impression in 1775, silently and quietly, never intending to enter at all into the controversy concerning the genuineness of Ossian's Poems, of which I was so incompetent a judge from my utter ignorance of the Earse language.

"From the positive repeated testimony above mentioned, together with some other observations, which I occasionally made myself, I own I began to believe them to be *modern*, but no *less brilliant*, proofs of Scottish genius, equally tending to do honour to the country that gave birth to their author. But as I never intended to publish one word on the subject, I fondly hoped I might have gone out of the world without having my name ever mentioned in the controversy.

"This, however, was unluckily not to be my fate, for Mr SHAW having called on me just before he set out for the Highlands, when he assured me he would inquire with the utmost impartiality into the genuineness of the poetry attributed to Ossian. To him I unreservedly expressed my sentiments on that subject, without concealing anything I knew or believed concerning it, not intending to influence his opinion (which would have been absurd in one who knew so little of the matter), but to spur his diligence to remove my objections.

"I accordingly related the transaction at which I had been present, and the positive assurances I had since received from Mr M'PHERSON's friend, that I must have been deceived. I also urged the suspicious circumstance of the wolf being

never mentioned, or alluded to in these volumes. But this was not my own observation, it had before occurred to others;\* only that I have occasionally in my researches found abundant proof that the wolf existed in England long after the Norman Conquest, and much later in Scotland; and in Anglo-Saxon poetry, I find such reference to the wolf, as would naturally happen in a country where it abounded, and was the only animal of terror.

“ Little did I imagine that this writer would quote my name at length, and assign whole sentences to me, without ever asking my consent, or allowing me to revise what I might have inaccurately let fall in conversation. Yet this he has done, and till I saw his pamphlet in print, I never knew or suspected that I was to make such a figure in it.

“ Thus the matter stands: I never in my life had the most distant suspicion that you were privy to the imposition, if it was one; and as for Mr FERGUSON, he may also have been free from any share of the deception, which may have originated only from the reciter himself; but the lines were certainly recited in his presence, as I perfectly well remember, although he may have entirely forgot the occurrence.

“ Thus far I had written, before I saw the advertisement published by Mr FERGUSON. As he hath *committed* himself to me, I am now compelled to give my testimony to the public. I perfectly well remember the transaction, though Mr FERGUSON may have forgot it; we may both be sincere, though my recollection may, in this case, have been better than his.

“ As I have been unwillingly forced into this controversy, I shall desire to get out of it as soon as I can; and if not again attacked, it is not my intention to push the matter any farther. Upon the whole, I hope you will think the advertisement which follows is written with temper and decency, and such as may have a tendency to compose the dispute, so far as I am engaged in it.

“ As for yourself, my good friend, I hope it will make no breach in our friendship. I know your generous and enlarged heart can extend its regard to persons who may differ from you in points of the most sacred importance; even (as our Liturgy expresses it) to all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics. And though, on this question, I may have the misfortune to be one of the *latter*, yet I hope you will still allow me to subscribe myself, your ever affectionate friend,

“ THOMAS PERCY.”

“ P.S.—Pray write to me without delay, under cover, to his Grace the Duke of NORTHUMBERLAND, at Alnwick Castle, in Northumberland. Mrs PERCY joins with me in respects to you and Mrs BLAIR.

“ P.S.—I have some notion that the student who was produced to me by Mr FERGUSON was (the Indian) Mr MACPHERSON, then (I believe) his pupil. Perhaps

\* See Johnson's Life by BOSWELL, vol. ii. page 303.



this circumstance may serve and awaken the recollection of you both. Pray, inform me how Mr or Dr FERGUSON is usually styled. Is he called Mr or Dr? \*

Dr PERCY, after some time had elapsed, began to think that he might possibly be mistaken on some points, and wrote the following letter to Dr BLAIR, after consulting the memoranda which he had made, when on his visit to Scotland:—

“ *Alnwick Castle, September 10, 1781.*

“ DEAR SIR,—You will excuse my having remained so long silent since I was favoured with your last (inclosing the polite letter from Mr Professor FERGUSON), when I inform you, that I delayed my answer till I could send into Northamptonshire, to have my papers there searched for minutes, which I remembered to have made, of some of the particulars that occurred to me during my short visit to Edinburgh in 1765; for, as I have the misfortune to differ about a matter of fact from a gentleman of so respectable a character as Mr Professor FERGUSON, I thought it would not be treating him with due regard, to neglect any means of information that could contribute to settle the point between us. After all, I think he would have recollected the recital made to me by the student, as well as he has done some of the other circumstances, at least he would not have been so positive on this head as he appears to be in his letter, if you had reminded him that the student produced to me was his own pupil, Mr MACPHERSON, who, I believe, then boarded with him in his house.

“ I have, however, recovered a pocket-book, in which I had written down minutes at the time, expressing how and where I spent every day during my short stay at Edinburgh in 1765, where I was only five days; for I arrived there from Stirling on Tuesday, October 8th, and departed thence for England early on Monday morning, October 13th.

“ Now by these minutes I find, that on Wednesday, October 9th, Mr FERGUSON dined with me at your house; and on the Sunday following, October 13th, after evening service (wherein I well remember to have heard a most eloquent sermon from you), you caused me to drink tea with Mr FERGUSON.

“ At his house it was, during that visit, that Mr FERGUSON, I believe, gave me the written specimens of Earse poetry, which he mentions; but very certain it is, that then and there the student was produced to me, who recited *vivâ voce* the passages in Earse, as I have related in my former letter. To which I can now add this farther circumstance, that it being Sunday, he could not decently sing the tune, which I had a great curiosity to hear; and as I was obliged to leave Edinburgh early the next morning, and was not likely to see him again, he in the evening, as we were going away, took me aside, and in a low voice, hummed a few notes to me, as a specimen of the old Highland tune.

“ This having been the case I can have made no jumble, as Mr FERGUSON is pleased to suppose, nor could I possibly confound this with any other occurrence, for

\* MSS. University of Edinburgh.

I not only never heard the sound of the Highland language from any other persons but Mr FERGUSON and his pupil, during my stay in Edinburgh; but I do not find that I was ever there in company with any other natives of the Highlands but themselves; and for this I can appeal to my memorandum-book, which mentions persons (and there were many very worthy and ingenious ones) to whom you then introduced me; and also how and where I spent the whole five days among them.

“ I might even proceed further and aver, that I never heard the recital of Earse poetry, either before or since, in my whole life; but that I now recollect, I once heard a short song or two from an old Highland soldier, who, travelling home to Scotland, begged at my door, but who I could not find knew anything of the subjects of Ossian's Epic poetry. On his account I shall suppress the circumstance of my never having heard the sound of Earse poetry, except at that single recital of the student, and, in my intended advertisement, which I shall also, in other respects, shorten as much as possible, for I heartily wish to rid my hands of this foolish business; and unless Mr FERGUSON is more desirous of committing his name in print than I am, our controversy shall soon be at an end; for I shall only attribute to him a want of recollection, which surely might happen to the best memory at so great a distance of time.

“ In truth, I cannot but think Mr FERGUSON's name too respectable to deserve to be tacked to slight appeals and rejoinders in the common newspapers; and I must acknowledge I have some reverence for my own; and, therefore, when I have once supported my own veracity in as few words as possible, I hope the matter will drop, and neither of us be ever mentioned more on this subject. But if he still persists in denying publicly the existence of a recital, which at your desire I once mentioned in print (though, upon since reflecting how little I knew of the matter, and for other reasons assigned in my former letter, I have since suppressed it), I must then be compelled, much against my will, to produce at large necessary proofs in support of my own affirmation, which yet, I trust, I shall with temper and decency, and still continue to approve myself—Dear Sir, your affectionate friend and very faithful servant,

“ THOS. PERCY.”

“ *P.S.*—My Lord ALGERNON PERCY, who has been here since I wrote to you last, but who is since gone away, could not distinctly remember, as I had at first understood him, that Mr FERGUSON was present when Mr MACPHERSON repeated the Earse poetry to me; but he remembered that fact better than could have been expected, after six years' interval, considering too, he was but a boy when it happened.

“ The Duke desires his compliments, and pray deliver mine in the kindest manner to Mrs BLAIR. I am now removing to Carlisle, where I hope to receive your next favour.” \*

\* MSS., University of Edinburgh.

This letter was sent to FERGUSON, who wrote the following answer to Dr BLAIR :—

“ *Edinburgh, 15th September, 1781.*

“ DEAR SIR,—I return Dr PERCY's letter of the 10th inst., on this disagreeable subject, of the recital of Erse poetry. I am sorry he has had so much trouble; but cannot blame myself, as I am satisfied the trouble did not originate with me. I have in what is past, and shall continue in what may follow, to confine myself strictly to what is necessary in my own defence. I found it alledged in print, that Dr PERCY had a cheat put upon him when at Edinburgh, to which I was accessory. In such cases it is often argued that until such or such assertions be contradicted they must be supposed true; and I did not choose that my character should rest upon that footing. I was free to deny any concurrence in the cheat, and even free to deny my having ever been present at any such scene as that in which the cheat was said to be practised. With respect to the last point, indeed, it may be thought that I could speak only negatively, and deny my having any memory of the transaction; and so it is no doubt of all past transactions. But there are circumstances which entitle a person to be more or less positive. In this case the cheat that is said to have been put upon Dr PERCY could not be practised in my presence without my concurrence; and this every feeling of my mind warrants me in denying in the most positive terms. As I never questioned the fidelity of Mr JAMES M'PHERSON in his publications, I was none of those who busied themselves in finding evidence of it. It has happened to me, indeed, to mention a very few particulars of Erse poetry that were known to myself; and from my knowledge of which I had taken a very early impression of what mere genius, without the aid of literature or foreign models, may do where the human mind is free and the passions have scope in recital as well as in action. I imagined that evidence of its power might have been found in every country if collected before language and manners had so far changed as to obliterate or efface its productions. There being any remnants of it in the Highlands of Scotland, I imputed to the manners and language having changed less than they have done elsewhere in equal periods of time. Whether or no this be honourable for the people I will not at present try to determine. It appeared to me matter of some curiosity in the history of mankind, but very little as matter of vanity to one corner of this island, much less of jealousy to any other corner of it. The scraps I showed to Dr PERCY had a reference to this idea, not the fidelity of Mr M'PHERSON's publications. And I was surprised to find myself, contrary to the general tenor of my feelings, stated as a fabricator of evidence on that subject. I thought myself free to deny in very positive terms my having ever been present at the repetition of verses to Dr PERCY by a student from the Highlands; because I never knew a student who pretended to repeat any part or specimen of Ossian's heroic poetry. And the mention of Mr JOHN M'PHERSON's name does not at all

