

'Poems,' 1645, is a base caricature, but Browne has not had the satisfaction of Milton's joke and happy revenge.

II.—THE BOOK.

As a book the 'Religio Medici' has had an interesting history. Written at 'leisurable hours and for his private exercise and satisfaction,' it circulated in manuscript among friends, 'and was by transcription successively corrupted, until it arrived in a most depraved copy at the press.' Two surreptitious editions were issued by Andrew Crooke in 1642 (Fig. 1), both in small octavo, with an engraved frontispiece by Marshall representing a man falling from a rock (the earth) into the sea of eternity, but caught by a hand issuing from the clouds, under which is the legend 'A Coelo Salus.' Johnson suggests that the author may not have been ignorant of Crooke's design, but was very willing to let a tentative edition be issued—'a stratagem by which an author panting for fame, and yet afraid of seeming to challenge it, may at once gratify his vanity and preserve the appearance of modesty.'

There are at least six manuscripts of the 'Religio' in existence, all presenting minor differences, which bear out the author's contention that by transcription they had become depraved. One in the Wilkin collection, in the Castle Museum, Norwich, is in the author's handwriting. Had Browne been party to an innocent fraud he would scarcely have allowed Crooke to issue within a year a second imperfect edition—not simply a second impression, as the two differ in the size and number of the pages,