

CT 41

JOHN WYCLIFFE THE BOLD,

OR

England's First Reformer.



By J. R. ELLIS.

London:
S. W. PARTRIDGE & Co.,
9, PATERNOSTER ROW.

TO BE HAD OF ALL BOOKSELLERS.

P R E F A C E.

THIS little record of the life and times of Wycliffe, justly called "The Morning Star of the Reformation," may seem to some readers to be dry and uninteresting; but although there is nothing in it of the poetic or the ideal, yet it should be to every thoughtful Christian a grand thing to contemplate the life, and teaching, and death of this man of men. Looking at him in the light of what he has, through God, accomplished for our country, surely the voice of England ought to ring out a thanksgiving from end to end of her dominions.

We who live in these enlightened and privileged times are too apt to forget the struggle which that liberty has cost our forefathers, and it is only by reading the lives of these great men that we are reminded of the glorious deeds of some of our ancestors who fought so nobly for the truth, and who suffered even to the death for that pure and simple Gospel which, by their very life's blood, they have handed down to us. Let us awake to a sense of *our* responsibility in the matter. We have not got to fight *for* the truth in the sense which they had, but let it be ours, by our lives and by our teaching, to shed abroad the *light* of that truth through the length and breadth of our land, that others of our countrymen and countrywomen who are now sitting in darkness may be brought under the light, and influence, and power of the Gospel; then shall we be remembering our great Reformer in the way that he would best have liked, viz., by carrying on the great work which he began, in this our day and generation.

"Faithful found
Among the faithless; faithful only he
Among innumerable false; unmoved,
Unbroken, unseduced, unterrified,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example, with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
Though single."

J. R. ELLIS.

JOHN WYCLIFFE THE BOLD,

OR

England's First Reformer.

THERE is an old and very true saying, common amongst us, that "When night is darkest dawn is nearest." This seems to have been specially the case with regard to England at, or rather just before, the time of the Reformation. Darkness, both spiritual and moral, and degradation seems to have spread all over the land, till it appeared as if the vice and immorality of the people, aye, and of priests also, could go no farther. And so the advent of John Wycliffe at such a time seemed to be, indeed, as light springing up like the dawn of day.

John Wycliffe was born in the little village of Spreswell, not far from Barnard Castle, in the North Riding of Yorkshire, in the year 1324. Of his boyhood there seems to be no authentic record, but it is supposed that as monastic schools were springing up in various parts of England at that period, he would have been sent to one or other of these schools. At any rate, he commenced his college life at the age of 15, when he went to Queen's College, Oxford, or Oxenford, as it was then called, where he entered as a student, and was soon removed to the celebrated Merton, and afterwards he was promoted to the presidency of Baliol, and also presented with a college living; but in 1365 Simon Islip, the primate, constituted him Warden of Canterbury College, which he had then newly founded at Oxford. An equal number of regular and secular priests having been placed as fellows in this college by the founder, after his death disputes arose, which led to the expulsion of Wycliffe and the other three secular members of the college in 1367. On an appeal to Rome, the measure received the sanction of the papal court, a circumstance which naturally exasperated the mind of the ejected warden against the pope.

In the reign of Edward II., the payment of the thousand marks annually, as agreed to by John, was quietly dropped, and no remonstrance against its discontinuance came from Rome; but in the year 1365, a renewal of the papal claim was made, and the demand accompanied by an intimation to the effect that if the king did not pay this tribute and also all the arrears of past years he would have to appear before his feudal superior in Rome to answer for his conduct.

During the century which had elapsed since the great Charter was signed, England's growth in all the elements of greatness had been marvellously rapid. She had fused Norman and Saxon into one people; she had extended her commerce; she had reformed her laws; she had founded seats of learning, which had already become renowned; she had fought great battles and won brilliant victories; her valour was felt and her powers feared by continental nations, and when the summons to do homage as a vassal of the pope was received, the nation hardly knew whether to meet it with indignation or with derision.

Edward had oftentimes been obliged, in order to meet the cost of wars, to ask Parliament to consent to increased burdens of taxation; and all the more acceptable to him was the opportunity of giving into the hands of the representatives of the country the repudiation of an impost which had been in abeyance for more than a generation. Should Parliament adopt this resolution, the crown was covered by the country. But the burden of taxation was not the principal point of view from which Parliament looked at the papal demand; much more than that, the honour and independence of the kingdom was the determining consideration for its representatives. The Parliament assembled for the purpose of considering this question in May, 1366, and required a day to consider as to the answer. Wycliffe was present on the occasion, but whether as a spectator merely, or as a Member of Parliament, does not seem quite clear. He wrote, however, a treatise on the question of political right in the sense of the declaration of Parliament. The decision given was unanimous. They said: "Forasmuch as neither King John, nor any other king, could bring his realm and kingdom into such thraldom and subjection but by common consent of Parliament, the which was not given; therefore, that which he did was against his oath at his coronation, besides many other causes. If, therefore, the pope should attempt anything against the king by process, or other matters in deed, the king, with all his subjects, should, with all their force and power, resist the same." Thus was England freed from the insolent demands of the pope at this time.

Failing in his attempt to assert a papal supremacy in England, the pope allowed the matter to rest, although his priests tried every means in their power to grasp some of her wealth, forgetting their true mission in their strivings after worldly gains: they infested alike the castle and the cottage, threatening the poor with everlasting sufferings if they did not give them their hardly earned money, and, making their way to the bedside of the rich, would offer them pardon from sins for filthy lucre.