alter the state of my recollection, for my memory of him is, among other particulars in which he is well known to me, that he never appeared to be in possession of any part of Ossian's poetry. I well remember that he was in some degree a singer, though I do not recollect any particular song but one, which, with a very few words of any meaning, consisted chiefly of a chorus or burden, not more significant than lullabolaro or derry down. If he repeated this or any other song that Dr PERCY might hear the sound of the language, it is no wonder that I should forget that circumstance, especially as I have totally forgot Dr PERCY's visit with you at my house. But I hope that Dr PERCY, now he has seen his minutes, will be sensible that a person may mistake what he thinks he remembers, as well as another may forget what has really passed. What he wrote from his memory in a former letter was, that I had sent for a student to your house. What he writes now is, that he came to the student at my house. Some other very easy mistake in the circumstances, if recollected, might acquit me entirely of any share in the imposition that was put upon Dr PERCY. I confess that I was astonished at the ease with which this charge was stated against me in the pamphlet which has given rise to this correspondence. If I had the honour of being sufficiently known to Dr PERCY, I should certainly request that he would compare probabilities, and consider which is most likely, that I should be accessory to a cheat, or that he should mistake some material circumstance of a story sixteen years old. Although I may not be entitled to employ this plea with Dr PERCY, I certainly must be allowed to submit it, in case I am under a necessity of more publications, to persons to whom I am better known. There is certainly hitherto no reason to apprehend from me, as Dr PERCY mentions, any improper desire of committing my name in print. I appeared, from necessity, to prevent inferences which might be drawn from my silence against me. I do not pretend to set up my affirmation against that of any other person; but as often as occasion is given to the same inference, I must appear again to the same purpose. Dr PERCY is pleased to say in the letter which I return to you, that if I persist in denying publicly the existence of a recital, &c., he must then be compelled, much against his will, to produce at large necessary proofs in support of his own affirmation. Dr PERCY will be pleased to observe, that I do not pretend to know what recitals he may have had made to him. I only deny that I ever was present at any imposition put upon Dr PERCY by any pretended recital of Erse, and that I ever was present at any such recital. I am persuaded that there are no proofs to the contrary, of which Dr PERCY will not perceive the weakness the more he considers them. At any rate, he must be sensible that if any such proofs are supposed, I cannot possibly consent to have them secreted. When they appear, I hope that I too shall proceed with temper and decency, although I have a little more at stake than Dr PERCY, and have my integrity to defend against a most unexpected attack, which it seems is to be carried on against me in support of his

accuracy in conversation.—I am, with much obligation for your good offices in this business, dear sir, your most affectionate humble servant,

“ ADAM FERGUSON.”\*

This singular dispute about a matter of fact is only interesting from the eminence of the persons engaged in it; at the same time, the question of the genuineness of the Ossianic Poems given to the world by M'PHERSON, is still an interesting subject of inquiry.

The advertisement of Dr PERCY, followed by a further statement of FERGUSON, duly appeared in the public prints, after which the subject dropped. †

There can be no doubt that BLAIR, when writing his elegant dissertation on the Ossianic poetry, was an enthusiastic believer in the genuineness of these poems, and that the recitation of Gaelic poetry had taken place at his instigation. On the occasion of this correspondence, he seems to have shown a forgetfulness, or possibly a fear of admitting any statements tending to compromise his opinions, which caused some annoyance both to Dr PERCY and FERGUSON.

From the letters above given, we learn that FERGUSON was a supporter of the genuineness of the Ossianic Poems, as he states that he “ never questioned the fidelity of Mr JAMES M'PHERSON in his publications.” † A correspondence with M'PHERSON relative to the publication of the original Gaelic of Ossian will be subsequently referred to.

In 1782, FERGUSON entered warmly into the scheme proposed by Principal ROBERTSON to institute in Edinburgh a society, similar to the foreign Academies, for the cultivation of every branch of science and literature. The immediate cause of this proposal was the application of the Society of Antiquaries to be incorporated by Royal Charter. §

The Senatus Academicus drew up a memorial to Government, proposing that, “ instead of granting a charter to the Scots Antiquaries as a separate society, a society shall be established by a charter upon a more extensive plan, which may be denominated ‘The Royal Society of Scotland,’ and shall have for its object all the various departments of science, erudition, and belles lettres. That a certain number of persons, respectable for their rank, their standing, or their knowledge, shall be named by the Royal Charter, with powers to choose the original members of the Society, and to frame regulations for conducting their inquiries and proceedings, and for the future election of members.” ||

\* MSS. University of Edinburgh.

† See Shaw's ‘Inquiry’ for FERGUSON's vindication, Appendix, p. 82.

‡ See his letter to Mr M'KENZIE, Secretary of the Highland Society, in that Society's Report on the Poems of Ossian, Appendix, p. 62.

§ Smellie's Account of the Antiquarian Society of Edinburgh, p. 12.

|| It was due to the persevering efforts of Principal ROBERTSON that the Royal Society was instituted. After memorialising Government, about the end of the year 1782, to the effect above stated, the Records of the University bear that the Principal, on the 10th of February 1783, informed the Senatus Academicus, “ that the Lord Advocate and Mr HUNTER BLAIR had desired him to acquaint

The members of the Philosophical Society, which had long existed in Edinburgh, were at this time also anxious to be incorporated by Royal Charter. They, however, adopted the views of the *Senatus Academicus*, and entered heartily into the scheme for the establishment of a society, on the model of those at St Petersburg and Berlin, for the purpose of cultivating every branch of science, erudition, and taste.

The Royal Society was accordingly incorporated in June 1783. The following is a list of the noblemen and gentlemen named in its Charter:—HENRY, Duke of Buccleuch; Lord President DUNDAS; JAMES MONTGOMERY, Lord Chief-Baron of Exchequer; Lord Justice-Clerk MILLER; JOHN GRIEVE, Lord Provost; Sir ALEXANDER DICK; Sir GEORGE CLERK; Principal ROBERTSON; Professors CULLEN, MONRO, BLAIR, WALKER, FERGUSON, DALZEL, ROBISON, MACONOCHIE; ILAY CAMPBELL, Solicitor-General; J. HUNTER BLAIR, and ADAM SMITH, Esqrs.; and J. MACLAURIN, W. NAIRNE, and ROBERT CULLEN, Advocates.

FERGUSON took a warm interest in the progress of the infant society, and was elected one of the Councillors. His only contribution, however, to its literary labours was a sketch of the Life of his relative, Dr JOSEPH BLACK, published in 1801.

them, that as they had the prospect of being in Edinburgh during the recess of Parliament, they had not returned any answer to the letters which the Principal had written to them, in obedience to the appointment of the meeting held on the second day of December last, but that they had laid the Memorial transmitted to them before His Majesty's ministers, and had good reason to think that what was requested in the aforesaid Memorial would be granted. That in order to obtain this, it would be necessary that a petition from the Principal and Professors of the University, in respectful and general terms, should be addressed to His Majesty, which the Lord Advocate undertook to present."

"The Principal produced a scroll of such a petition, the tenor whereof follows:—'Unto the King's most excellent Majesty, the Petition of the Principal and Professors of the University of Edinburgh, humbly sheweth—That literary societies having been found by experience to contribute greatly towards promoting useful science and good taste in every country where they have been established, many persons eminent in rank, or in learning, have long expressed an earnest desire that a literary society, formed on the plan suited to the state of this part of the United Kingdom, might be instituted in Edinburgh, being fully persuaded that its labours and researches will be of considerable advantage to the nation.

"We, therefore, deeply sensible of your Majesty's paternal attention to the welfare of your people in every instance, and confiding in the gracious disposition of a Sovereign who has distinguished his reign by the splendour of his efforts to extend the knowledge of nature, and the liberality of his institutions for encouraging the arts of elegance, are humble suitors to your Majesty, that you may be graciously pleased to establish, by Charter, a literary society, to be denominated, The Royal Society of Edinburgh, for the advancement of learning and useful knowledge, empowering the Members of it to have, as the objects of their investigation and discussion, not only the Sciences of Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Medicine, and Natural History, but those relating to Antiquities, Philology, and Literature.

"We humbly request that your Majesty will take our petition into your gracious consideration, and be pleased, as Founder and Patron, to give a beginning and form to this Royal Society, in that mode, and under those Regulations, which to your Royal wisdom shall seem most proper.'

"Which being maturely considered by the *Senatus Academicus*, was approved of, and the Principal empowered to sign it in their name, and to transmit it to the Lord Advocate and Mr HUNTER BLAIR, with thanks for their obliging attention to the former application of the *Senatus Academicus*, and to request that they will still continue to attend to this business, until it be brought to the desired issue."

In 1783 FERGUSON gave to the world his principal work, entitled *The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic*. This title strictly embraces the period between the end of the early Roman monarchy, and the elevation of Julius Cæsar as the first Emperor of Rome. But, in order to bring the narrative nearer to the point at which GIBBON begins his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, FERGUSON continues his work down to the death of Tiberius, the time when the succession to the throne began to be considered as hereditary.

FERGUSON has thus written the *History of Rome* from A.U.C. 240 to A.U.C. 790, a period of 550 years, and has given a lucid and compendious account of the leading events of that history.

