

vi ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

The unaided memory of old companions is apt to play strange vagaries, and in matters which are comparatively unimportant may differ in a degree distracting to the biographer. An additional difficulty is added in the present case, for Swinburne himself was an autobiographical Will o' the Wisp. He was not disinclined to give information about his life, but his recollections need the closest inspection. In the midst of a statement of considerable importance and value, he is apt to introduce, by a slip of memory, some remark which makes the whole narrative seem apocryphal; and the biographer must always be prosaically guarding the poet against his own romance. After the checking and re-checking of eight years, however, I believe that I have surmounted the main difficulties of the task.

In attempting to do so, I have met with extraordinary and almost universal kindness from Swinburne's representatives and friends. Before all other helpers I must mention my dear and valued friend, the late Lord Redesdale, who never ceased to press me forward on my course with his unfailing interest and sympathy. There was no limit to his friendly solicitude, and he insisted on seeing the book through all its stages. He finished reading the last revise after he was confined to his bed by his fatal illness. Although in the body of the narrative I have made use