What a contrast was the conduct of John Wycliffe at this time! Knowing as he did the people were trodden down by the cruel demands of the priests, he insisted on himself receiving almost nothing at their hands, while he denounced the hypocrisies of the Church of Rome and preached unto the people justification by faith; and such a man at this eventful period was sorely needed in England, for wars were continually breaking out with France, and while the soldiers won splendid victories, the people willingly bore the heavy burden of taxation imposed upon them in consequence; but when Edward the Black Prince became incapacitated by disease from leading the soldiers, then loud and bitter complaints arose, people became irritable, and threatened to rebel against the Government unless some kind of relief was afforded them. In 1341 Edward made a fresh demand for subsidy of 50,000 marks, and it was now that the power of Wycliffe's true teaching was displayed. He had become by this time very popular, so that in the hour of danger every one looked to him for counsel and advice. He had taught the people that the Bible said that the Church had no right to any earthly king, and the people had so far received the doctrine that they were determined, at all hazards, to force the priests into compliance with it. Consequently, when the king made fresh demands, in the way of issuing new taxes, the Parliament at once proposed that the Church should pay a part of the cost of the war out of the revenue she had received from the people. Of course, the priests frantically opposed this, but the people firmly insisted upon the proposition being carried into effect, and gained the day. Also the Parliament at this time proposed to the king to remove the prelates from all secular positions which they might hold, and put laymen in their places. This proposition was adopted by the king, and two or three of the bishops were succeeded by laymen in their secular offices, according to the voice of the country. In a little time, however, the evil broke out again with greater violence. In 1373, the aged king listened again to the demands of the people, and sent a deputation to the pope; but his holiness did not return a satisfactory reply. Parliament again took up the scandal, and sternly demanded redress. A second embassy was appointed, consisting of seven men, the second of whom was John Wycliffe. The papal court was at Avignon, but the City of Bruges was selected for the

negotiations. Bruges was, at that time, a city of great importance, numbering 200,000 inhabitants, and with commercial and political relations extending far and wide.

Wycliffe must, from his prominent position, have come into contact with many eminent men, who were there also. Amongst these was the king's fourth son, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, who already knew and appreciated the high qualities of Wycliffe. The terms of peace agreed upon between the king and the pope did not reach any of the real evils complained of by the country, and in April, 1376, when the Parliament met, it spoke with the voice of the people when it put before the king the grievances under which they suffered, through the arbitrary conduct of the Roman See, and showed to him what great need there was for reform in the land. The old king, however, was drawing near his end, and possibly frightened too by his priestly advisers, rendered the Parliament no help in the matter. The next year they renewed their complaint, and now the power of Wycliffe's influence over them once again came into full play. He had, by his upright and generous conduct, inspired the people with full confidence, and they seemed only too ready to follow where he led. No wonder that the wrath of the priests now began to turn upon Wycliffe. He had denounced them as hypocrites, and stirred up the indignation of the people against them. In return they sought to bring false witnesses against him and bring his deeds to nought, but the Hand of the Lord, whose he was and whom he served, was with him; and he was still preserved to do good in old England. In 1377 Edward III. died, and was succeeded by his grandson, Richard II. The country was still involved in war, the expense of which, together with a want of economy in the administration, had entirely exhausted the royal treasury, and in the same proportion ruffled the public temper, that the murmurs of the people became deeper and more emphatic. All parties felt that something must be done to relieve the country in its extremity, and, at the same time, to repress the rising of popular discontent. The source of the evil was traced to the luxury, extravagance and malpractices of the hierarchy. The pope was held guilty of enriching himself by the reversion of benefices; of accepting bribes for the promotion of unlearned and unworthy men to the cure of souls, who never saw or cared to see the flocks; of levying a subsidy from the whole English clergy for the ransom of Frenchmen as the avowed enemies of the king; of making a gain by the translation of bishops and other dignitaries within the realm; and of appropriating to himself the first-fruits of all benefices. Lay patrons, taking advantage of the simony and covetousness of the pope, were accused of selling their benefices. The pope's collector and receiver of his pence not only kept a house in London with clubs and offices thereunto belonging, as if it had been one of the king's solemn courts, but annually transported to the papal see twenty or more thousand marks. Cardinals and others retained at the court of Rome were raised to the highest offices and dignities within the realm. On these grounds, it was represented to Parliament that it would be good to renew all statutes against provisors from Rome, since the pope reserved all the benefices of the world for his own proper gift, and had, within one single year, created twelve new cardinals, thus raising the number to thirty; while all of them, with two or three exceptions, were the known enemies of the king. It was further suggested that the provisors of the pope should be most strenuously resisted, and that no papal collector or proctor should remain in England upon peril of life and limb, and that no Englishman on the like pains should become such collector or proctor, or remain at the court of Rome.

After Wycliffe's return from Bruges, he was presented by the king to the living of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire. From this pulpit he began to preach the glorious Gospel, and to strike the keynote of the Reformation. That pulpit, which is composed of richly carved oak, still remains in a high state of preservation. Twice during the year 1377 was Wycliffe summoned as a heretic—the first time before Convocation at St. Paul's Cathedral. The history of the Reformation thus describes it: "On the 19th February, 1377, an immense crowd, heated with fanaticism, thronged the approaches to the church and filled its aisles, while the citizens favourable to the reform remained concealed in their houses. Wycliffe moved forward, preceded by Lord Percy, Marshal of England, and supported b

the Duke of Lancaster, who defended him from purely political motives. He was followed by four bachelors of divinity, his counsel, and passed through the hostile multitude, who looked upon Lancaster as the enemy of their liberties, and upon himself as the enemy of the church. 'Let not the sight of these bishops make you shrink a hair's breadth in your profession of faith,' said the prince to the doctor, 'they are unlearned; and as for this concourse of people, fear nothing. We are here to defend you.' When the reformer had crossed the threshold of the Cathedral the crowd within appeared like a solid wall; and notwithstanding the efforts of the Earl Marshal, Wycliffe and Lancaster could not advance. The people swayed to and fro, hands were raised in violence, and loud hootings re-echoed from the building.

"At length Percy made an opening in the dense multitude, and Wycliffe passed on."