In preparing his work, he of course availed himself of the classical authors, and, amongst modern writers, he made use of the researches of GUAZESSI and VESTRINI, the *Annals* of PIGHIUS, and the celebrated *Essay* of MONTESQUIEU, on the *Grandeur and Decline of the Roman People*.

His aim was rather to give in a connected and elegant form a narrative of the great facts of Roman history, than to indulge in discussions of the many matters of controversy which so extensive a subject necessarily involves. He does not enter upon the story of the origin of Rome, or even of the rise of the Republican form of government, but leans to the view previously held by DE BEAUFORT, and more fully developed by Sir GEORGE CORNEWALL LEWIS, that the early history of Rome was so involved in fable that no profit could result from such inquiries.

In this way FERGUSON'S *History*, ably and elegantly as it was written, does not afford the rich fund of information to be obtained from the more recent works of NIEBUHR and MOMMSEN, who, with infinite skill, have elucidated the early history of Rome by a critical examination of the remains of the classical authors; and who, by the comparison of their fragmentary details, by the examination of institutions existing in later and more historical times, and by the study of analogous phenomena among other nations, have endeavoured to place that history on a more trustworthy basis.

FERGUSON was led to undertake this work from a conviction that the history of the Roman people, during the period of their greatness, was a practical illustration of those ethical and political doctrines which were the object of his peculiar study; and he has remarked, that to know the history of Rome well was to know mankind, and to have seen our species under the fairest aspect of great ability, integrity, and courage. He regarded the great Roman statesmen and warriors during the Republican period, as exhibiting the utmost range of the human powers; while he reckoned the steps, by which the republican form of government was exchanged for despotism, as well deserving the careful attention of the student of political history and human nature.

As was before remarked, the military experience which he had seen in his youth

was of material service to him in writing his vivid account of the wars in which the Roman people were so constantly engaged; and his knowledge of human nature enabled him faithfully to portray the characters of the principal Roman leaders, and to test them by the laws of a high morality.

The many editions of this work which have been published show the estimation in which it has been regarded by the literary world.\* The errors and omissions of the first edition were subsequently carefully corrected; and FERGUSON himself, ten years after it first appeared, visited Italy to inspect the scenes of the more important events which his work describes.

In 1785, FERGUSON, now in his sixty-second year, finding the anxiety attendant upon his professorial labours pressing upon his health and spirits, resigned the Professorship of Moral Philosophy. That he might retain his salary, he was, according to the custom of the Town Council, appointed to the Chair of Mathematics in conjunction with a junior professor, Mr PLAYFAIR, while Professor DUGALD STEWART was transferred from the Chair of Mathematics to that of Moral Philosophy.

STEWART had been the pupil of FERGUSON, and owed to his instructions the development of that taste for metaphysical speculation, by which in his lectures and writings he shed so much lustre on the University.

As Professor of Moral Philosophy, FERGUSON amply sustained the reputation of the institution with which he was so long connected. He was manly and impressive as a lecturer, but at the same time persuasive and elegant. In one particular his mode of teaching was peculiar, and not easily imitated. As he had delineated the general plan of his course in his 'Institutes of Moral Philosophy,' he had for many years no written lectures, but trusted to his mastery of the subject for the expression of his ideas on the spur of the moment. When his health gave way in 1781, however, he found it necessary to write out his course, which, during the leisure of his retirement, he corrected for the press and published in 1792.

Amongst the many proofs he received of the value of his professorial instructions, none were more agreeable to him than the attentions shown by Sir JOHN M'PHERSON, who had now attained the high position of Governor-General of India. The following letter, which enclosed a munificent gift, is no less creditable to his kindness of heart than to the merits of the veteran Professor:—

*“ 12th January 1786.*

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—When I was but a Company's writer in the Carnatic, I remember I sent you a small bill, which you told me you accepted with pleasure, as it came from me, and you bought French cloth with it, being then on a visit

\* It was translated into French by De Meunier and Gibelin in 1784, also into German and Italian.



to Paris. I have been near a year Governor-General of India, and four years a Supreme Counsellor, and I have sent you nothing but a little madeira, yet you are the friend next to my heart, and your interests are dearer to me than my own, as they involve the concerns of a numerous family depending on the state of your health. If I have been thus inattentive to your situation, you are yourself the cause, for to you am I indebted for those rules of conduct in my public trusts, which have bound my generosity to your or to my own private interests within narrow limits. You have been occasionally informed of the line pursued by me since I left Europe, the situation in which I found affairs, my labours to retrieve them, and the disbursement of my own income in various attentions to those who were recommended to me, and whom I could not oblige at the public expense. If the line I have pursued was not necessary from its satisfaction to my own mind, the example of it was a *sine qua non* to enable me, when affairs devolved upon me, to reduce the expenses of this colony about a million sterling per annum, and to silence the cries of thousands who might otherwise have just grounds for charging me with partiality and selfishness.

“ I have followed your maxims in the practice of affairs,—upon perhaps the greatest theatre of affairs, if the greatness of affairs is founded in the numbers of men, and the extent of their interests—the concerns to be extricated or forfeited—the wealth that might have been acquired, and the consequences that might ensue to individuals, tribes, and nations.

“ The events that hinged upon my ideas and conduct four years ago were more important than those which I can now influence, though I stand at the head and in absolute charge of all our affairs in India.

“ It is, my friend, one-and-twenty years since I began under you the rudiments of these affairs; and as there is no period of my life that I look to with such a conscious sensation of joy and pride, as that which I passed with you and our noble pupils, so to you is due the account which I can in truth give, and which I am bound to notice to you: It must be interesting to you, and it is for the benefit of our native school, and perhaps of society in general, that I should enable you to know the result, that you might hereafter be the more confirmed in your system.

“ I have amply experienced the truth of three of your favourite positions:—

“ 1st. That the pursuits of an active mind are its greatest happiness, when they are directed to good objects, which unite our own happiness with that of our friends and the general advantage of society. Hence the first success in the Carnatic; the subsequent efforts in London; the return to India; the visit to Europe in '77; the intercourse with men in business; the friendships of the ministers; Lord N.'s \* selection of me for my trust in 1778.

“ 2d. I have likewise experienced, that he who has not been in contact with

\* Lord NORTH.

his fellow creatures knows but half of the human heart. But such are the necessary taxes of occupation, of business, and perhaps of life.

“ 3d. That all that rests with us individually, is to act our own parts to the best of our ability, and to endeavour to do good for its own sake, independent of events, disappointments, or sufferings.

“ Under these impressions I have acted and I now act ; and if the India Company, the ministers, and the Legislature extend their views to the necessity of affairs, and to the future prosperity of Britain and India, as they stand united ; and if they will adopt the plans I have laid before them, I am steady in believing that the greatest benefits to Britain from Thule to the Land's End, and to Asia, from Cape Comorin to Tartary, may flow from the practical operation of the commercial and political systems I have opened for the adoption of the empire. The outlines are clear and strong, as well as the ground of the operations themselves. Look on the map and see the field of empire marked by the Thibet Hills from Tartary to Chitagong, by the Ganges from its source to its embrace of the ocean, and by opposite chains of hills and of wild tribes from Balasore to the Jumna.

“ This empire asks nothing from Britain but protection and some staples ; and it sends to Europe every year about twenty fine Indiamen, loaded with the industry and the productions of its extraordinary soil. Each ship is worth L.100,000, one with another. The improvements made in navigation, and the knowledge of climates, and the care of health, enable Britain to carry on this trade, if she adopted a liberal plan for it, on a footing to employ a fleet in going and returning, including China and the coasts of the great Peninsula, about seventy ships—now equal in size to 50-gun ships, why not to 64 and 74 ? Commerce would then create a navy for Britain, at least such as would command the Indian seas ; and as in King William's days, the first great operations of our state began by converting our debts into funds or property by regular payments of the interest ; so we may here employ the present interest of our debts to be a medium for remitting the whole to Britain in an additional investment of goods. Upon this system, which necessity forced us to begin here in 1782, by providing what was called a subscription investment, and drawing bills upon the proceeds of the goods, India was saved from the jaws of war and the chains of a little monopolist policy, which forced all remittances to Britain through the channels of foreign trade, and which paid the tribute of custom to Lisbon and Copenhagen, at a rate that has turned the exchange from Copenhagen against England to about 18 per cent.

But my system does more ; it pours in upon Britain more streams of friendship and of aid, which every officer, civil and military, in these colonies wishes to send partially to his relations, and which, in the general remittance and receipt, give the British heart on this and your side of the ocean its most delightful

exercises, and which gladden every village and place, from the cottages of the Isle of Skye to the palaces of London.

“ I think a still greater scene opens by this commercial intercourse, if our rivals in Europe wished but for a proper share in it. It would embrace much of the repose of the universe, the happy communications of all the inhabitants of the globe from the sources of the Mississippi to those of the Ganges, and from west to east, till the east and the west are united.

“ I have at this moment at Calcutta ambassadors from Tidore, in the eastern seas, from Thibet, from all the states of India, and from Timur Shaw, who is crossing the Attock ; and as Manilla is opening her trade, I hope to hear direct from Lima before I leave India, and to make the Incas of Peru acquainted with the Brahmin Rajahs on the banks of the Ganges.

“ Curious are, besides, the treasures in literature and the oblivious history of nations that are dawning upon us from the researches of Sir WILLIAM JONES and others, in Shanscrit, Arabic, and Persian. Even Anacreon and Euclid's best and happiest labours may have been long asleep in the translations of this country. And what seems to complete our prospect of elegant and useful information, is that the present Governor of Chinsura, who was for seven years in Japan, has brought in the wonders of that country. Their Encyclopædia is in his hands, and in some of the arts of life and of government, those islanders of Asia, those Anglo-Asiaticks, have left all other nations far behind.

