

who was present writes ;—"to me, remembering how old Coleridge had inoculated a little knot of us with the love of Wordsworth when his name was in general a by-word, it was striking to witness the thunders of applause, repeated over and over again with which he was greeted in the theatre by undergraduates and masters of Arts alike." Truth had triumphed. England could once more appreciate spiritual truth. And Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Tennyson, (forgive me for classing Tennyson with any others) and Jean Ingelow have learned of him and continue his influence.

What then was Wordsworth's mission, for mission he had, and never did ancient prophet or consecrated priest feel his call more impressively, or live up to it more truthfully. He said that he made no vows, but that unknown to him vows were made for him. Robertson of Brighton, in his lecture on him, says, and in all reverence, that what he did* "was the work which the Baptist did when he came to the pleasure-laden citizens of Jerusalem to work a reformation; the work which Milton tried to do when he raised that clear calm voice of his to call back his countrymen to simpler manners and to simpler laws." To Wordsworth this life of ours in itself was an infinitely little thing.

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting."

To him,

"Our noisy years seemed moments in the being
Of the eternal silence."

And yet he saw men slaves to time and earth, to appearances and customs, as if they had no souls, as if there were no reality beyond the seen and temporal. His preaching to them by word and life was,

"The wise man I affirm can find no rest
In that which perishes; nor will he lend
His heart to aught that doth on time depend."

And the professed teachers of the day had neither eyes nor ears. Lofty was his contempt for them; shallow moralist, shallow man of science, shallow philosopher;—

"One to whose smooth-rubbed soul can cling
Nor form nor feeling, great nor small;
A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
An intellectual all in all!"

The general Atheism of men's lives terrified him. They professed to be Christians, but they held no communion with God. There was one all-prevailing spirit of worldliness. Nature was to them a heap of husks, the bible a catechism of truths imposed on them from without. The soul was so steeped in the world that it could not interpret either. And the prophet-poet felt that it was

* Lectures and Addresses, p. 244.