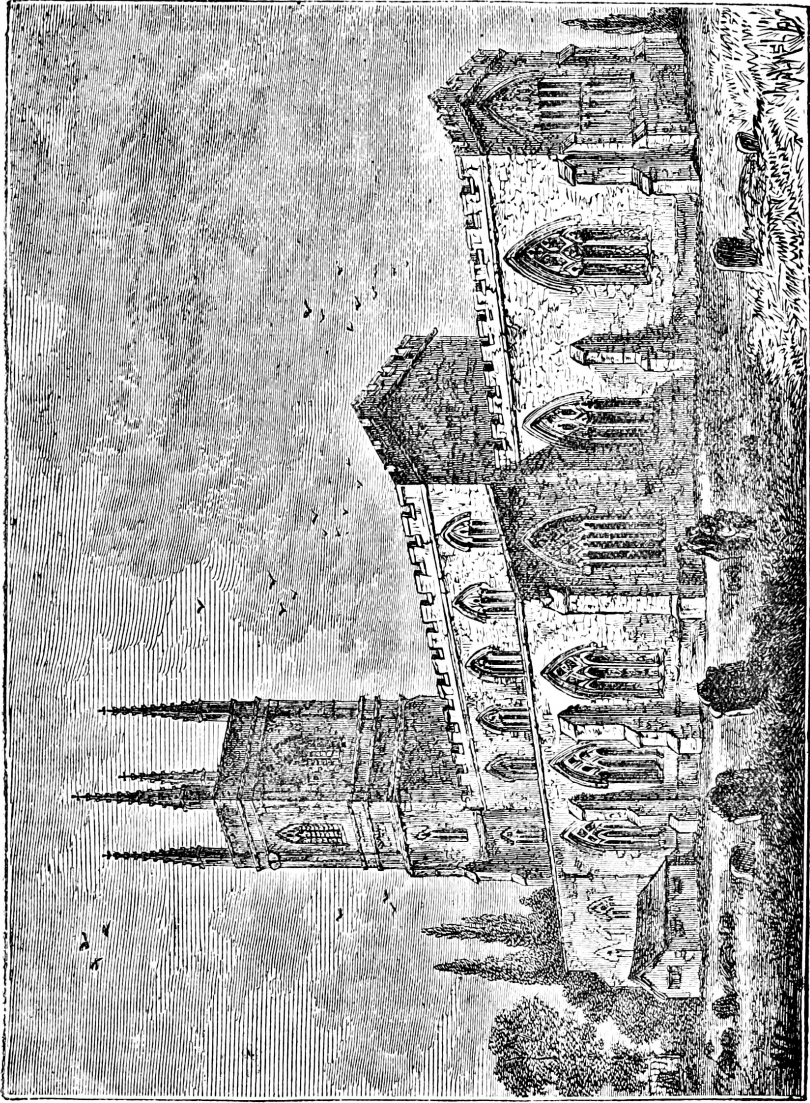
The haughty Courtney, who had been commissioned by the Archbishop to preside over the assembly, watched these strange movements with anxiety, and beheld with displeasure the learned doctor accompanied by the two most powerful men in England.

He said nothing to the Duke of Lancaster, who at that time administered the kingdom, but turning towards Percy, observed sharply, "If I had known, my lord, that you claimed to be master in this church I would have taken measures to prevent your entrance."

Lancaster coldly rejoined, "He shall keep such mastery here though you say Nay." Percy now turned to Wycliffe, who had remained standing, and said, "Sit down and rest yourself." At this Courtney gave way to his anger, and exclaimed in a loud tone, "He must not sit down; criminals stand before their judges." Lancaster, indignant that a learned doctor of England should be refused a favour to which his age alone entitled him (for he was between fifty and sixty) made answer to the Bishop, "My lord, you are very arrogant; take care, or I may bring down your pride, and not yours only, but that of all the prelaty of England." "Do me all the harm you can," was Courtney's haughty reply. The Prince rejoined with some emotion: "You are insolent, my lord; you think, no doubt, you can trust on your family; but your relations will have trouble enough to protect themselves." To this the Bishop nobly replied, "My confidence is not in my parents, or in any man, but only in God, in whom I trust, and by whose assistance I will be bold to speak the truth." Lancaster, who saw only hypocrisy in these words, turned to one of his attendants, and whispered in his ear, but so loud as to be heard by the bystanders, "I would pluck the Bishop by the hair of his head out of his chair than take this at his hands." Lancaster had hardly uttered these words before the Bishop's partisans fell upon him and Percy, and even upon Wycliffe, who alone had remained calm. The two noblemen resisted; their friends and servants defended them. The uproar became extreme, and there was no hope of restoring tranquillity. The two lords escaped with difficulty, and the vast assembly broke up in great confusion. On the following day, the Earl Marshal having called upon Parliament to apprehend the disturbers of the public peace, the clerical party, uniting with the enemies of Lancaster, filled the streets with their clamour; and while the Duke and the Earl escaped by the Thames, the mob collected before Percy's house, broke down the doors, searched every chamber, and thrust their swords into every dark corner. When they found that he had escaped, the rioters, imagining that he was concealed in Lancaster's palace, rushed to the Savoy, at that time the most magnificent building in the kingdom. They killed a priest who endeavoured to stay them, tore down the ducal arms, and hung them on the gallows like those of a traitor. They would have gone still further if the Bishop had not very opportunely reminded them that they were in Lent. As for Wycliffe he was dismissed with an injunction against preaching his doctrines.

But this decision of the priests was not ratified by the people of England. Public opinion declared in favour of Wycliffe. If he is guilty, said they, why is he not punished? If he is innocent, why is he ordered to be silent? If he is the weakest in power he is the strongest in truth!

The hostility of the prelates continued, but his political friends were far stronger than his enemies; they therefore resolved that they would appeal to the



LUTTERWORTH CHURCH.

pope and see what could be done by the highest spiritual authority. Some have thought that the chief movers in this matter were the mendicant monks, but history seems to prove that it rested altogether with the English bishops, who collected a number of propositions which the Reformers had propounded either in published writings or in lectures or disputes. They were nineteen in number, coming under three heads. 1st. Concerning the rights of property and inheritance; 2nd. Concerning Church property and its lawful secularisation; and 3rd. Concerning the power of Church discipline and its necessary limits. These were all condemned, and no less than five Bulls were issued against Wycliffe in one day. These Bulls, however, were not made public until some months after their issue, in consequence of the illness and death of Edward III. Afterwards such a policy of antagonism to Rome was expressed by the members of Parliament who assembled under the new king, Richard II., that the enemies of Wycliffe thought it would be more favourable to their cause to postpone all their measures against him until after the prorogation of Parliament. The subject which was chiefly being discussed by this assembly cannot be better shown than by an extract of Wycliffe's own opinion, drawn up at this time for the benefit of the young, "Christ, the head of the Church, whose example should be followed by all Christian priests, lived upon the alms of devout women. He hungered, thirsted, was a stranger, and suffered in many ways, not only in His members but in Himself. As the Apostle testifies, 'He was made poor for your sakes, that ye through His poverty might be enriched.' Accordingly, when the Church was first endowed, whoever among the clergy were then holders of any temporal possessions held the same in the form of perpetual alms. This is evident from histories and other sources; hence, St. Bernard, in his second book to the Pope Eugenius, declares that no secular dominion could be challenged by him on the ground of his office as the Vicar of St. Peter, and writes thus: 'It may indeed be claimed by you, in virtue of some other plea, but assuredly by no right or title derived from the Apostles; for how could an Apostle give unto you that which he did not himself possess? That care over the Church which he really had, he gave you; but when did he give you any worldly rule or lordship? Observe what he saith: "Not bearing rule as lords over God's heritage, but yielding yourselves as examples to the flesh." And that ye may not think these words spoken in a show of humility, and not in truth, mark the words of our Lord Himself in the Gospel: 'The kings of the nations have lordship over them, but it shall not be so with you.' Here lordly dominion is plainly forbidden to the Apostles; and wilt thou venture to usurp the same? If a lord, then apostleship is lost; if an Apostle, thy lordship is no more; for certainly the one or the other must be relinquished. If both are sought, both must be lost. Or should'st thou succeed, then judge thyself to be of that number respecting whom God so greatly complains, saying, "They have reigned, but not through Me; they have become princes, but I have not known them." "He who is greatest among you shall be made as the least, and he who is the highest shall be your minister." And to illustrate this saying He set a child in the midst of His disciples. This, then, is the true form and institution of Apostolic calling—lordship and rule are forbidden; ministrations and service are commended.'

