PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

The Lectures which I have undertaken to edit were delivered to the students of Trinity College, Dublin, from the newly-instituted chair of Moral Philosophy, of which Mr W. Archer Butler was the first occupant. In the interesting Memoir of the Professor, written by his friend and literary executor the Rev. Thomas Woodward, and prefixed to the volume of Sermons published in 1849, we are informed that this chair was first founded by Dr Lloyd the Provost in 1837, and that Mr Butler was appointed to fill it "immediately upon the expiration of his Scholarship." According to the data furnished by his biographer, this honourable distinction must have been conferred upon him before he had completed his twenty-sixth year, and it would seem that he entered without delay upon the duties of his office, which he retained until his premature death, which took place in 1848. The present Lectures seem to have been delivered during the first four years of his professorial life, as we may infer from an interesting notice inserted in the Dublin University Magazine for 1842, in which Lectures on Aristotle (forming the last series in these volumes) are expressly mentioned. Before that period, however, the Professor had ceased to write his Lectures in extenso: for we are told that "in the Ethical Lectures on which he was then" (1842) "engaged
he had abandoned the custom of *reading* his Discourses.* It would seem to follow that his design of writing a complete history of Philosophy was never realized, and that the Lectures which have been placed in my hands were, in fact, all that their Author penned upon that subject. A large pile of papers now in my keeping contains ample materials for structures never completed, and furnishes striking evidence of Mr Butler's varied and extensive reading.

In explanation of the delay which has taken place in the publication of the finished Lectures, it may be well to state that the MS. remained in the possession of Mr Woodward (whose professional engagements prevented him from undertaking the labour of editing it) until some eighteen months ago, when the present publishers purchased the copyright from that gentleman. Having previously expressed a favourable opinion of some specimen Lectures which had been shewn to me (one of which is annexed to the Memoir before referred to), and being further informed that no other Editor was forthcoming, I was induced to undertake the task proposed to me, in the hope of stimulating the interest in such studies, languid though it be and intermittent, which does undoubtedly exist in this country. I hoped, too, that the Lectures, after all allowance had been made for a posthumous and unfinished work, would tend to raise rather than diminish the reputation of an Author, whom, though personally unknown to me, the masterly "Letters on Development" had led me to rank among the most gifted spirits of his generation. My task has been rendered both more laborious and more interesting by the fact that the references to original writers, without which a history of Philosophy is of little use to the student, were almost entirely wanting in the MS. In the endeavour to trace the authorities I have naturally been led to a closcr
consideration of some of the Professor’s views, which, in not a few instances, has induced me to expand a reference into a note, and in some cases to give my reasons for dissenting from the statements in the text. With the text itself I have meddled as little as might be, finding it difficult to prune the redundancy without impairing the force and impressiveness of the Author’s language. Greater liberty has been used with the interspersed translations, though even here I have mainly confined myself to the tacit removal of inaccuracies by which the sense was affected. These, it is fair to say, were neither numerous nor very important; for though Mr Butler did not pretend to the title of an exact classical scholar, the philosophical acumen of his mind has generally enabled him to seize the true meaning of even the more recondite works of Plato and Aristotle.

It is no part of an Editor’s duty to criticise posthumous writings which are given to the world partly on his own responsibility. He has a right, however, to state how far that responsibility extends; and I say, therefore, without hesitation, that the Lectures included in the Introductory Series appeared to me unequal in merit to those that follow, and that I wished to withhold them. They were evidently hastily composed—as in fact appears from notices in the Author’s handwriting—and in some places they bear the appearance of having been produced to meet a sudden demand. Their rhetorical pomp of style, a meaning not always definite in itself, and frequently obscured by the very excess of illustration, the frequent repetitions, and, above all, a certain vacillation of judgment on speculative questions, are faults which must strike the intelligent reader, and which would, I am persuaded, have been acknowledged by the accomplished Professor himself. I have consented to edit them in deference to the opinion of
persons better able than myself to estimate their probable reception by the mass of readers, to many of whom, it is thought, some of the characteristics in question may prove attractive rather than repellent, while those of maturer taste may be induced to tolerate the style in consideration of the really fine vein of thought and sentiment which it conceals.