“ While devoting all my moments that are my own to such general considerations, I have perused, and am perusing again, your story of the Roman State and their rule of India—Thanks ! thanks ! my dear friend, but one ambition remains—it is to converse with you at your town over these affairs. Has life in reserve for us this happiness ? or is our expectation of it enough ? May I be able to meet you there worthy in every respect of your esteem as of your affection,—and is it possible to go through the remaining acts of my service here with progressive dignity and success. Hitherto all is as you could wish. But all may not be at the farm as you wish.\* I know the feu-duty embarrasses you, and the *dignitas* without the *otium* may be there. Receive, then, the inclosed bill upon my masters, the India Company. Let the amount of it be sunk to discharge the annual feu-duty of the farm during your life, Mrs FERGUSON's, and the lives of all your children and their descendants. It will be a future business to buy off the feu-duty altogether ; at present I can send you no more. And should fate have deprived me of the future happiness of knowing that you can be conscious of this little attention, those nearest and dearest to you I must consider as what remains to me of you. To them I address this letter ; also, in such event, JOHN FLETCHER, HOME, M'PHERSON. FERGUSON will keep a room for me, or any remembrance of

\* FERGUSON, for several years after his marriage, had cultivated the farm of Bankhead, near Currie, at a considerable sacrifice of his private means.

the farm-house. Tell him (for I will not admit the idea that you have left us) that he is my son. His father was more than the father of your ever affectionate,

“JOHN MACPHERSON.

“Mind me to Drs BLAIR, HOME, ROBERTSON, CARLYLE, BLACK, &c. &c.”

About the time of the resignation of his University duties, FERGUSON resided in what was then a southern suburb of Edinburgh, named “the Sciennes.” This suburb, which now forms part of the city, was then considered so far distant that his friends used to call his house “Kamtschatka ;” and there, in the beginning of 1787, an interesting occurrence took place, which shows the pleasure he always took in the recognition of youthful genius.

BURNS had come to Edinburgh at the close of the previous year, to superintend the printing of the second edition of his poems. His arrival in the capital had produced a sensation, and he received great attention from many of the literati of the time. FERGUSON'S colleagues, Professors DALZEL and STEWART, have recorded the feelings of interest which the arrival of BURNS excited in the literary society of Edinburgh. Being desirous to converse with so remarkable a man, FERGUSON invited a small party to meet him at his house, amongst whom were Drs HUTTON and BLACK, Mr DUGALD STEWART; and the famous aeronaut LUNARDI. Trifling as this incident may seem, it afforded to Sir WALTER SCOTT, then a boy and companion of FERGUSON'S sons, the only opportunity he ever had of meeting with BURNS. On that occasion also he displayed that wonderful acquaintance with poetry for which he afterwards was so remarkable.

In a letter to LOCKHART, SCOTT thus describes this interesting meeting:—“I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor FERGUSON'S, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr DUGALD STEWART. Of course, we youngsters sate silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember, which was remarkable in BURNS' manner, was an effect produced upon him by a print of BUNBURY'S representing a soldier lying dead upon the snow, his dog sitting in misery on the one side, on the other his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath:—

“Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's Plain,  
Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain ;  
Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew,  
The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,  
Gave the sad presage of his future years,  
The child of misery baptised in tears.”

“BURNS seemed much affected by the print or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of LANGHORNE'S, called by the unpromising title of “The Justice of the Peace;” I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to

BURNS, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received and still recollect with very great pleasure." \*

In 1792, FERGUSON published his lectures, under the title of *Principles of Moral and Political Science, being chiefly a Retrospect of Lectures delivered in the College of Edinburgh*. This work was the first extensive contribution to mental philosophy which emanated from the University of Edinburgh. HUTCHESON in the University of Glasgow, REID and BEATTIE in that of Aberdeen, had previously laid the foundation of the Scottish school; and FERGUSON has the merit of having introduced its doctrines into a new sphere, where they were destined to attain a further development. He also had the advantage of bringing to his speculations a greater amount of historical knowledge, and a much more extended acquaintance with human character.

He divides his subject into two parts, the *first* of which states historically the most general appearances in the nature and state of man; embracing his description and place in the scale of being, mind or the characteristics of intelligence,

\* Life of SCOTT, vol. i. p. 136.

Some interesting reminiscences of FERGUSON'S son, Sir ADAM, who was the life-long friend of SCOTT, printed in Chambers's Journal, No. 60, 1855, supply one or two particulars which SCOTT'S modesty suppressed. "The large black eyes of BURNS, which literally glowed when he spoke with feeling or interest, overflowed as he read the above lines, and he turned with an agitated voice to the company, asking if any one knew who wrote them. The philosophers sat mute; and after an interval, young WALTER said half aloud and very carelessly, 'The're written by one LANGHORNE.' BURNS caught the response, and seeming, both surprised and amused that a boy should know what all those eminent men were ignorant of, he said to SCOTT, 'You'll be a man yet, sir.' Rather oddly, we have found on an inspection of the print, that the name 'LANGHORNE' is inscribed below the lines, though in so small a character, that where the picture hung on a wall, it might well have escaped the notice both of BURNS and SCOTT."

In the same interesting article, an amusing anecdote is recorded of Principal ROBERTSON, when dining one day at FERGUSON'S house:—

"FERGUSON, while devotedly attached to Dr ROBERTSON, and a great admirer of his works, found reason to complain of the manner in which he conducted himself in private society, particularly at dinner parties. It was the worthy Principal's custom, as soon as the cloth had been removed, to settle himself in his chair, and throwing out a subject, commence lecturing upon it to the destruction of conversation, and the no small weariness of the company. By way of giving him a check, Dr FERGUSON took his friend Dr CARLYLE of Inveresk into counsel; and it was speedily arranged between them that, immediately after dinner, Dr CARLYLE should anticipate the ordinary lecture of Dr ROBERTSON, by commencing a long tirade, in an enthusiastic manner, on the virtues of an article then in the course of being puffed in the newspaper advertisements, namely, patent mustard! FERGUSON, in the meantime, had a private conversation with the Principal, in which he took occasion to remark, that he had lately begun to fear there was something wrong with CARLYLE'S mind; he was getting so addicted to speak loudly in praise of trivial things,—for example, he was unable for the present to converse about anything but patent mustard! ROBERTSON expressed his concern for the case, but hoped it was only a passing whim. The dinner party accordingly assembled at Dr FERGUSON'S, and ROBERTSON was about to commence as usual with one of his long-winded formal palavers, when all at once Dr CARLYLE broke in,—'This was,' he said, 'an age most notable for its inventions and discoveries. Human ingenuity was exerted on the noblest and the meanest things, and often with the most admirable effects on the meanest. There was, for instance, an article of a humble kind which had lately been wonderfully improved by a particular mode of preparation, and he for his part was inclined to say, that *patent mustard* was the thing above all others which gave a distinguishing glory to this age. In the first place,—it is needless, however, to pursue his discourse further; suffice it, that Dr ROBERTSON sat paralysed, and could not afterwards, during the whole night, muster power or spirits to utter more than an occasional sentence."

and the principles of his progressive nature. Having laid this foundation of his course in history, FERGUSON proceeds in the *second* part of his work, to examine the specific good incident to human nature, and to treat of moral law or the distinction of good and evil, and its systematic applications, which are explained under the heads of Ethics, Jurisprudence, and Politics.

In the treatment of the metaphysical part of his course, FERGUSON declares himself an enemy to the scepticism of HUME, and opposed to the doctrine of ideas as maintained by HOBBS, LOCKE, and BERKELEY, but he coincides in his views with the metaphysical doctrines of ARISTOTLE as revived by REID. He is also a valuable exponent of the inductive method of observation as applied to the mind, so well laid down by REID, and consistently recommends the employment of this mode of procedure in all investigations. His metaphysical discussions are also valuable, as showing clearly the characteristics of mental as distinguished from material action, and establishing those primary truths on which all useful philosophical speculation is founded.

In his moral system, FERGUSON was a philosopher of the Stoic school. He avoided, however, the exaggerations and paradoxes into which many of its disciples have fallen, and endeavoured, by selecting what seemed reasonable and just from that and other theories of morals, to enunciate a more perfect system.

In opposition to HUTCHESON, who confounds the Will with Desire, FERGUSON first of all establishes Free-will as the subject and foundation of Moral Science. To the laws which regulate the Will—viz., *the Law of Self-preservation—the Law of Society—and the Law of Estimation or of Progression*, FERGUSON refers all moral facts, and all systems of morality. By this theory also he attempts to refute or reconcile the different theories previously promulgated.

In supporting his system, FERGUSON was opposed to that of CLARKE, who regarded the Intellectual principle as the arbiter of right and wrong, and who thus made virtue a matter of mere calculation. He was opposed to HUME, who places the foundation of morals in Utility, and shows, that if utility and virtue often unite to urge us in the same direction, they are often also at variance and mutually contradictory; and that whilst virtue is that which is most definitely useful, and most certain to promote our happiness, it nevertheless is not confounded in our minds with any idea of private interest. He was also opposed to SMITH'S theory of Sympathy as the principle of morality; and proves, that to sympathise with a person, and to approve of his conduct, are two very different things. He thus also disposes of HUTCHESON'S celebrated theory of the *moral sense*:—"If," says he, "moral sense be no more than a figurative expression, by which to distinguish the discernment of right and wrong, admitting this to be an ultimate fact in the constitution of our nature, it may appear nugatory to dispute about words, or to require any other form of expression than is fit to point out the fact in question."

FERGUSON endeavours to reconcile all these systems of morals, by comprehending them in his own classification. With HOBBS and HUME he admits the power of self-interest or utility, and makes it enter into morals as the law of Self-preservation. HUTCHESON'S theory of universal benevolence, and SMITH'S idea of sympathy, he combines under the law of Society. But as these laws of Self-preservation and Society are the means rather than the end of human destiny, they are subordinate to a supreme end, and this supreme end is Perfection.

It was in this *Idea of Perfection*, then, that FERGUSON placed the principle of moral approbation, and considered it as the law which every intelligent being forms to himself, by which to judge of every sentiment of esteem or contempt, and every expression of commendation or censure.

