

5. Obituary Notice of the Rev. Professor Stevenson, D.D.  
By John Small, M.A., Librarian to the University of  
Edinburgh.

Professor WILLIAM STEVENSON was born at Barfod, in the parish of Lochwinnoch, on the 26th October 1805. His father was the proprietor of a small estate called Broadfield, and William was his second son. He entered the University of Glasgow in 1821, and pursued his studies at that University during the usual curriculum in the Faculty of Arts, with the exception of one session (1824–25) which he spent at St Andrews, attracted by the popularity of Dr Chalmers, who was at that time Professor of Moral Philosophy there. While at the University of Glasgow he attended diligently to his studies, and worked particularly for the classes of mathematics and natural philosophy. During the summer months he acted as tutor in the family of the late Mr Cochran of Ladyland, and thus began a friendship which lasted uninterruptedly till the time of his death. It was the arranging and cataloguing the old library at Ladyland that developed the love of books for which he was afterwards so remarkable, and the catalogue he then made is still carefully preserved. He pursued his theological studies at the University of Glasgow, but was in session 1828–29 at the University of Edinburgh. In theology he was a distinguished student, in some sessions carrying off the highest honours. After finishing his university course, he was licensed by the Presbytery of Paisley on the 5th of May 1831.

He officiated for six months in the Presbyterian Church in Limerick in 1832, and in July 1833 was appointed by the Crown assistant and successor to the Rev. George Gleig, minister of Arbroath, on whose death two years afterwards he succeeded to the charge.

While at Arbroath Mr Stevenson enjoyed the friendship of the Rev. Dr Thomas Guthrie, then minister of Arbirlot, and an amusing account is given in the autobiography of that eminent divine, of a public discussion with the Rev. Dr Ritchie, “the Goliath of Voluntaryism,” held at Arbroath, in which Mr Stevenson took a prominent part (vol. i. p. 167). The account of the discussion on this occasion was published in the form of a pamphlet, with the

following title: "Account of a Meeting held at Arbroath on the 16th April 1834, in Defence of Church Establishments, with a full Report of the Speeches delivered on that occasion by the Rev. Messrs Stevenson, Meek, Whitson, Lee, Guthrie, and Muir." This publication attracted considerable attention, and brought the speakers prominently before the public; one of them was the Rev. Dr Robert Lee, afterwards Professor of Biblical Criticism, then minister of a Chapel-of-Ease at Inverbrothock. In 1839 Mr Stevenson's health gave way, and he suffered so much from chronic bronchitis that he had to spend the winter of that and the following year at Torquay.

On the re-establishment of his health, Mr Stevenson was in 1844 presented by the Crown to the first charge of the parish of South Leith. This valuable preferment enabled him to gratify his intense love of reading, and he collected rare and valuable books, not only on theology, but on every subject illustrating the history and antiquities of Scotland. In 1848 he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and in 1849 he received the degree of D.D. from the University of Edinburgh.

Whilst minister of South Leith Dr Stevenson took much interest in his parochial duties, and in 1851 published a small volume, entitled "Christianity and Drunkenness." He was also a contributor to Macphail's "Edinburgh Magazine," and the topics he handled were "The Buchanites," "Pusey and the Confessional," and matters relating to the great Gorham controversy in the Church of England. He took part in the proceedings of the General Assembly, and was appointed Convener of the Colonial Committee in 1859.

In 1858 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

In 1861 he was appointed to the Chair of Divinity and Ecclesiastical History in the University, on the death of the Rev. Dr Robertson. As Professor, his method of conducting the class was somewhat peculiar. In place of giving in each session a simple outline of his very extensive subject, he chose rather to take a limited period in the Church's history, and illustrate this in the most minute manner. Every heresy or controversy that had cropped up in the period selected received due attention, and was

illustrated by extracts from rare works which he had collected for the purpose. In his first session (1861–62), the period embraced in his lectures was only from A.D. 30 to 100.

