

word to show that he met with any sympathy : indeed the misunderstanding, whatever it was, that overshadowed him, had driven acquaintances, friends, and lovers away from him ; yet his tender confidence in GOD never fails : he feels that in his passionate worship of virtue and truth, his intense love of purity and justice, he has got a treasure which is more to him than riches or honour, or even than human love.

He speaks as though this passion for holiness had been the very thing that had cost him so dear, and that had exposed him to derision and dislike. Perhaps he had refused to fall in with some customary form of evil, and his resistance to temptation had led him to be regarded as a *précisian* and a saint. I have little doubt myself that this was so. He speaks as one might speak who had been so smitten with the desire for purity and rightness of life that he could no longer even seem to condone the opposite. And yet he was evidently not one who dared to withstand and to rebuke evil : the most he could do was to abstain from it : and the result was that he saw the careless and evil minded people about him prosperous, happy, and light-hearted, while he was himself, by his own act, plunged in solitude and tears.

And then, how strange to see this beautiful and delicate confession put into so narrow and constrained a shape ! It is the most artificial, by far, of all the psalms.

The writer has chosen deliberately one of the most cramping and confining forms that could be devised. Each of the eight verses that form the separate stanzas begins with the same letter of the alphabet, and each of the letters is chosen in turn. Think of attempting to do the same in English !—it could not be done at all.

And then every single verse, except in one, where the word has probably disappeared in translation, by a mistake, there is a mention of the Law of GOD.

Infinite pains must have gone to the slow building of this curious structure—stone by stone must have been carved and lifted to its place. And yet the art is so great that I know of no composition of the same length that has so perfect a unity of mood and atmosphere.

There is never a false or alien note struck. It is never jubilant or contentious or assertive—and, best of all, it is wholly free from any touch of the complacency which is the shadow of virtue. The writer never takes any credit to himself for his firm adherence to truth ; he writes, rather, as one who has had a gift of immeasur-