The philosophic speculations of FERGUSON have been carefully criticised by COUSIN, who thus expresses himself with reference to this theory of *Perfection* :—  
 “ We find in his method the wisdom and circumspection of the Scottish school, with something more masculine and decisive in the results. The principle of *perfection* is a new one, at once more rational and comprehensive than benevolence and sympathy, and which, in our view, places FERGUSON as a moralist above all his predecessors.”\*

In treating, in the latter part of his course, on the fundamental law of morality, and its applications and sanctions, FERGUSON observes, that some of these sanctions may be enforced, whereas others may be left to operate on the free will of the agent. Obligations and sanctions which may be enforced form the subject of Jurisprudence; those which cannot be enforced, are the applications of morality to the Duties of men.

In treating of Jurisprudence, FERGUSON explains the laws relating to peace and war, and follows GROTIUS in acknowledging the law of self-defence to be the only just foundation for employing force or stratagem in the case of independent or unconnected individuals.

The Duties of men FERGUSON divides into two classes,—those which may be considered as prohibitory, forbidding the commission of wrongs, and those which regard conscience, and can only be recommended by way of persuasion. The duties which involve in regard to others the right of constraint or prohibition are the foundations of natural law; and in this way FERGUSON enters upon the last portion of his subject, which is Politics.

FERGUSON treats of Politics under the heads of Population, Manners, and Wealth, and Civil Liberty. In this department, he follows MONTESQUIEU and HUME, and eloquently pleads the cause of well-regulated liberty and free government. His views in 1792 were, however, somewhat modified from those

\* Philosophie Écossaise, 3d ed., p. 512.

he had enunciated in 1769, when he published his "Institutes of Moral Philosophy." In that work, when treating of Political Institutions, he had thus expressed himself,—“Institutions that preserve equality, that engage the minds of the citizens in public duties, that teach them to estimate rank by the measure of personal qualities, tend to preserve and to cultivate virtue.” The progress of the French Revolution, however, had, by the time when he published his lectures, cooled the general enthusiasm for liberty; and FERGUSON, who seems in 1769 to have held extreme views, at length admitted the necessity for inequality in rank, and the expediency of hereditary distinctions and of an aristocracy.\*

In 1793 FERGUSON was elected an honorary member of the Academy of Sciences of Berlin. He was also a member of the Academy at Florence, of the Etruscan Society of Antiquaries at Cortona, and of the Arcadia at Rome.

From his knowledge of the Gaelic language, and from his early friendship with JAMES M'PHERSON, he was at this time consulted as to the proposed publication of the original Gaelic of the Poems of OSSIAN.

M'PHERSON had from the first professed his willingness to satisfy the public as to the authenticity of OSSIAN'S Poems, by printing the originals which had come into his possession. At the same time, when urged by the Committee of the Highland Society, he always pleaded want of leisure as his excuse for withholding them from the world. In 1793, however, a few years before his death, he prepared to comply with the generally expressed desire, but a difficulty arose as to the selection of the character and spelling to be adopted in printing the Gaelic language. It appears from the following exceedingly interesting letter, addressed to FERGUSON, that he had resolved to adopt the letters of the Greek alphabet, as more adequately representing the niceties of Gaelic pronunciation. With the view of making a trial of this method, he printed a specimen sheet, containing a passage from the Gaelic translation of the Bible in Greek characters, which he submitted to the criticism of his friends:—

“London, May 21st, 1793.

“MY DEAR SIR,—I wrote you a few lines some time ago, wherein, if I recollect aright, I promised to send you soon after an answer to your letter of the 8th of April, on the subject of the proposed printing the original of the Poems of OSSIAN in the Greek character. Having been, at the time of receiving your letter, immersed in a hurry of business, from which I have not, as yet, wholly extricated myself, I desired a gentleman, who has for many years, in conjunction with myself, thought *critically*, of the Gaelic language, to throw our opinion upon paper, at his convenience, more for your satisfaction than from either a wish or expectation of making converts of others. This he has done accordingly,

\* Institutes, 2d ed., page 293. The Lectures on Moral Philosophy were translated into French, and attracted much attention abroad.



as you will find under another cover, which goes by to-morrow's post. As my friend has left little that is material for me to add, I shall not trouble you with a long letter.

“ Our friend, Dr BLAIR, I perceive, labours under much want of information on the subject ; for there is not one of the points on which he states his objections founded in fact, and, that being the case, his arguments and reasons require no answer. I cannot conceive what interest, except it was a silly degree of vanity, to give themselves a consequence on account of their knowledge in the Gaelic, those persons who gave the information had in deceiving our friend.

“ Mr DAVIDSON writes rationally, but he seems not to know that there is scarce any manuscript to be followed, except, indeed, a very few mutilated ones in a kind of Saxon characters, which is as utterly unknown to the Highlanders as either the Greek or Hebrew letters. With respect to the cheap copy he mentions, if there should arise a wish for having a small edition, there is scarce any common printer but can metamorphose the Greek character into something like it in the Roman. With respect to the splendid edition now intended, it was never my intention to put it up to sale, so that its grandeur will not keep it out of the hands of those who would enjoy it most. I believe it will appear, from the accompanying observations, that there are not many of those amateurs between Glotta and Tarvisium.

“ Mr DAVIDSON should be informed, that neither the Irish nor the Scotch Highlanders had ever any alphabet of their own. When they wrote, or attempted to write, they made use of the Saxon characters, which are much more confined than even the Roman, from which they are derived.

“ As I have heard that Mr DAVIDSON is an excellent Greek scholar, he may be induced perhaps to try the effect of the specimen now sent on the Highland porter or chairman, in the manner recommended in the accompanying observations. Our friend Mr HOME, and even Dr BLAIR, who are both good Grecians, will be able, I trust, to read the original of OSSIAN, as it is to be printed in Greek, in a manner that will be intelligible to such Highlanders as *understand* their native tongue. But these, I apprehend, are much more circumscribed in number than is generally supposed.

“ The result of the whole is, that I have resolved to follow the example of the old Druids, in writing the Celtic language in Greek characters. I shall not, therefore, with Dr BLAIR, agree, ‘ That it is the opinion of some of the *learned* in *Earse* that must determine the point, and that to them it *must be submitted.*’ Where those *learned men* are I have never been able to learn. With respect to the clergy, I would rather take their ghostly advice on matters of religion than accept of their opinion about the manner of printing profane poetry. I consequently request, that instead of submitting the decision to them you will be pleased to return to me the specimen, already in your hands, at your convenience. And

after having weighed the observations at your full leisure, and at your own time, you will please to put them also under a cover to me. You will easily perceive, that this letter is meant only for your own eye; for few men wish to *know* that they have been so long deceived, on a point which the smallest attention might at once ascertain.—With my best respects to all friends, I am, with great esteem, yours most faithfully,

JAMES MACPHERSON.\*

The observations on the method to be adopted in printing the Gaelic language in Greek characters, drawn up at M'PHERSON'S desire, and sent to FERGUSON along with the above letter, were to the effect, that the existing Gaelic orthography does not give the pronunciation of that language with truth and certainty, for the same letters represent different sounds, and the same sounds are expressed by different letters, and this in a promiscuous manner, according to the fancy of the writer. That in Gaelic a large number of letters are absolutely quiescent, which were probably introduced to represent in a clumsy manner a coarse pronunciation used chiefly in Ireland. That from these irregularities in the use of the letters which are really needful, and from the absurd accumulation of those which are useless, confusion has arisen, that renders the writing of the language arbitrary and the reading of it a matter of conjecture. With the view of making an experiment, a Scripture story—the finding of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter—was copied from the Gaelic translation of the Bible, and on the opposite page the same words were written in Greek characters. This specimen of the proposed system was circulated by M'PHERSON among his friends, who were requested to make the experiment of reading the specimens to some illiterate Highlander, with the view of ascertaining which of the two would be best understood. In answer to the objection, that the use of the Greek alphabet would be a great inconvenience and innovation, it was urged, that the Highland gentry do not generally read the Gaelic; that it would be but the labour of a few hours to master the Greek letters, and their use would smooth the way for those who wished to read and write the Gaelic language. It was further expected, that the familiar use of the Greek letters would naturally lead to the study of the Greek language itself, then much neglected in Scotland; and that it would be “no degradation of its characters to express the compositions of a poet, which the taste and learning of Europe have long since ranked among the admirable works of antiquity.”

To the letter of M'PHERSON, and these observations, FERGUSON replied in the following terms:—

“*Edinburgh, 30th May 1793.*”

MY DEAR SIR,—I am glad you are decided on the form in which Ossian is to be recorded. You may expect to hear different opinions on the subject; but if

\* MSS. University of Edinburgh.

any one thinks he can do better in a more portable form, or in Roman character, this he can easily accomplish from your standard copy; and I shall cease to reason on the subject. Being but a bastard Gaelic man, my ear is a very uncertain rule for pronunciation or orthography. I will, however, mention what occurs under correction of your better judgment. Will it not be proper to prefix an alphabet, with notice of the power of each letter? If so, I think the two sigmas should be distinguished, the one *s* the other *sh*. I think the alpha is sufficiently full and broad in the sound without any additional vowel, as (*υ*), for instance; and I think the upsilon should have the power of the English (*υ*) uniformly given to it. The modern Greeks always pronounce it so. The (*σ*), falsely numbered with the diphthongs, should always stand for the Italian (*u*) or English double (*oo*), as in moon or boon, &c. To illustrate these remarks, I have ventured to mark the changes they would make in the specimen. *Ακκς*, I see, you spell with a kappa, to my ear it is rather *α* (*γ*), gamma; however you know much better. Query, also whether the nasal sound, when the article *α* precedes a word beginning with gamma or kappa, may not be marked with the double gamma, as in the tale of Pharaoh's daughter (*αγγ κσφστ*); so much for remarks which you will not make any use of, as you see cause. I have conformed to your former injunction exactly in consulting no more persons. There are few persons of any education in the Highlands, whether clergy or laity, that do not know the Greek alphabet; and perhaps will have easier access to your Ossian in that alphabet than they would in the barbarous orthography which few, and I among the rest, never learned to read. I know that this would make many a learned man stare. For there is no persuading people south of Tay, that all the works of the bards are not to be found in booksellers' shops in Lochaber or Morven the capital of the country at least. I tried your experiment on J. HOME, and he made it much more intelligible from the Greek orthography than from the Roman. I showed him in confidence your flagellation of the Edinburgh critics, and he is much diverted. I admire the fair hand and current writing of Greek in your amanuensis.—And am, dear sir, your most obedient and most humble servant,

“ ADAM FERGUSON.”\*

M'PHERSON does not seem to have received much encouragement towards using the Greek characters for his projected edition. He died three years after this, and the Poems of Ossian, which were printed in Gaelic after his death, appeared in the ordinary Roman characters.