Although the Government, when he was appointed Professor of Church History, dissociated from the Chair the valuable appointment of Secretary to the Bible Board for Scotland, still Dr Stevenson, from his private resources, was enabled to gratify to the utmost his passion for adding to his library. He was a member of the Bannatyne Club and other literary societies originated for printing valuable historical manuscripts, ancient poetry, &c., &c., and the recondite works he thus received were not in his case put hastily on his shelves, but were carefully read and criticised.

He was Vice-President of the Society of Antiquaries for several years, and, as his colleague, Sir James Simpson, had given a great impetus to archæological matters in Scotland, Dr Stevenson went with him hand in hand. His reminiscences of excursions (“howking expeditions” as they were called) planned by Sir James to places of antiquarian interest in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, were very amusing.\*

As Dr Stevenson, from his excellent scholarship, desired extreme minuteness and accuracy in every literary work, this may account for his published writings being fewer than his abilities led his friends to expect. But, while it was supposed that his appoint-

\* One of these, arranged in honour of Dr Reeves, of Trinity College, Dublin, was to inspect the curious buildings still existing at Culross, and Sir James had chartered a steamer to take a large party from Leith to visit that ancient Burgh. So much time, however, had been lost in visiting Inch Garvie and other islets in the Firth, that on reaching Culross, from the shallowness of the water, the steamer had to anchor a long way from the shore. Nothing daunted, Sir James, with a dozen of followers, got into a small boat, but it at last ran aground. The rest of the party getting into another boat, and avoiding the error the first had committed, reached the pier by a circuitous route, and lent their aid to bring the party which had first left the steamer ashore. They were at last carried through the shallow water and mud on the shoulders of the Culross boatmen, and the appearance of Sir James himself as he was supported on the backs of two sailors, with other two lending their assistance, created great merriment. This was often referred to by Dr Stevenson as one of his happiest excursions. Although differing in Church politics, a great friendship existed between Sir James and Dr Stevenson, and on the death of the former Dr Stevenson was much affected. He expressed his feelings in a poem, a portion of which was inserted in the *Life of Sir James* by the Rev. Dr Duns.

ment to the Chair of Church History might have allowed him leisure to publish some results of his extensive reading and matured thought, the plan he had laid down for teaching the history of the Church (as before observed) necessitated the writing of new lectures for each year. In this way he sometimes wrote seventy new lectures in one session. In any intervals of leisure, however, he enjoyed miscellaneous reading, and sometimes indulged in poetical effusions. He translated into verse the Latin rhymes in the well-known Aberdeen Breviary, which he printed, but did not then complete.

As ancient Scottish literature, especially poetry, had always been a favourite subject with him, Dr Stevenson was often consulted about the publication of manuscript remains of our early Doric vernacular, and several works of this kind, when they appeared, were dedicated to him. In 1870 he took much interest in an edition of the works of Gavin Douglas, the poetical Bishop of Dunkeld, then projected. He read over the proof sheets, and aided in expiscating some circumstances attendant on the double consecration of that ancient Scottish Prelate. About the same time he resolved to complete the legends from the Aberdeen Breviary, by appending historical notes, and they at length appeared in an octavo volume about the end of 1872. The title of the work is as follows:—“The Legends and Commemorative Celebrations of St Kentigern, his Friends and Disciples, translated from the Aberdeen Breviary and the Arbuthnot Missal, with an illustrative Appendix. Printed for private circulation, 1872.”

In the preface, he states that at one time he had in view “to prepare a complete calendar of the Scottish Saints, and, taking the national legends of the Aberdeen Breviary for a basis, he proposed to intercalate all that he might be able to ascertain regarding those *Dii minores* of our country’s earlier faith, who, although not enrolled in that dignified service book, are mentioned in other literary monuments now less recondite than they were then, or have left some dim memories of themselves in the names of the towns, villages, fairs, and wells of our country, sometimes in remote and lonely districts, or spots where there had once been chapels, cells, or hermitages.”