Of the Lectures which follow, the most original are those on Plato and the Platonists, which fill nearly the whole of the second volume. They are, unquestionably, as the Author informs us, "the result of patient and conscientious examination of the original documents;" and they may be considered as a perfectly independent contribution to our knowledge of the great master of Grecian wisdom. Of the Dialectic and Physics of Plato they are the only exposition at once accurate and popular with which I am acquainted; being more accurate than the French, and incomparably more popular than the German treatises on those departments of the Platonic philosophy. The Author's intimate familiarity with the metaphysical writings of the last century, and especially with the English and Scotch school of psychologists, has enabled him to illustrate the subtle speculations of which he treats in a manner calculated to render them more intelligible to the English mind than they can be made by writers trained solely in the technicalities of modern German schools, or by those who disdain the use of illustration altogether. To the Ethics and Politics of Plato equal justice has not been done, but from notes which have come into my possession I am inclined to think that this defect was in a great measure supplied in the unwritten Lectures on Ethics to which allusion has been made.

The brilliant Lecture on Neo-Platonism which concludes the fourth series I make no apology for publishing,
though sensible that the subject has of late received additional illustration. How much of it came from secondary sources, and how much from the fountain-head, it may be left to the curious to investigate.

The three Lectures on Aristotle contain an able analysis of the well-known, though by no means well-understood treatise, περὶ ψυχῆς. They were preceded by a discourse on the literary history of the Philosopher and his writings, which, as the subject has been treated satisfactorily by others, it seemed on the whole better to omit. An unfinished fifth Lecture on the Physics is omitted only because it is unfinished. It is a most promising commencement of a detailed examination of the Aristotelian theories of nature, which it is to be regretted that Mr Butler never completed.

In composing his comparatively brief notices of the earlier Grecian schools, the Author appears to have made considerable use of the German histories of Philosophy, especially that of Ritter. His estimate of Socrates, on the other hand, evinces the same independence of judgment and the same preference of original documents which mark his Lectures on Plato, and, as far as they go, those on Aristotle also: but the subject is handled in a manner too slight and cursory for its importance. In the notes I have endeavoured to direct the attention of students to sources of more complete information. The account of the minor Socratic sects, which concludes the first volume, will be found valuable by those University students who may wish to understand the allusions to the tenets of those schools or their founders with which the Platonic dialogues abound. The Megarian doctrines are explained with especial clearness, and the history of this succession of Sophist-philò-

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1 As by Professor Stahr in Dr Smith's Dictionary of Biography, Mr Blakesley in his Life of Aristotle, &c.
sophers appears to me to be treated with remarkable ability.

From these observations it will be seen that the description of this work in the title-page needs some qualification. The absence, for instance, of any account of the Stoics and Epicureans is a grave omission in a history of Philosophy. It would doubtless have been supplied had the Author completed his original design, for very copious collections for the purpose are to be found among his MSS. As the Lectures stand they constitute a history of the Platonic Philosophy—its seed-time, maturity, and decay: and on such a work the very omission of the collateral sects bestows a unity which it might not otherwise have possessed. To the theologian the importance of studying this philosophy is becoming daily more apparent; and it is no slight honour to the great Protestant University of Dublin to have furnished the first or one of the first examples in recent times, of an upright and intelligent history of Platonism written by an uncompromising defender of the catholic truths as well as of the historical evidences of Christianity.

I ought to add that the very complete Index which will be found at the end of the Second Volume, has been prepared by my friend Mr H. Montagu Butler, Fellow of Trinity College, to whom my best thanks are due.

W. H. T.

Cambridge,
Dec. 12, 1855.
PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

In preparing this new Edition, for which the Publishers announce that a demand exists both here and in America, some use has been made of treatises which have appeared since the former publication. The notes have in parts been enlarged, new references added, and doubtful statements modified or withdrawn. The text, also, has been carefully revised, some remaining inaccuracies have been removed, and a certain though limited discretion has been assumed in the removal of rhetorical superfluities.

The Editor's estimate of the value of the Lectures seems to have been confirmed by the continuance of the demand for them in the face of the important English contributions to the History of Ancient Philosophy which have appeared in the interval.

W. H. T.

July 1874.