About the end of the year 1793, FERGUSON, although now in his seventieth year, finding his health much improved, formed the resolution of visiting Italy, that he might be the better able to prepare a new edition of his Roman History. He accordingly set out for the Continent on his way to Rome, and visited the chief cities of Germany, in all of which he was received with much distinction.

\* This letter has been kindly furnished by Sir DAVID BREWSTER.

The following letters, addressed to Sir JOHN M'PHERSON, were written from Frankfort, Munich, and Venice, and are interesting from their allusions to passing events at this memorable period :—

“ *Frankfort, 25th Sept. 1792.*

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—I wrote a line from Ostend, to give notice of my safe arrival on the Continent. I have since made out so far of my journey to this place, where I halt a day or two; but do not find that I can venture to go in search of the MARQUIS LUCCHESINI, and therefore enclose your letter to him, and consign it to the post, with my regret for not being able to do more. Military matters are well here, a division of French prisoners has just past, a second is expected at night, and a third to-morrow, amounting in all to about three thousand men taken in battle lately by the Duke of BRUNSWICK, but I cannot learn where. You pelted me with letters from the Continent, to which I was not enabled to make any answer. I should be sorry to return you the compliment exactly. My pelting will be very moderate, and your answers, I hope, will come, though I don't at present know where to direct them nearer than Rome, to the care of Mr JENKINS, banker, and there, in the name of God, let them come as many, and as soon as possible; that is to say, much sooner than *gleich* and *geschwind*, which I have generally found to be as slow as possible. All I have to say for the present is, that travelling even here is certainly a very healthy business, for I thrive wonderfully upon it. I have some inducements to go by Munich, and to take the inland route by Nuremburg, &c., as I know less of it than I do of the other, and the road, I am told, is good. I sometimes torment myself with thinking what is to become of the world; but as I have no commission to govern it, the wisest course is to mind my route, and so I shall do in the best humour I can muster.—Believe me to be yours most affectionately,

“ ADAM FERGUSON.”\*

“ *Munich, 5th Oct. 1793.*

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—Here I am at Munich, in a most prosperous course of travelling, waxing in strength and patience. I sent you a line from Frankfort, intimating my intention of sending your letter to the MARQUIS LUCCHESINI, with my regret for not being able to hunt for military quarters in person. I did so in the best French I could muster. The elector of Bavaria said at his levee yesterday that the king of Prussia has declared his intention to winter at Berlin, and to leave his army under the Duke of BRUNSWICK. There is, I find, a hankering inclination to censure his Majesty, on a supposition that more might have been done in the campaign; but I am of the opinion, which I guess is also yours, that to hem in the French, and give them as few opportunities as possible to take

\* MSS. University, Edinburgh.

what we call crop to themselves, is the very perfection of conduct. There is a report here that the Emperor is about setting out for Brussels, and that even part of his equipage is in readiness. I surprised JAMES STUART by meeting him here, and find we shall be much together at Rome, &c. &c. It is now about forty years since I have known him to be one of the pleasantest, naive, and best hearted creatures in the world. I am introduced to Mr WALPOLE here, and was at a *vrai diner d'Embassadeur*, all English, at his house yesterday; but I shall make no stay, being very impatient to get within the precincts of the Old Republic, and no less impatient to be at some place where I can hope to hear from you, and learn something of what is doing in the world; for in this way of life we are hood-winked, and know no more than can be seen when the glasses of the sulky are down.—I am, my dear friend, yours most affectionately,

“ ADAM FERGUSON.”\*

“ Venice, 19th Oct. 1793.

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—I write merely to let you know what is become of me, and the sum total is that I am well, and have come on as prosperously as a speculative master and a dumb servant could do without any other aid. I wrote a line also from Frankfort or Munich, with an account of what I did with your letter to COUNT LUCCHESINI. I see from newspapers since, that if I had stayed but a few days more at Frankfort I should have seen him there; but the secrets of kings who can know? and I should have thought myself in a scrape amidst the scarcity of horses, caused by his Majesty's motions. In the way I took by Nurenburg and Munich I avoided that distress, came prosperously through the Tyroll, and at Verona began to reap the fruits of my labours. If you remember, the Cimbri or Teutones are said to have performed wonders against CATULUS the Roman general in that neighbourhood; and though it be not of much consequence whether that tale be exaggerated or no, yet I was anxious to judge of its credibility on the spot, and got on horseback from Verona for that purpose, and reconnoitred the banks of the Adige for some little way. So far I had come post; but there I fell in with a Florentine veturino, who had brought some travellers from Florence. I rode his horses at Verona, and agreed with him to drive my Titbo thing to Padua. We agreed so well on the road, that I have lodged and boarded myself with him all the way to Rome. He seems to be a good-humoured, careful creature; and I am happy to escape the blustering postilions of the ecclesiastical state. I told him I should be at Florence soon, though at present I go by Loretto; and if any distress befall me, my point of rallyment will be Florence, being under the special protection of Count MANFREDINI, so that Antonio Lopini, this veturino, and I are already a sort of compatriots. I languish for news from England. I call for newspapers everywhere, but nothing has yet overtaken me

\* MSS. University, Edinburgh.

more than I knew, and in part witnessed in passing through Flanders. I sometimes flatter myself that you will not have waited for accounts of my arrival at Rome, but will have written under care of P. MOIR, and JENKINS the banker; if you have not, *pour l'amour de Dieu* delay it no longer. I could not pass this place, though it is much too modern to be any object to me; I wonder at it; but am not much delighted. *Si je n'avois que soixante et dix ans*, as VOLTAIRE used to say, I would read its history with great avidity; but that is for the world to come. I went to the opera last night, and was truly entertained with the audience.—I am, my dear friend, yours most affectionately,

“ADAM FERGUSON.”\*

From the disturbed state of the Continent at the time, owing to the effects of the French Revolution, FERGUSON'S stay at Rome was shorter than he anticipated. but he returned to Edinburgh much pleased with his tour.

After his return he continued to reside at his villa at “the Sciennes,” where he enjoyed the society of his literary friends. Principal ROBERTSON dwelt in the neighbourhood, at the Grange House, and Mr COCKBURN, father of Lord COCKBURN, had his abode in the immediate vicinity, at Hope Park, midway between the houses of the Principal and his late colleague. Lord COCKBURN informs us, in the “Memorials of his Time,” that he, when a boy, was frequently at the houses both of ROBERTSON and FERGUSON. He thus gives us his recollection of FERGUSON'S appearance:—“Our neighbour on the east was old ADAM FERGUSON, the historian of Rome, and STEWART'S predecessor in our Moral Chair—a singular apparition. In his younger years, he was a handsome and resolute man. . . . Time and illness, however, had been dealing with him, and, when I first knew him, he was a spectacle well worth beholding. His hair was silky and white; his eyes animated and light-blue; his cheeks sprinkled with broken red, like autumnal apples, but fresh and healthy; his lips thin, and the under one curled. A severe paralytic attack had reduced his animal vitality, though it left no external appearance, and he required considerable artificial heat. His raiment, therefore, consisted of half-boots, lined with fur; cloth breeches; a long cloth waistcoat, with capacious pockets; a single-breasted coat; a cloth greatcoat, also lined with fur; and a felt hat, commonly tied by a ribbon below the chin. His boots were black, but with this exception, the whole coverings, including the hat, were of a quaker-grey colour, or of a whitish-brown; and he generally wore the furred greatcoat even within doors. When he walked forth, he used a tall staff, which he commonly held at arm's-length, out towards the right side; and his two coats, each buttoned by only the upper button, flowed open below, and exposed the whole of his curious and venerable figure. His gait and air were noble; his gesture slow; his look full of dignity and composed fire. He looked

\* MSS. University, Edinburgh.

like a philosopher from Lapland. His palsy ought to have killed him in his fiftieth year, but rigid care enabled him to live, uncrippled either in body or mind, nearly fifty years more. Wine and animal food besought his appetite in vain, but huge messes of milk and vegetables disappeared before him, always in the never-failing cloth and fur. I never heard of his dining out, except at his relation, JOSEPH BLACK'S, where his son, Sir ADAM (the friend of SCOTT), used to say it was delightful to see the two philosophers rioting over a boiled turnip. Domestically he was kind, but anxious and peppery. His temperature was regulated by Fahrenheit; and often, when sitting quite comfortably, he would start up, and put his wife and daughters into commotion, because his eye had fallen on the instrument, and discovered that he was a degree too hot or too cold. He always locked the door of his study when he left it, and took the key in his pocket; and no housemaid got in till the accumulation of dust and rubbish made it impossible to put the evil day off any longer, and then woe on the family. He shook hands with us boys one day in summer, 1793, on setting off, in a strange sort of carriage, and with no companion except his servant James, to visit Italy for a new edition of his History. He was then about seventy-two, and had to pass through a good deal of war, but returned in about a year younger than ever." \*

In 1795, FERGUSON received a severe blow to his domestic happiness by the death of his wife, who had been his faithful partner for nearly thirty years. Being now well advanced in years, and taking but little pleasure in society, he began to look about for a spot where he could spend the rest of his days in peaceful seclusion. It happened at this time that the old castle of Neidpath, overhanging the Tweed, near Peebles, was left untenanted by the Duke of QUEENSBERRY, and FERGUSON, charmed by the beauty of its situation, interested himself to procure a lease of the old castle, and a few acres of ground, from the Duke. The following letter fully shows the eagerness with which this new arrangement was entered into by the veteran philosopher:—