The want of leisure prevented his carrying out so extensive a

plan, but we are indebted to him for some interesting information regarding the group of saints more immediately connected with the Lothians and Fife, viz., St Kentigern, and his mother St Thenew (daughter of Loth, King of the Lothians), St Servanus or St Serf, St Columba, St Asaph, St Baldred of the Bass, St Conwall, and St Palladius.

From his family connection with Clackmannanshire he was much attached to that district, and for several summers he occupied a villa in the neighbourhood of Muckart. In this retirement he was always happy, surrounded by his family, and supplied with the newest literature. One season was distinguished by some rural festivities, which he commemorated in verse in a tiny volume printed in 1872 ("The Yetts o' Muckart; or the Famous Pic-nic and the brilliant Barn-Ball. In hairst auchteen hunder an' seventy-one.")

Finding his health failing, Dr Stevenson, with much reluctance, resigned his Chair in November 1872.

This step was much regretted by his colleagues, and his retirement was gracefully referred to by Principal Sir Alexander Grant, in his opening address of the College, session 1872-73, and in the introductory lectures of his colleagues in the Faculty of Theology, who all expressed the hope that he would enjoy the rest to which he was so well entitled.\*

The good wishes of the learned Principal and the Professors were not realised, and the last year of Dr Stevenson's life was spent in much annoyance from the effects of an accident he had

\* The allusion by Sir Alexander Grant to Dr Stevenson was in the following terms:—"I regret now to have to announce the retirement, owing to impaired health, of Dr Stevenson, who for eleven years has occupied the important Chair of Divinity and Ecclesiastical History. During that time Professor Stevenson has shown himself to be a man of real learning; he has exhibited that quality which the philosopher Coleridge used to value highly, and which he called 'book-mindedness.' In an age distracted by a number of ephemeral interests, and, at the same time vaunting itself on a Baconian adhesion to things rather than to words, this quality of 'book-mindedness,' the characteristic of the scholar of the olden times, has a tendency to become rare. But, for the interests of humanity, it is necessary that there should be not only men who study nature, but also men whose life is spent in books—whose minds are more taken up with the past than the present; to whom everything suggests an association with some great writer, and who thus

the misfortune to receive some years previously; but, enfeebled as he was, he spent any intervals from suffering in preparing additional notes to his work on St Kentigern (which had been very favourably noticed), in the event of an edition being published after his demise. [It is believed that this edition is nearly ready for publication.]

Till within a few days of his death he was able to see his friends, and at last died peaceably on the 14th of June 1873, in the 68th year of his age.

Dr Stevenson was twice married, and left issue by both marriages.

#### 6. Obituary Notice of Auguste De la Rive. By Professor George Forbes.

AUGUSTE DE LA RIVE, one of our foreign Honorary Fellows, was born in the year 1801. He resided principally at Geneva, where for a long time he held a professorial chair. He made journeys in various European countries, and spent a considerable time in England and Scotland. After a long and active life, he was struck down by paralysis. A severe attack of gout added to his infirmity. The death of numbers of his friends and relatives deeply affected him. His state of health rendered it desirable that he should winter in the south of France in 1873. He died at Marseilles on the 27th November 1873, at the age of 72 years. His faculties were not impaired by infirmities, and up to the year of his death he continued to communicate memoirs to the Physical Society of Geneva.

M. De la Rive was chiefly interested in the study of electricity. In the Royal Society catalogue we find 106 articles, chiefly on this

serve as the living interpreters of libraries, and as links to maintain the hereditary succession of thought. Such a man as this is our friend Professor Stevenson, and such a character as his is the appropriate ornament of Universities. He has ever manifested not only the learning, but also the urbanity, of the true scholar; and in quitting the labours of the class-room and the Senate-hall to seek that repose which has now become necessary to him, he will not leave a single enemy behind. He will take with him into privacy the regrets of his colleagues, and their sincere wishes that he may yet enjoy many years of happiness and peace."