



DR. HUGH BLAIR.

THIS venerable clergyman was a lineal descendant from an antient family in the west of Scotland; he was born on the 7th of April 1718. The fortune of his father had been much impaired, but not so as to prevent him from giving his son a liberal education. After going through the usual course at the high school, Hugh Blair became a student at the university of Edinburgh, in October 1730. From the delicacy of his constitution he was unable to partake much in the sports of the boys, but preferred amusing himself in his solitary walks by repeating the poems of others, and sometimes attempting to make some of his own.

When he became a student at the university, his constitution grew more vigorous, and he could pursue both the amusements and the studies proper for his age. In all his classes he attracted attention, but in the logic class he was particularly distinguished; and, while attending it, he composed an essay on the *Beautiful*, in which the bent of his genius first displayed itself, both to himself and to others.

In the year 1739, when the course of Mr. Blair's academical studies was nearly finished, he published a thesis, "*De Fundamentis et Obligatione Legis Naturæ.*" The discussion, though short, is able. After spending eleven years at the university in the study of literature, philosophy, and divinity, Mr. Blair was licensed to preach by the presbytery of Edinburgh, in 1741. In the pulpit his doctrines were sound and practical, and his language elegant: one sermon of his in the west church was particularly noticed, it arrested the attention of a very numerous congregation. The Earl of Leven was desirous to reward the preacher, which he did by procuring him a presentation to the church of Colesie, in Fifeshire. There Mr. Blair continued nearly ten months, when his talents were brought into a sphere, in which they became conspicuous and extensively useful. In consequence of a vacancy in the Canongate of Edinburgh, he was admitted second minister in July 1743; though to obtain this situation no small exertion was necessary on the part of his friends, and during the eleven years that he continued minister of the Canongate his reputation was continually growing. He was, in 1754, translated to that church in Edinburgh, called Lady Yester's, and from thence to the High church, in 1758. During the four years that Mr. Blair was minister of Lady Yester's, several important events in his life occurred.

In June 1757, the university of St. Andrew showed its discernment by presenting him with the degree of doctor in divinity, and as this academical honour was then hardly known in Scotland, it was the more creditable for those who attained it. The town council of Edinburgh, in August 1760, instituted in the university a professorship of rhetoric, to which they elected and appointed Dr. Blair; and in April 1762, his majesty erected and endowed a professorship of rhetoric and belles-lettres, appointing Dr. Blair professor, with a salary of 70*l.* After reading his course of lectures in the university above twenty years, Dr. Blair found it proper to publish them, in 1783; and observes, in his preface, that their publication then was not altogether a matter of choice. Imperfect copies had been exposed to sale, and it became necessary that the lectures should proceed from his own hand. He had married, in 1748, his cousin, Miss Bannatyne, and from their union, which lasted 47 years, he derived much domestic happiness; and her death, which happened five years before his own, deeply affected him. The summer before his death he prepared the last volume of his sermons for the press; and died in December 1800, in the 83rd year of his age.