*“ Edinburgh, 20th May 1795.*

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—Tho' the time is now approaching at which I have for some time past flattered myself with the hopes of seeing you here, I take my chance of overtaking you at Brompton with a few lines. The scheme of a country life, which you proposed to dispute, still remains with me, and I have been looking out for some place at which to settle. Among others, I have seen the castle of Nydpath, on the Tweed, belonging to the Duke of QUEENSBERRY. It has been lately dismantled, or stript of its furniture, and so far destined to become the habitation of bats and owls, or what is little better, such a tenant as I am. The servant who showed the place told me that his Grace has been asked to let it, but declined, which makes my prospect somewhat desperate. I have, neverthe-

\* Memorials of his Time, p. 48.

less, made proposals in form to the man of business here. And beg the favour that, if you should see the Duke of QUEENSBERRY, you will try to incline his Grace not to forbid any transaction with me. "And I undertake to satisfy you that the scheme I propose is the best for my family as well as myself. I am, your most affectionate humble servant,  
ADAM FERGUSON."\*

It was in the month of May that FERGUSON had removed his household gods to Neidpath, and during the summer the old Castle was found to be a most desirable residence. "The woods, the hills, and the river, are Elysian, and the atmosphere all composed of vital air." These were his expressions in September; but when the cold blasts of winter approached, the Castle was anything but an enviable residence in its existing condition. The following letter to Sir JOHN M'PHERSON gives a glimpse of his situation in the winter season there:—

" *Nydpath, 9th January 1796.*

" MY DEAR FRIEND,—I have just now received your affectionate letter, with the inclosed commission of business for ADAM the Writer to the Signet, and write merely to get out my breath on this plaguy situation into which I have got, without the accommodation of either town or country. . . . I now see the mistake of having thrust myself into this situation before it was cleared for me one way or another; but I reasoned that I must either occupy the Castle before winter to keep it in repair, or lay aside thoughts of it altogether, to the last of which I was extremely reluctant. I am sensible what I should do now is to wait the chapter of accidents, but patience, the great virtue for succeeding in anything, has been but very scantily dealt to me. Old as I am, I had rather be doing anything, than wait doing nothing, of which this very letter is a sufficient proof; for it certainly will do you no good, nor me any other than employing some minutes of this woful time. I have to wait for some instruction to his man of business from the Duke of Q. So much for one Duke; if ever I have to do with another, I will give them leave to duck me in the first horse-pond. I am, most affectionately yours,  
ADAM FERGUSON."\*

It has been remarked, that no Stoic philosopher more completely subjected his passions and his feelings to his reason than did FERGUSON; but the discomforts attendant upon his residence at Neidpath were a sore trial for his philosophy. Writing about them, in February, he says, "if any body think me a philosopher, he is grievously mistaken. I have done nothing but *peste* and scold inwardly for three or four weeks, not to say months."

The arrangements necessary to get quit of the lease of the Castle were, however, easily made; and he took up his residence at Hallyards, a farm in the

\* MSS. University of Edinburgh.



immediate neighbourhood, where he lived for the next fourteen years,—a longer period than he had ever spent in any of his previous places of abode. During this period he still enjoyed good health, and interested himself in farming with all the ardour of a young agriculturist.

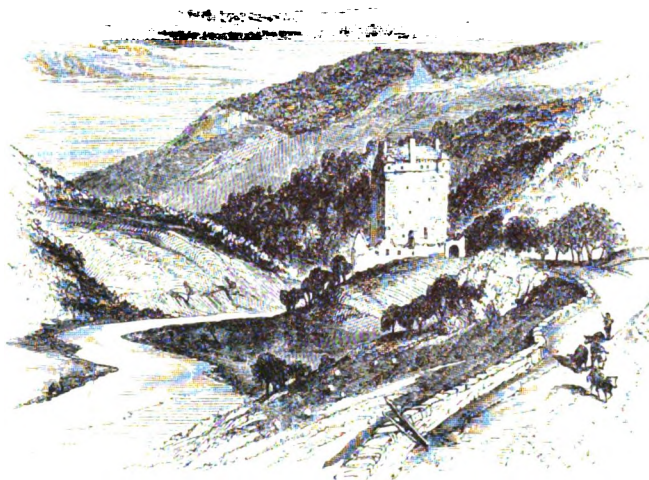
It was to an incident which occurred while FERGUSON lived at Hallyards, that we owe one of Sir W. SCOTT'S most characteristic novels. Among the hills near the house lived an eccentric and misshapen dwarf, called DAVID RITCHIE, and SCOTT, then a young advocate, when he came in 1797 to pay a visit to the FERGUSSONS, was taken to see DAVID as one of the lions of the district. The strong impression which the interview with the hermit, who was supposed to be possessed of magical powers, made on SCOTT, was never effaced; and the tale of the 'Black Dwarf,' published twenty years afterwards, owed its origin to this remarkable occurrence.\*

The following letter addressed to Sir JOHN M'PHERSON, contains FERGUSON'S views as to the epitaph which he wished to be inscribed on his tomb, and also an allusion to the energy which was the distinguishing feature of the character of the late Sir JOHN SINCLAIR.

“ *Hallyards, 3d July 1798.*

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—My silence is not negligence nor forgetfulness. If I had ten thousand of the best letters that ever were written, you should have them all; but what can I write from this post, at which my prime consolation is, that I have nothing to do but to wait quietly till my time comes. The French, I trust, although they may teaze, cannot subdue this armed nation; and all speculation on the subject is at an end. I have in my view a most delightful kirkyard, retired and green, on the bank of a running water, and facing a verdant hill, which in your part of the world would pass for a tremendous mountain; but to me it gives the idea of silence and solitude away from the noise of folly; and so I fancy myself laid there, with a stone to tell the rustic moralist what he will not understand, because I sometimes project it should be in Greek, as follows:—ὡς εἶδον τον κοσμον ιθαυματα, και συ θασασμενος χαρις; but then, again, I wish to explain it, and so it should be, ‘I have seen the works of God, it is now your turn, do you behold them and rejoice.’ I would speak my verse for agriculture in Greek also,—Αθρωπου ιχθιος γεωργια,—and you may judge of my willingness to write when I put all this on paper to you. I have not stirred from home for many months past till lately, when Admiral and Mrs NUGENT being at Edinburgh led me thither to gratify my sense of their kindness to my little seaman. And I am still the more convinced, that NUGENT is the most amiable, faultless creature upon earth. In that excursion I met our friend, Sir JOHN SINCLAIR, in the street; this put it in his head to write to me since my return hither, an account of works he is projecting to promote what he calls statistical philosophy. I hinted that his project is too vast;

\* CHAMBERS'S Hist. of Peeblesshire, p. 402.



NEIDPATH CASTLE, FROM THE EAST.



THE BLACK DWARF'S COTTAGE.



but he tells me that his mind is made up to draw it on a great scale, and on as perfect a plan as possible; and that he never started at any difficulty that could be surmounted, ever since he collected, as far back as the year 1780, one thousand and two hundred men, and in one day's time made a road of six miles long over a mountain, till then thought impassable. The fact is, that he has got an instinct to be doing, which other people ought to know how to employ without turning him out of place. Although I have so many excuses for writing so seldom, I am not willing to allow you any; so I pray, when you are writing however, let there be a scrap for me, even if you should not be able to tell me what is become of BUONAPARTÉ. By the by, is that a genuine Prussian paper in answer to the French demands, which we have in the newspapers? It is menacing, and I do not see how the great nation can give way to it, without appearing to be cowed. They certainly meant to gall us, and to secure the co-operation of Prussia against us, by transferring Hanover, &c. &c.—Yours most affectionately,

“ ADAM FERGUSON.”\*

The following letter, also addressed to Sir JOHN M'PHERSON, concerning the purchase of an estate in Peeblesshire for a ward of Sir JOHN'S, contains an allusion to ALLAN RAMSAY and the Edinburgh writers:—

“ *Hallyards, 1st August, 1798.*

“ MY DEAR FRIEND,—To begin where your letter ends *amicus amicissimus indefatigabilis*. After having splashed you before with bad Greek, you are well off that there is nothing more now than bad Latin. I do recollect hearing of S. J. E.'s desire to have some land property near his native spot, but at present know nothing more, nor do I know of any fit place at Peebles for your ward, but shall inquire. There is no property in this country you know without a doer, as ALLAN RAMSAY used to call the writers when he was angry with them, which he was, indeed, for the greatest part of every hour of his life. If there be any subject on which to make us your doer, we shall not neglect to do what is proper; and for the sequel, if there be any sequel, it must come as God will have it in the whims and inclinations of those concerned. As to the world, I am glad you think BUONAPARTÉ is gone upon a mere trading or plundering voyage. In that way he cannot be long without having the seas disputed with him, and I patiently wait for the consequence, without supposing that every encounter of ours must be *veni, vidi, vici*, for even the great JULIUS was a puppy at a time, and more so than has yet appeared of BUONAPARTÉ. A combination of Europe, including Russia, if not properly directed would do us no good. You may possibly remember my bull, that the proper way to make war on the great nation is to make peace with them. In this they are too wise to be caught, I mean their directors; but I think we may make a war as like peace as possible, especially if Europe com-

\* MSS. University of Edinburgh.

bine in it, by keeping them at bay,—leaving them no outlet from home, nor goading them with any trifling attacks to keep their attention and animosities directed abroad. There was an expedition to Ostend, and there is one again now, the newspapers say, from Margate, mere proofs that we have not yet learned the character of our enemy or the nature of our contest, but of that no more. I am no oppositionist, and this moment think the nation in a most prosperous state—that is to say, we have men, arms, and spirit, and if we should come to have less wealth we must consume the less, either by having fewer mouths or putting less in them. I was in Edinburgh for a day or two when your last letter came here to Hallyards, otherwise, having now three or four such favours to acknowledge, should have done it sooner. The 'Roman History' advances but slowly. The printers have much other work when our law courts are sitting; then much of the business proceeds by a kind of paper war from the press. Five octavo volumes are projected, but little more than one is yet printed. I shall be obliged to your German author for his prolongation scheme, though having annuities and salaries from other people, 'tis like they think I have prolonged enough. I went to Edinburgh to see our friend G. JOHNSTONE, and was highly gratified.—I am, my dear friend, most affectionately yours,

“ADAM FERGUSON.”\*

In the following extract from a letter, written in 1799, FERGUSON thus expresses his opinion of the views then published by Sir JAMES MACINTOSH.