"From the words of a blessed man, whom the whole Church hath agreed to honour, it appears that the pope hath no right to possess himself of the goods of the Church, as though he were lord over them, but that he is to be with respect to them as a minister or a servant and a proctor for the poor. And would to God that the same proud and eager desire of authority and lordship which is now discovered by this seat of power were aught else than a declension, preparing the pathway of Antichrist!"

The following year the Reformer appeared before the pope's commissioners at the Archbishop's palace at Lambeth. This time he had to present himself alone, for the Duke of Lancaster, who had before appeared as his defender, was no longer in a position to do so, and was therefore absent. Wycliffe bravely defended himself, and was supported by the people on the one hand, who created much disturbance during the time of the trial, and by Royalty on the other, so that, altogether, the commissioners were powerless to proceed, and just to save appearances they issued a prohibition against any future teaching, either by lectures or sermons.

Soon after this trial at Lambeth Palace, the enemies of Wycliffe themselves furnished him with a powerful weapon with which to effect their downfall. The deep corruption which existed in every part of the Romish Church could not but force itself upon Wycliffe's notice, and to contrast itself with the pure life and teaching of Jesus and His Apostles. He soon decided that the Christian Church, as it was still called, possessed a name to live, while it was in reality dead; and the light which had gone out from it must by some means be rekindled, as it soon was by the Reformer and his followers. The death of pope Gregory, on March 27th, 1378, proved to be the beginning of great dissensions in the Church, as the newly-elected pope, who took the title of Urban VI., disappointed the cardinals; being a man of firmness and stability of character he soon shewed them that he would never be the mere instrument of their pleasure. At the end of July the cardinals met and declared the election of Urban to have been illegal, whereupon they called upon him to renounce his papal dignitaries, and proceeded to elect another pope, the Bishop of Cambray, who took the title of Clement VII. Thus the Church was completely divided; the English Church continued to adhere to Urban VI., on whose side Wycliffe's sympathies were at first centred; but he soon found so much in both to call forth his condemnation, that he publicly declared them both to be false popes, for, said he, "They have nothing to do with the Church, as is plainly seen by their actions; they are apostates and limbs of the devil, instead of being members of the body of Christ." As Wycliffe saw the growing corruption and dissension in the false Church he set himself more strenuously to study the doctrines of Holy Scripture, so that he might be able to proclaim the old, old story to thirsty souls all over the land. Not only did he preach and teach in all places himself, but he organised a band of itinerant preachers, men, who like Wesley, were noted for the zeal of their cause, and for the purity of their lives; and these men carried the truth from village to village, preaching either in a building or by the wayside. They urged the people to live in the peace that becometh the Gospel; they condemned the vice and hypocrisy of the priesthood, and warned the people to avoid all intercourse with them. Of course, they soon encountered the fierce hostility of the Church, who spread all sorts of slanders about them, but in spite of all, this great mission started by Wycliffe flourished and spread throughout the land. This is a specimen of one of the great Reformer's own sermons, preached at Lutterworth parish church on a Christmas Day:—

"On this day we may affirm that a child is born to us, since Jesus according to our belief, was this day born. Both in figure and in letter God spake of old to this intent, that to us a child should be born, in whom we should have joy. From this speech of Isaiah three short lessons should be delivered, that men may rejoice in the after services of this child:—First: We hold it as part of our faith that as our first parents had sinned, there must be atonement made for it according to the righteousness of God. For as God is merciful, so He is full of righteousness. But except He keep His righteousness on this point, how may He judge all the world? There is no sin done but what is against God, but this sin was done directly against the Lord Almighty and all rightful. The greater also the Lord is against whom whom any sin is done, the greater always is the sin—just as to do against the king's bidding is deemed the greatest of offences. But the sin which is done against God's bidding is greater without measure. God then, according to our belief, bid Adam that he should not eat of the apple, yet he broke God's command. Nor was he excused therein by his own weakness, by Eve, nor by the serpent. Hence, according to the righteousness of God, this sin must be always punished. It is to speak lightly to say that God might of His own power forgive the sin, without the atonement that was made for it, since the justice of God would not suffer this, which requires that every trespass be punished either in earth or in hell. God may not accept a person to forgive him his sin without an atonement, else He must give free license to sin both in angels and men, and then sin were no sin, and our God were no god! Such is the first lesson we take as part of our faith. The second is that the person who may make atonement for the sin of our first father must needs be God and man. For as man's nature trespassed, so must man's nature render atonement. An angel, therefore, would attempt in vain to make atonement for man, for he has not the power to do it, nor was his the nature that here sinned. Since all men

form one person, if any member of this person maketh atonement, the whole person maketh it. But we may see that if God made a man of nought or strictly anew, after the manner of Adam, yet he were bound to God after the extent of his power for himself, having nothing wherewith to make atonement for his own or Adam's sin. Since then atonement must be made for the sin of Adam, as we have shewn, the person to make the atonement must be God and man, for then the worthiness of this person's deeds, were even with the unworthiness of the sin!"

