

**ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE
AND WRITINGS OF
WILLIAM ROBERTSON**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649035182

Account of the Life and Writings of William Robertson by Dugald Stewart

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

DUGALD STEWART

**ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE
AND WRITINGS OF
WILLIAM ROBERTSON**

Wm. M. Smith

A C C O U N T
OF THE
L I F E A N D W R I T I N G S

OF

WILLIAM ROBERTSON, D.D. F.R.S.E.

LATE PRINCIPAL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH,
AND HISTORIOGRAPHER TO HIS MAJESTY
FOR SCOTLAND.

[Read before the Royal Society of Edinburgh.]

SECOND EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed by A. Strahan, Printers Street,
FOR T. CADELL JUN. AND W. DAVIES IN THE STRAND,
AND E. BALFOUR, EDINBURGH.
1802.

D 15
R 54 S 84

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE principal authorities for the biographical details in the following pages were communicated to me by Dr. Robertson's eldest son, Mr. William Robertson, Advocate. To him I am indebted, not only for the original letters with which he has enabled me to gratify the curiosity of my Readers, but for every other aid which he could be prompted to contribute, either by regard for his father's memory, or by friendship for myself.

My information with respect to the earlier part of Dr. Robertson's life was derived almost entirely from one of his oldest and most valued friends, the Rev. Dr. Carlyle of Inveresk.

It

LIBRARY SETS

NOV 25 '42

ALDINE BOOK CO.

447334

It is proper for me to add, that this Memoir was read at different meetings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh; and was destined for a place in their Transactions. The length to which it has extended, suggested the idea of a separate publication, and the addition of an Appendix.

During the long interval which has elapsed since it was composed, a few sentences have been occasionally inserted, in which a reference is made to later criticisms on Dr. Robertson's writings. I mention this circumstance, in order to account for some slight anachronisms.

DUGALD STEWART.

College of EDINBURGH,
16th May, 1801.

ACCOUNT
OF THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF
WILLIAM ROBERTSON, D.D.

SECTION FIRST.

*From Dr. ROBERTSON'S Birth till the Publication
of his History of Scotland.*

WILLIAM ROBERTSON, D.D. late
Principal of the University of Edin-
burgh, and Historiographer to his Majesty
for Scotland, was the son of the Reverend
William Robertson, Minister of the Old
Gray-Friar's Church, and of Eleanor Pit-
cairn, daughter of David Pitcairn, Esq. of
Dreghorn. By his father he was descended
from the Robertsons of Gladney in the
county of Fife; a branch of the respect-
B able

able family of the same name, which has, for many generations, possessed the estate of Struan in Perthshire.

He was born in 1721, at Borthwick (in the county of Mid-Lothian), where his father was then Minister; and received the first rudiments of his education at the school of Dalkeith, which, from the high reputation of Mr. Leslie as a Teacher, was at that time resorted to from all parts of Scotland. In 1733, he again joined his father's family on their removal to Edinburgh; and, towards the end of the same year, he entered on his course of academical study.

From this period till the year 1759, when, by the publication of his *Scottish History*, he fixed a new era in the literary annals of his country, the habits and occurrences of his life were such as to supply few materials for Biography; and the imagination is left to fill up a long interval spent in the silent pursuit of letters, and enlivened by the secret anticipation of future eminence. His genius was not of that forward and irregular growth, which forces itself pre-
 2 turely

turely on public notice ; and it was only a few intimate and discerning friends, who, in the native vigour of his powers, and in the patient culture by which he laboured to improve them, perceived the earnestness of a fame that was to last for ever.

The large proportion of Dr. Robertson's life which he thus devoted to obscurity will appear the more remarkable, when contrasted with his early and enthusiastic love of study. Some of his oldest common-place books, still in his son's possession, (dated in the years 1735, 1736, and 1737,) bear marks of a persevering assiduity, unexampled perhaps at so tender an age ; and the motto prefixed to all of them, (*Vita sine literis mors est*,) attests how soon those views and sentiments were formed, which, to his latest hour, continued to guide and to dignify his ambition. In times such as the present, when literary distinction leads to other rewards, the labours of the studious are often prompted by motives very different from the hope of fame, or the inspiration of genius ; but when Dr. Robertson's career commenced, these were the only incitements

which existed to animate his exertions. The trade of Authorship was unknown in Scotland; and the rank which that country had early acquired among the learned nations of Europe, had, for many years, been sustained entirely by a small number of eminent men, who distinguished themselves by an honourable and disinterested zeal in the ungrateful walks of abstract science.

Some presages, however, of better times were beginning to appear. The productions of Thomson and of Mallet were already known and admired in the metropolis of England, and an impulse had been given to the minds of the rising generation, by the exertions of a few able and enlightened men, who filled important stations in the Scottish Universities. Dr. Hutcheson of Glasgow, by his excellent writings, and still more by his eloquent lectures, had diffused, among a numerous race of pupils, a liberality of sentiment, and a refinement of taste, unknown before in this part of the island; and the influence of his example had extended, in no inconsiderable degree, to that seminary where
Dr.