

PREFACE

THE only memoir of the life of Algernon Charles Swinburne which has hitherto been published is the sketch which I contributed to the *Dictionary of National Biography* in 1912. This was the result of some years of investigation, and it is the skeleton on which the present biography is built up. But since that article was issued, a great deal of new material has passed through my hands, and I have had the advantage of consulting many fresh sources of information. Important correspondence has been entrusted to me, and early friends have kindly consented to revise my pages. My narrative is therefore not merely much fuller than it would have been in 1912, but in various respects more accurate.

Only those who have never ventured on the biography of an elder contemporary, and especially of one who lived in great retirement, will under-estimate the difficulty of obtaining exact particulars. Events which occurred seventy, or even sixty, years ago are remembered by few, and the recollections of these few are seldom consistent.