One of the chief doctrines which Wycliffe attacked was that of transubstantiation, a doctrine which makes every priest a miracle worker; he proclaimed it to be unscriptural both in the pulpit and in the lecture room, and also he wrote twelve short "theses," in which he set forth the ground of his disbelief. This created a considerable sensation, not only amongst the prelates, but also amongst the students at Oxford, to whom he was then lecturing. A conference was called, whose voice was unanimous that the opinions of Wycliffe were erroneous, and a decree was issued prohibiting them from being taught. When the mandate reached the Reformer, with its sentence of condemnation, he said to the messengers: "But you ought first to have shown me that I am in error." He also told them, that no one on earth could alter his convictions, and that he should appeal to the king and his parliament. Lancaster immediately became alarmed, and, hastening to his old friend, begged him, ordered him even, to trouble himself no more about this matter. Attacked on every side, Wycliffe, for a time, remained silent. Shall he sacrifice the truth to save his reputation—his repose—perhaps his life? Shall expediency get the better of faith—Lancaster prevail over Wycliffe? No; his courage was invincible. Although he was compelled to keep from preaching, he yet made good use of his pen on this subject. About this time he wrote a very popular tract, entitled "The Wicket." The following is an extract from it: "Christ hath revealed to us that there are two ways—one leading to life, the other leading to death; the former narrow, the latter broad. Let us, therefore, pray to God to strengthen us, by His grace, in the spiritual life, that we may enter in through the straight gate, and that He would defend us, in the hour of temptation. Temptation to depart from God and fall into idolatry is already present, when men declare it to be heresy to speak the Word of God to the people in English, and when they would press upon us, instead of this, a false law, and a false faith—viz., a faith in the consecrated host. This is of all faiths the falsest.

"Since the year of our Lord 1000, all the doctors have been in error about the sacrament of the altar except, perhaps, it may be Berengarius. How canst thou, O priest, who art but a man, make thy Maker? What—the thing that growth in the fields; that ear which thou pluckest to-day shall be gods to-morrow! . . . As you cannot make the works which He made, how shall ye make Him who made the works? Woe to the adulterous generation that believeth the testimony of Innocent rather than that of the Gospel!"

In 1381 an insurrection broke out amongst the peasants of the country, headed by Wat Tyler. Goaded by the excessive taxation, and tried by the severity of the tax-collectors, mobs gathered in the beginning of June and marched up to London, where they killed all the magistrates, lawyers, and jurymen that they could lay hands upon; destroyed many valuable documents, and burnt the splendid palace of the Duke of Lancaster in the Savoy to ashes, and they seized the Primate and several other officers of state, and condemned them to be executed as traitors. The poor king was so stricken, that he seemed at first powerless to resist them, till at last the brave mayor of London, William Walworth, of Smithfield, laid hold of Tyler just when he was approaching the king, and sent him off to prison, whereupon some of the king's knights took him and killed him. From that time courage seemed to rise in the hearts of the soldiers, and in a short time quiet was again restored throughout the land.

This insurrection was laid to poor Wycliffe's charge; but, of course, it is not at all likely that he had anything to do with it, for the Duke of Lancaster, against whom the mob was so bitter, was his chief friend; and, besides, they had determined to destroy all the priests in the land, excepting the "mendicant" or "begging friars," against whom Wycliffe was most severe. In 1380 Wycliffe published his tract, entitled "Objections to Friars," wherein he charges them with

heresy and error. The course of his argument run thus: "There cometh no pardon but of God. The worst abuses of these friars consist in their pretended confessions, by means of which they affect, with numberless artifices of blasphemy, to purify those whom they confess, and make them clean from all pollution in the eyes of God; setting aside the commandments and satisfaction of our Lord. There is no greater heresy than for a man to believe that he is absolved from his sins, if he give money, or if a priest lay his hands on his head and say that he absolveth thee; for thou must be sorrowful in thy heart and make amends to God, else God absolveth thee not. Many think if they give a penny to a pardoner they shall be forgiven the breaking of all the commandments of God, and therefore they take no heed how they keep them. But I say this for certain: though thou have priests and friars to sing for thee, and though thou each day hear many masses, and found churches and colleges, and go on pilgrimages all thy life, and give all thy goods to pardoners, this will not bring thy soul to heaven. May God of His endless mercy destroy the pride, covetousness, hypocrisy and heresy of this famed pardoning, and make men busy to keep His commandments and set fully thy trust in Jesus Christ.

"The friars being cause, beginning, and maintaining of perturbation in Christendom, and of all evil in this world, these errors shall never be amended, till friars be brought to freedom of the Gospel and clean religion of Jesus Christ."

Wycliffe's opposition to the friars increased with increasing years, and great was their joy when in the year 1379 he fell dangerously ill. The four regents who represented the four religious orders, accompanied by four Aldermen, visited him. They said "You have death on your lips, be touched by your faults and retract in our presence all that you have said to our injury."

Begging his servant to raise him on his couch, and turning towards the friars, he opened his livid lips and fixed on them a piercing look, saying with emphasis, "I shall not die, but live, and again declare the evil deeds of the friars."

It seemed to be rather an unfortunate thing for Wycliffe that immediately after the insurrection of Wat Tyler and his followers, Courtney was made primate in the room of Sudbury, who had been beheaded in the tower by the mob. Courtney was one of Wycliffe's worst enemies, having before instituted proceedings against him. Since that time, however, the influence of the Reformer had spread and strengthened, and he had become bolder to resist the persecution of his enemies. The primate believed that Wycliffe had been in some way concerned in the insurrection, he therefore considered it to be his duty to summon him to answer for his doctrine, with a view of condemning the same. He therefore convened an assembly of men who were known to be faithful to the pope, to examine these doctrines, and pronounce judgment. The meeting was held in the Hall of the Dominican Monastery at Blackfriars, in May, 1382. Just as it had commenced there was a dreadful earthquake, which shook the foundations of the City of London, and at which the people were so frightened that they wished at once to dismiss the charge, but Courtney declared that it was but the favour of God upon their proceedings. There is not much recorded of the transactions of this Conference, but it is stated that one of the Archbishop's officers read ten propositions, said to be Wycliffe's, but ascribing to him certain errors of which he was quite innocent. It was now determined that if all who held heretical opinions did not recant they should be crushed by the law. The Chancellor of the kingdom represented to the House of Lords that it was a well-known fact that different ill-disposed persons were going through the realm, from county to county and town to town, in a well-known dress, and under the aspect of great holiness, even preaching from day to day without authority from the proper ordinary, or credentials from any other quarter, not only in churches and churchyards, but also in market places and other public thoroughfares, where much people were wont to resort. Their sermons were full of heresies and manifold errors, to the great injury of the Church and the faith, and to the great spiritual peril of the people and of the whole realm. "These men preach also things of a calumnious kind in order to sow strife and division between different classes, both spiritual and secular, and they influence the minds of the people to the great danger of the whole

