PREFACE.

This book was originally intended for students. It was not meant to be used as a class-book or to take the place of the usual lectures and dictata of the professor. An exact grasp of the fundamental principles of the subject can hardly be acquired otherwise than by professorial lectures delivered tutorialy. It was meant for home reading when the student had learnt enough from his classes to understand and read with profit. In respect of style, it attempted to avoid that prolixity, irrelevance and want of exact definition which too often render the study difficult, repellent and unprofitable to the student. In reading for another edition, the writer does not find that the purpose has been satisfactorily attained, but he has been able to introduce some improvements in arrangement and definition, and the book may be found useful as a supplement to class-lectures, and may help the student towards the study of more elaborate works. It attempts hardly more than a statement of the fundamental questions. But, in philosophy more than any other subject, an exact statement and definition, if accomplished, would go far towards a solution of the question, and want of accurate definition is the main cause of the endless controversies which make the study of philosophy so hopeless to many. The complaint is often made that philosophical inquiry leads to no definite result. It is true that it cannot exhaust the infinite, and that its results can never be more than proximate. But this is true, though in a less degree, of science. And philosophy can claim to have reached fairly definite results up to a certain point. Philosophy however is more subject, than any other study to freaks of theory and the glory of paradox, which set logic at defiance, and overly and conceal the tolerably well-established results of rational thought, which is, after all, only elaborated common sense.

H. S.