At that time MACINTOSH had been recently called to the English bar, and with the view of bringing himself into notice, he delivered a course of lectures on the Law of Nature and Nations.

The introductory lecture was published as 'A Discourse on the Law of Nature and Nations,' and it, with the other lectures of his course, received the highest praise from men of every shade of political opinion.

FERGUSON states, "I hear very favourable accounts of Mr MACINTOSH'S performances at Lincoln's Inn. As I judge only from his pamphlet, his tone, though perhaps more harmonious, is in unison with mine. He had his reasons, probably, for not mentioning me, and I am not solicitous about them. He will probably procure to Moral Philosophy that popularity in England which I wished for, but have been unable to obtain. His taking his ground in the law is not so apt to alarm the Universities and the Church as if he had called his object Moral Philosophy, which those authorities sometimes mention among the corruptions of the times."\*

The literary labours of FERGUSON were not yet over. In 1801 was published his already mentioned contribution to the Transactions of the Royal Society, under the title of *Minutes of the Life and Character of Joseph Black, M.D.* In it there is

\* MSS. University of Edinburgh.

given a concise but interesting account of BLACK'S discoveries of carbonic acid and latent heat, which entitle him to be regarded as the father of modern chemistry.

It was his relationship to the family of JOSEPH BLACK,\* which was probably the indirect means of forming FERGUSON'S own philosophical views. The father of Dr BLACK had been a wine merchant at Bourdeaux, and when residing there enjoyed the intimate friendship of the great MONTESQUIEU, who was the president of the parliament or court of justice of that province. The letters and scraps of correspondence which passed between MONTESQUIEU and Mr BLACK, the descendants of the latter preserved as though they had been titles of honour belonging to their race. In his own Philosophy, FERGUSON has in many places followed the views of MONTESQUIEU, and his 'Essay on Civil Society' may be regarded as an eloquent introduction to the immortal work, 'The Spirit of Laws.'

The infirmities accompanying advanced life now made FERGUSON desirous of again residing in a town, where he might have more opportunities of conversing with intelligent friends.

As St Andrews was the place where he had been educated, his early predilection for that ancient city returned, and in 1808 he retired thither to spend the remainder of his life.

He there enjoyed the society of the Professors of the University, and that of the patriotic GEORGE DEMPSTER of Dunnichen, whose endeavours to extend the manufactures of Scotland are well known.

Among FERGUSON'S letters, perhaps not the least curious is the following, addressed to Mr CARLYLE BELL, in which he expresses his opinion of the 'Diary' of Dr CARLYLE of Inveresk. CARLYLE died in 1805, and it was proposed in 1810 by his executors to edit this work, which, however, has only recently appeared under the editorial superintendence of Mr J. HILL BURTON. Had it been published in 1810, in place of 1860, the Diary would not have excited the same interest:—

“*St Andrews, 21st July 1810.*”

“MY DEAR SIR,—I have received your letter acquainting me that trustees whom you do not name, are now deliberating on the publication of my worthy friend and your late uncle's manuscripts. Of this you must be sensible that I cannot give any opinion. The small part I saw, or with my impaired sight could decipher, did not appear to me intended for publication; but rather the amusement of leisure in the exercise of a talent in which our friend excelled; the easy and satisfactory detail of familiar occurrences affording a pleasure which his correspondents experienced in every letter he wrote to them. I was so pleased in reading the part you showed me or I could attempt to read, but it related to things and persons most of us so obscure as not to be entitled to public notice,

\* The mother of FERGUSON was aunt of the mothers of JOSEPH BLACK and JAMES RUSSELL Professor of Natural Philosophy. FERGUSON was also married to Dr BLACK'S niece.

that I should not be willing to exceed what I believed to be the writer's original intention by publication; and I thought myself the more at liberty to give this opinion that I found my own name repeated with that partial favour which I always experienced from my friend. It was our lot through great part of our time to be neighbours so near as to be frequently together, and the opportunities, I believe, were never willingly omitted by either. We were *socii criminis* in the countenance we gave to the first representation of our friend J. HOME's tragedy of Douglas, a charge for which I was never called to account. But Dr CARLYLE was more known, and had more enemies, who, by prosecuting him for this offence, declared him innocent of anything more likely to serve their spite. We were also accessory to the formation of a Poker Club, and survived most of its members, and thus had occasions of regret which are but ill repaired in the solitary comforts of sequestered old age. You cannot doubt my desire to promote the respect which is due to the memory of Dr CARLYLE, but how I know not, beyond the testimony, if it were called for, that I never knew a more steady friend or more agreeable companion, and in this I should have so many concurring witnesses as to make my words of little account. I shall be anxious to know how you proceed, and I beg I may hear from you.—I am, with best respects to Mrs BELL, yours most affectionately,

ADAM FERGUSON."

During his residence at St Andrews FERGUSON's mind was almost as vigorous as in his younger days, and his bodily functions, with the exception of his sight, were scarcely impaired by age.\* Even in 1815, the year before his death, his health was better than it had been for some years, and his spirits were elevated by the successful termination of the war with France, in which he had always been much interested.

About the beginning of February 1816, however, he was attacked by a febrile complaint, to which he had been occasionally subject. This illness, after continuing for four days, proved fatal on the 22d of that month, when he was in the ninety-third year of his age.

FERGUSON had a family of seven children, four sons and three daughters. His

\* In 1812 FERGUSON was requested by Mr HENRY MACKENZIE—'The Man of Feeling'—to furnish him with some memoranda relative to his early acquaintance with JOHN HOME, author of 'Douglas.' MACKENZIE's last literary effort was a Memoir of HOME, which he read before the Royal Society in 1822, and which was afterwards published in a separate form. To that volume an Appendix is added, containing a remarkable letter, written when FERGUSON was in his ninetieth year. Besides referring to his early connection with JOHN HOME, it contains further information as to his views with reference to the Ossian controversy.

There was also published, after his death, a short biographical sketch or memoir of his friend, Lieut.-Col. PATRICK FERGUSON (second son of JAMES FERGUSON, of Pitfour, one of the Lords of Justiciary in Scotland), which he had written some short time previously. It was intended as an article for the Encyclopædia Britannica, but it was considered by the editor too long for that work; and as FERGUSON declined to abridge it, it was not inserted. A few copies were printed in 1817 from the original sketch, for private distribution.

eldest son, Sir ADAM,—one of the most genial and kind-hearted of men—was an early friend of Sir WALTER SCOTT, and is frequently alluded to, under the soubriquet of Linton, in Sir WALTER'S Life by LOCKHART. His second son, JOSEPH, entered the army, and died in India in 1800 as Captain in Lord SEAFORTH'S regiment. His other sons were, JAMES, Colonel H.E.I.C.S., and JOHN, Rear-Admiral, Royal Navy, who survived their father.

His daughters, ISABELLA, MARY, and MARGARET are frequently noticed in LOCKHART'S Life of SCOTT, as having, when residing at Huntly Burn, formed part of the delightful circle which SCOTT gathered around him at Abbotsford.

In these Memorials of ADAM FERGUSON, which we now conclude, we renew our converse with many persons of whom Scotland has every reason to be proud, and amongst whom FERGUSON deservedly holds a high place. Whether viewed as a historian, a moralist, or a man, FERGUSON was eminently distinguished by a vigour and a simplicity of character which well entitle him, as the last survivor of a galaxy of great contemporaries, to be designated *Ultimus Romanorum*!

On the monument erected to his memory by his family, within the grounds of the old Cathedral of St Andrews, is the following elegant inscription, from the pen of Sir WALTER SCOTT:—

HERE REST

THE MORTAL REMAINS OF ADAM FERGUSON, LL.D.,

PROFESSOR OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

HE WAS BORN AT LOGIERAIT, IN THE COUNTY OF PERTH, ON THE 20<sup>TH</sup> OF JUNE 1723.

AND DIED IN THIS CITY OF ST ANDREWS, ON THE 22<sup>D</sup> DAY OF FEBRUARY 1816.

UNSEDUCED BY THE TEMPTATIONS OF PLEASURE, POWER, OR AMBITION,

HE EMPLOYED THE INTERVAL BETWIXT HIS CRADLE AND THE GRAVE WITH

UNOSTENTATIOUS AND STEADY PERSEVERANCE IN ACQUIRING

AND DIFFUSING KNOWLEDGE,

AND IN THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC AND OF DOMESTIC VIRTUE.

TO HIS VENERATED MEMORY

THIS MONUMENT IS ERECTED BY HIS CHILDREN,

THAT THEY MAY RECORD HIS PIETY TO GOD AND BENEVOLENCE TO MAN,  
AND COMMEMORATE THE ELOQUENCE AND ENERGY WITH WHICH HE INCULCATED

THE PRECEPTS OF MORALITY,

AND PREPARED THE YOUTHFUL MIND FOR VIRTUOUS ACTIONS.

BUT A MORE IMPERISHABLE MEMORIAL OF HIS GENIUS EXISTS IN HIS

PHILOSOPHICAL AND HISTORICAL WORKS,

WHERE CLASSIC ELEGANCE, STRENGTH OF REASONING, AND CLEARNESS OF DETAIL

SECURED THE APPLAUSE OF THE AGE IN WHICH HE LIVED,

AND WILL LONG CONTINUE TO DESERVE THE GRATITUDE, AND COMMAND

THE ADMIRATION OF POSTERITY.



ERRATA.

Page 35, line 23 from top, *for* treatise *read* charge.

„ 46, line 2 from bottom, *for* 1778 *read* 1781.