kingdom. If these preachers are summoned by the bishops for examination, they pay no regard to their commands, do not trouble themselves in the least about their admonitions and the censures of the Holy Church, but rather testify their undisguised contempt for them. They know besides how to draw the people by their fine words to listen to their sermons, and they hold them fast in their errors by a strong hand, and by means of imposing crowds." It was, therefore, he urged, indisputably necessary that the State should lend the assistance of its own to bring to punishment these itinerant preachers as a common danger to the country. The Lords consented to the motion. Not so, however, the Commons. Indeed, it is supposed that it was never introduced to them. Yet, although without the consent of the Commons it could not become law, it was placed on the statute-book in May, 1382. Wycliffe had eyes sharp enough to detect this irregularity, and so in the same month he addressed a memorial to the Commons defending his teaching. The result was that the Commons pleaded with the king to annul the statute, and he granted their request. Courtney was so enraged at this proceeding that he summoned Wycliffe once again to appear at Oxford. Forty years ago the Reformer had come up to the University. Oxford had become his home, and now it was turning against him! Weakened by labours, by trials, by that ardent soul which preyed upon his feeble body, he might have refused to appear. But Wycliffe, who never feared the face of man, came before his enemies with a good conscience. We may conjecture that there were amongst the crowd some disciples who felt their hearts burn at the sight of their master and his persecution; but no outward sign indicated their emotion. The solemn silence of a court of justice had succeeded the shouts of enthusiastic youths. Yet Wycliffe did not despair. He raised his venerable head and turned to Courtney with that confident look which had made the regents of Oxford to shrink away. Growing wroth against the priests of Baal, he reproached them with disseminating error in order to sell their masses. Then he stopped and uttered these simple but energetic words: "The truth shall prevail!" Having thus spoken he prepared to leave the court. His enemies dared not say a word, and, like his Divine Master at Nazareth, he passed through the midst of them, and no man ventured to stop him.

The prelate, even after this, continued to complain to the king; and Richard, alarmed somewhat by the representations made to him, gave full power to the primate to imprison all who preached the condemned doctrine, and not to release them till they recanted and gave full proof of repentance. So earnest and zealous were the bishops in their endeavours to extirpate the followers of Wycliffe that in less than six months there was not one voice in his favour to be heard in Oxford; but in spite of the desertion of his friends the Reformer stood firm.

For two years previous to his death Wycliffe enjoyed something like repose, while labouring as pastor in Lutterworth village. His health, however, failed so much (having been seized by a paralytic stroke from which he only partially recovered) that he was obliged to engage an assistant, named John Horn. He also secured the services of a faithful attendant in the person of John Puvvey, who was to him a real bosom friend, and helped him considerably in the translation of the Bible.

It may also be assured, with some degree of probability, that during these years, the preaching itinerancy, although menaced by the measures of the bishops, was still carried on, though in diminished proportions and with some degree of caution; and so long as Wycliffe lived, Lutterworth continued to be the centre of this evangelical mission. But the narrower the limits became within which the itinerancy could be worked, the more zealously did Wycliffe apply himself to the task of instructing the people by means of short and simple tracts in the English tongue. The largest number of the tracts which have come down to us belong to this period, and of these there are at least fifty.

Setting aside translations of portions of Scripture, these tracts may be divided into two chief groups; the one consists of explanation of single heads of catechism; the other, discussions of the doctrines of the Church. The latter, for the most part, have a polemical character, while the former are of a more positive form, didactic and edifying. Some treat of the ten commandments; of works of mercy; of the seven mortal sins; several discuss the duties belonging to the

different stations and relations of life, while other treats of prayer, and explain the Paternoster and Ave Maria. There are also tracts on the Lord's Supper and the confession and absolution. Some defend the itinerant preachers, others set forth the function of preaching, the nature of pastoral work, and the life and conversation which should characterise the priesthood.

There can be little doubt that although these last years were spent almost without interruption, the wrath of his enemies still raged, and they still longed to devise him some hurt. It has been said by some that about this time pope Urban summoned him to Rome to answer for his heresies, and he openly refused so to do; but there seems no foundation whatever for the statement, and one of Wycliffe's latest biographers says: "This alleged citation to Rome must be relegated to the category of groundless tradition." Two years subsequently to the paralytic stroke before mentioned, on the 28th December, 1384, he received a second one, from which he never rallied; in fact he never spoke again, but died on the following Saturday.

The speech of one of his enemies after his death proves to us very forcibly that their wrath against him was as warm as ever. It was this: "On the Feast of St. Thomas of Canterbury, John Wycliffe—that organ of the devil; that enemy of the Church; that author of confusion to the common people; that idol of heretics; that image of hypocrites; that restorer of schism; that storehouse of lies; that sink of flattery—being smitten by the horrible judgment of God, was struck with palsy, and continued to live in that condition until Saint Sylvester's day, on which he breathed out his malicious spirit into the abodes of darkness." Also in 1415, more than thirty years after his death, the Council of Constance issued a decree. "His body and bones, if they might be discovered, and known from the bodies of other faithful people, should be taken from the ground and thrown away from the burial of any church, according to the canon laws and decrees. Thirteen years after this order his body was ruthlessly disinterred, the bones burnt, and then the ashes cast away into the river. O Christian England, what a blot upon thy name and memory!

The preaching of Wycliffe deserves a word of thoughtful commendation. Seeing as he did how the preaching friars deceived the people and misled them on the most momentous of all subjects, he endeavoured yet the more earnestly to expound to them the truth as it is revealed. Those of his sermons which have been preserved are either in Latin or English. It is evident from the style and substance of the teaching contained in them, that the Latin discourses were preached in the University. His English sermons are very remarkable; free from anything like set phraseology, they are clear and plain, yet withal fresh and vitalising in their power. Many of them no doubt were preached at Lutterworth, and many to the crowds of common people elsewhere, who assembled to hear him whenever opportunity occurred. His preaching was eminently scriptural; he endeavoured to show the harmony of different parts of scripture, while comparing one part with another; and yet he did not fail to point upon the wrongs of the age, which were immediately connected with the religion in his day. Some have complained that in his sermons he does not make the Gospel of the atonement sufficiently plain, but we must remember that he had not the advantages of the light that our modern preachers possess, but was, as it were, just groping his way out of the darkness. His powers of illustration were great, and he often showed a vein of humour, or even of sarcasm, in his pulpit teaching, as when speaking of the begging friars he says: "They are like the tortoises, which quickly find their way, one close after the other, through the whole country. They penetrate every house into the most secret chambers like the lapdogs of women of rank." His preaching must have exerted a very powerful influence everywhere; he preached occasionally in London, besides his regular ministrations at Lutterworth, Oxford, and elsewhere. He shines not only as a preacher, but as a pastor; he was a man of deep sympathy, and was ever found when needed in the humblest cottage or the house of mourning, and proclaiming alike to the prince and the peasant, the living and the dying, that which he had taught from the pulpit. Speaking from "The seed is the word of God," he says "O marvellous power of the Divine seed, which overpowers strong men, softens hard hearts, and renews and changes into divine, men who had been brutalised by sins, and had departed from God! Such a change as this could never be

wrought by the word of the priest, if the Spirit of Life, and the Eternal Word did not above all things else work with it."

