

ARISTOTLE

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Aristotle by Sir Alexander Grant

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SIR ALEXANDER GRANT

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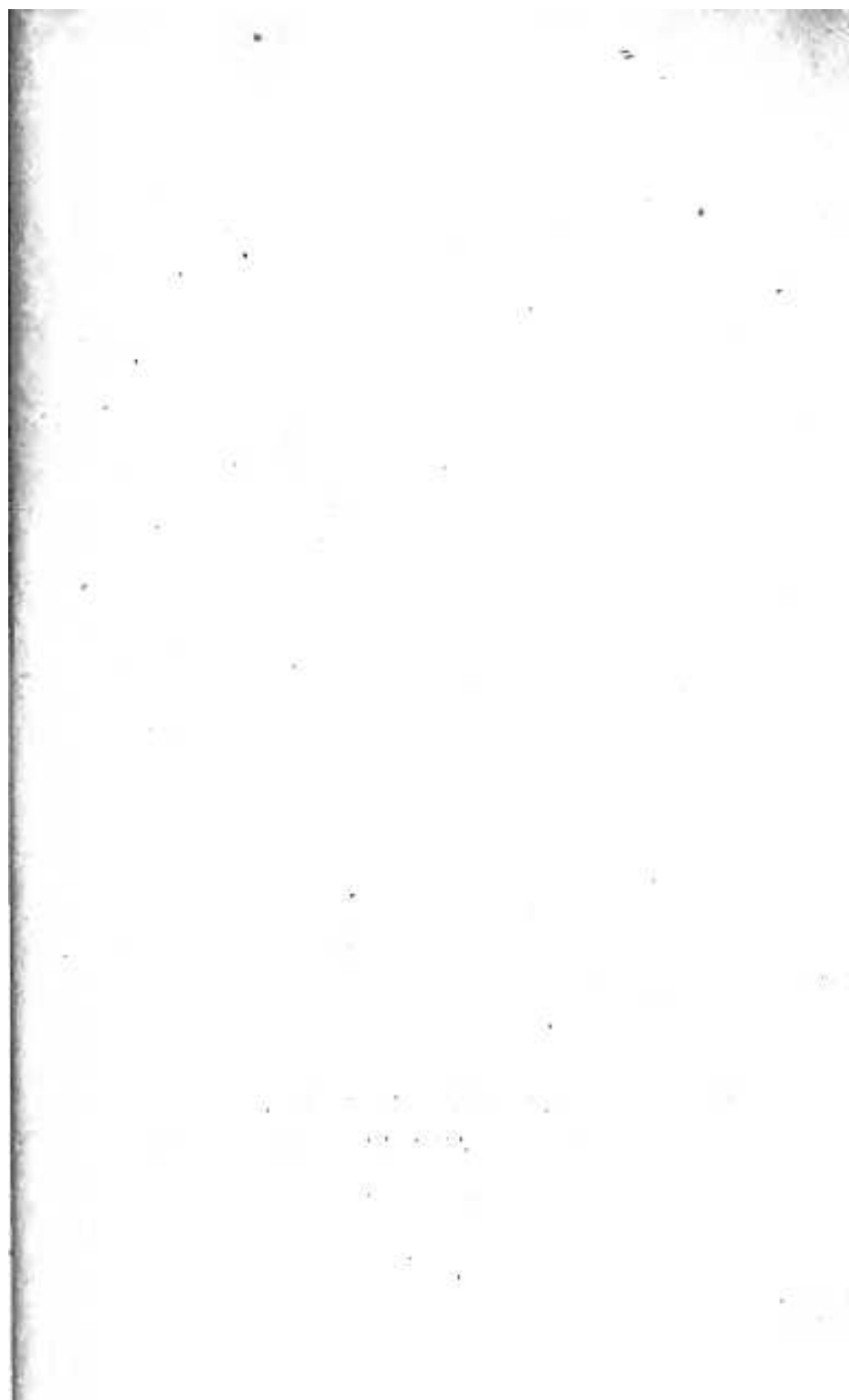
BY

SIR ALEXANDER GRANT, BART., LL.D.

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A R I S T O T L E.

CHAPTER I.

THE LIFE OF ARISTOTLE.

THE dates of the chief events in the life of Aristotle, extracted from the 'Chronology' of Apollodorus (140 B.C.), have been handed down to us by Diogenes Laertius in his 'Lives of the Philosophers;' and from various other sources it is possible to fill in the outline thus afforded, if not with certain facts, at all events with reasonable probabilities. Aristotle's own writings are almost entirely devoid of personal references, yet in them we can trace, to some extent, the progress and development of his mind. On the whole, we know quite as much about him, personally, as about most of the ancient Greek writers.

Aristotle was born in the year 384 B.C., at Stageira, a Grecian colony and seaport town on the Strymonic Gulf in Thrace, not far from Mount Athos—and, what is more important, not far from the frontier of Macedonia, and from Pella, the residence of the Macedonian

King Amyntas. To Stageira, his birth-place, he owed the world-famous appellation of "the Stagirite," given to him by scholiasts and schoolmen in later days. It was fancied by Wilhelm von Humboldt that Aristotle exhibits certain un-Greek characteristics in his neglect of form and grace in writing, and that this is attributable to his having been born and brought up in Thrace. But, on the other hand, Aristotle's family were purely Hellenic, and probably the colonists of Stageira lived in strict conformity with Greek ideas, and not without contempt for the surrounding "barbarians." Even the court of Macedonia, in the neighbourhood, were phil-Hellenic in their tastes, and entertained Greek artists and men of letters. And Aristotle shows no trace in his writings of ever having known any language beside Greek. Probably the mere locality of his birth produced but little influence upon him, except so far as it led to his subsequent connection with the court of Macedon. His father, Nicomachus, was physician to King Amyntas, and it is possible that the youthful Aristotle was taken at times to the court, and thus made the acquaintance of his future patron, Philip of Macedon, who was about his own age. But all through the time of Aristotle's boyhood, affairs in Macedonia were troubled and unprosperous. Amyntas was an unsuccessful ruler, and brought his country to the verge of extinction in a war with the Illyrians. Aristotle, as a youth, cannot have had any inducement to take an interest in Macedonian politics. Up to the time when he left his native city, there had appeared no indication of that which afterwards occurred,—that