With the love and the power of preaching so deeply imbued within him, he not only preached himself but he also sent forth other preachers—"poor priests," or, as we should call them in our day, "evangelists," whose sole business it was to go up and down over the country proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation wherever and whenever they could gain an audience. Doctor Robert Vaughan thus describes them: "These 'poor priests,' these sturdy, free-spoken and popular Methodists of the fourteenth century, are here travelling before us, from county to county, from town to town, and from village to village, bare-footed, staff in hand, the visible personation of the toilsome, the generous, the noblehearted." In churches or churchyards, in markets or fairs, before gentle or simple, pious or profligate—wherever men or women are gathered together, or may be gathered, there the itinerant instructor of this school finds his preaching-place, and discourses boldly on the difference between the religion of the Bible, with its appeal to every man's reason and conscience, and the superstitions of the priests, which have nothing to sustain them, save that hollow mockery called the superstition of the Church. Prelates and abbots, mendicants and monks, rectors and curates, became wrathful; but the people are not wrathful. Almost to a man they attest that the stranger is in the right, and that harm shall not be done to him. Knighton mentions a number of persons of some figure who openly favoured the new preachers; such as Sir Thomas Latimer, Sir John Perke, Sir Richard Story, and Sir John Hilton. It was the manner of these distinguished persons, as the historian informs us, when a preacher of the Wycliffe order came into their neighbourhood, to give notice to all their neighbours of time and place, and to draw a vast audience together. Even beyond this did they proceed; for you might see them standing round the pulpit of the preacher armed and prepared to defend him from assault with their good swords if it should be needed. Knighton, who complains of their mode of proceeding as being rather Mahomedan than Christian in its spirit, is nevertheless obliged to give these Lollard or Puritan knights the credit of being governed by a "zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. The advent of the preacher is the signal for the interference of the magistrate, and an officer is sent to warn him of his danger and order him to depart. The local official, not daring to go further, serves his writ upon the disorderly stranger, requiring him to appear before his ordinary; but the stranger is speedily elsewhere, and at his wonted labour.

"Proud churchmen thunder their anathemas against him; to him it is an empty sound. The soul under that coarse garb, and which plays from beneath that weather-worn countenance, is an emancipated soul; not so much the image of the age in which we find it, as the prophecy of an age to come; to come only after a long, a dark, and a troubled interval shall have passed away."

Wycliffe entertained the idea that nothing ought to come between the people and the Word of God; he therefore undertook the grand work of translating the whole of the Bible into the English tongue, first the New Testament and subsequently the Old also. "The interest taken in the man and in his work enlisted a hundred expert hands, who, though they toiled to multiply copies, could scarcely supply the many who were eager to buy. Some ordered complete copies to be made for them, others were content with portions; the same copies served several families in many instances, and in a very short time Wycliffe's English Bible had obtained a wide circulation, and brought a new life into many an English home." The following is a specimen of Wycliffe's Bible in old English:—

"Biholde ye the foulis of the air, for thei sowen not nether ripen, nether gaderen into barnes: and your Fadir of hevene fedith hem, wher ye ben not more worthi thanne thei? but who of you thinking mai putte to hys stature o cubit? and of clothing whar ben ye bisie? biholde ye the lilies of the feld how thei waxen, thei travelen not, nether spynnen, and I seye to you that Salomon in al his glorie was not kenerid as one of thes, and if God clothith thus the heyde of the feeld, that to dai is and to morewe is cast in to an ovene, how myche more you of litel feith."

ABRAHAM KINGDON & CO.,

52, MOORFIELDS, MOORGATE, LONDON, E.C.

Lithographers, Colour* Printers, Engravers,
Stationers, and Binders.

LITHOGRAPHIC PRINTING.

PLAIN AND ORNAMENTAL.

Circulars in Plain Writing and Facsimile; Plans and Specifications for Surveyors; Plans of Estates; Note Headings; Law Writing; Show Cards.

STATIONERY.

Account Books made to Order; Note and Letter Paper; Envelopes of all Sizes; and Stationery of Every Description.

ENGRAVING

ON STEEL & COPPER.

Business and Visiting Cards; Invoices; Receipts; Bills of Exchange; Share Certificates; Bank Notes and Cheques.

Crests, Coats of Arms. Monograms, or Business Dies.

Treble Protective Bank Notes and Cheques, which defy manipulation.

Abraham Kingdon & Co.'s Publications.

THE ENGLISH AND COLONIAL MERCHANT AND MANUFACTURER AND EXPORT TRADE JOURNAL. Monthly. Single Copies, Price 6d.; Annual Subscription, including Postage to any Address in Great Britain, 5s.; Colonies and Abroad, 7s.

GUIDE TO EASTBOURNE. With Illustrations. One Penny. With Map, Twopence.

GUIDE TO EPPING FOREST. One Penny. With Map, Twopence.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

THE LIGHT OF THE VILLAGE; A Sketch of Elizabeth Bath, of Northam. By Mary Beighton, Author of "The Mason's Home," "The Mother's Prayer," "The Cuban's Wife," &c.

PRICE THREEPENCE.

THE BIBLE IN PUBLIC WORSHIP; With Tables of Selected Scripture Sermons for Sunday and Week Evening Services.

Price Fourpence each, Half-price for quantities of not less than 50 Copies, in Staff and Sol-fa Notations,

THREE BEAUTIFUL SERVICES OF SONG.

"DANIEL QUORM," from "Daniel Quorm," by the kind permission of Rev. MARK GUY PEARSE.

"FRANKEY VIVIAN," from "Daniel Quorm," Second Series.

"SIMON JASPER." From Rev. Mark Guy Pearse's New Work.

LONDON: ABRAHAM KINGDON & CO., 52, Moorfields, Moorgate E. C.

ALLEN & HANBURYS'

"TASTELESS"



CASTOR OIL.

It is guaranteed to be pure Castor Oil, of full medicinal activity, yet absolutely free from odour and unpleasant taste.

ALLEN & HANBURYS' "TASTELESS" CASTOR OIL

will be found free from the only drawback that has hitherto attended the use of, perhaps, the safest, surest, and most generally valuable aperient known.

It is prepared from the entire seed, and the process employed yields a perfectly pure Castor Oil, possessing the well-known properties of the remedy, but entirely free from the nauseous smell and taste, a result never before attained. The activity of this Oil is in no degree reduced by the new method of manufacture. It is equal in this respect to the best East Indian Oil, and superior to the Italian, hitherto preferred as the least repulsive variety, and often sold as "tasteless."

The LANCET writes:—"Messrs. Allen and Hanburys have recently introduced a variety of Castor Oil which seems likely to supersede the old fashioned form with which we are all so familiar. Their 'Tasteless Castor Oil' is absolutely pure, is almost colourless, and is as free from disagreeable taste or smell as anything of the nature of oil can be. We have given it an extensive trial, and find that it is taken both by children and adults without the slightest difficulty, whilst its aperient effects are unquestionable. It possesses all the advantages that are claimed for it."

The BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL writes:—"Although absolutely pure Castor Oil, it is so prepared as to be entirely devoid of smell, and to have none of the disagreeable flavour which characterises the ordinary varieties of this oil. It possesses full aperient properties."

The MEDICAL PRESS AND CIRCULAR writes: "We have had the opportunity of employing this 'Tasteless Castor Oil' of Allen and Hanburys' in a public hospital on a large scale. Its aperient power is complete, and it is fully appreciated by the patients, especially by children, who, finding it quite tasteless, never raise an objection to its administration."

In bottles at 6d., 1s., 1s. 9d. & 3s. each; bearing ALLEN & HANBURYS' 2

Signature and Trade Mark.

N.B.—This Oil is sold at the common retail price of the ordinary qualities, and can be obtained of MOST CHEMISTS; but, where any difficulty is experienced, this, and any other of Allen & Hanburys' special preparations, will be sent CARRIAGE PAID on receipt of price in stamps or P.O.O.

ALLEN & HANBURYS,
PLOUGH COURT, LOMBARD STREET, LONDON

origin of their union. None can be more alive than ourselves to the vast amount of misery which theological beliefs have inflicted on mankind, but the wars which they have originated, and the frightful tortures and cold-blooded murders which they have prompted and sanctioned, were not due to the existence of these beliefs simply as such, but to the egotism of their expounders, who, not distinguishing between the spheres of knowledge and speculation, between truth and opinions, delivered their own dicta as infallible.

M. Comte claims for the worship of Humanity the superiority of reality, and affirms that the creed of the Theist is mere anthropomorphism, and that he is but the worshipper of his own ideas. We accept the statement, but not the conclusion intended to be conveyed in it. The Positivist worships human beings as he knows them either in life or in history; or, he worships them after subtracting their faults and weaknesses, and idealizing their virtues. In the one case his worship, being of frail creatures like himself, can neither prompt him to noble deeds nor exert a hallowing influence on his life; in the other, his claim for the superiority of reality is annulled; while, however, he may idealize his objects, they must ever remain associated with the limitations of humanity, and consequently he is not only a worshipper of his own ideas, but of his own ideas after they are shorn of those majestic proportions which, if unrestrained, they would instinctively and unconsciously assume, while aspiring to realize even the feeblest conception of the Source of all being.

Since the mysterious and incomprehensible perfection of the Divine attributes transcends the possible perfection of humanity as immeasurably as the infinite exceeds the finite, there is a sphere for endless progress in our contemplations and conceptions of those attributes, and for the consequent reaction of those conceptions, which, in the sphere of morals, are at once the power which moulds, the spirit which inspires, and we hope and believe will become more and more the influence which hallows both our personal and national existence. Here we see the imperative reason for giving the largest scope and most unrestrained activity to our intellectual faculties when aspiring to conceive of the Divine Nature—appending only one condition, viz., an abiding consciousness and recognition of the barrier which divides the regions of imagination from those of knowledge. This alone is the insuperable safeguard against spiritual usurpation, the solvent of all thought which would otherwise petrify into dead immoveable institutions, and the lasting guarantee of spiritual advancement.

The contemplations and conceptions of the Positivist who

worships his kind are bounded, as we have said, by the limitations which he knows are incident to humanity; idealize as he may, he can never free himself of the belief that no perfect man or woman has ever trod this planet. How, then, is it possible that any one but the ignorant and unreflective can ever feel the glow of genuine devotion when he bows himself to a being whose nature he knows to have been but a fragmentary representative of the ideal of man, or when he worships his best conception of this ideal itself knowing it to be an idol of his own creation? These fatal weaknesses of Positivism have no application to the Theist: the fervour of his adoration is deadened by no secret consciousness that the object of his worship is marred with imperfection; for however great and glorious may be the attributes he ascribes to it, he feels assured that they are infinitely surpassed by the Reality itself.

CT 42



ART. II.—RECOLLECTIONS OF SHELLEY AND BYRON.

Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron. By E. J. Trelawny. London: Edward Moxon. 1858.

MR. TRELAWNY has done well in giving this manly and carelessly written little volume to the world: it will at least revive the personal memory of two Englishmen who, though long dead, can never be altogether of the past. Without telling much of either with which we were not previously acquainted, the information communicated is the result of intimate personal knowledge, and, gathered during the intervals of a familiar acquaintance, comes out with such freshness and vigour, that it possesses nearly all the merit of novelty; and the striking features of character are brought forward in much stronger relief, than in the tame and wearisome biography of which one at least was the victim. It is the least enviable appanage of genius that it perpetuates by its own lustre those faults and weaknesses which repose in the graves of meaner men; the biographer, even though a friend, cannot ignore these; and while he avoids giving them undue prominence, cannot forget that truth has its claims, as well as genius.

We recognise Shelley in these sketches as he appeared in his works—the gentle, guileless, noble soul who persisted in putting himself wrong with the world, and who rashly and fearlessly launched his indignant sarcasm at the cant and bigotry and sel-