PREFACE

TO THE 1836 EDITION OF 'LITERARY REMAINS'

Mr. Coleridge by his will, dated in September, 1829, authorized his executor, if he should think it expedient, to publish any of the notes or writing made by him (Mr. C.) in his books, or any other of his manuscripts or writings, or any letters which should thereafter be collected from, or supplied by, his friends or correspondents. Agreeably to this authority, an arrangement was made, under the superintendence of Mr. Green, for the collection of Coleridge's literary remains; and at the same time the preparation for the press of such part of the materials as should consist of criticism and general literature, was entrusted to the care of the present Editor. The volumes now offered to the public are the first results of that arrangement. They must in any case stand in need of much indulgence from the ingenuous reader;—multa sunt condonanda in opere postumo; but a short statement of the difficulties attending the compilation may serve to explain some apparent anomalies, and to preclude some unnecessary censure.

The materials were fragmentary in the extreme—Sibylline leaves;—notes of the lecturer, memoranda of the investigator, out-pourings of the solitary and self-communing student. The fear of the press was not in
Preface

them. Numerous as they were, too, they came to light, or were communicated, at different times, before and after the printing was commenced; and the dates, the occasions, and the references, in most instances remained to be discovered or conjectured. To give to such materials method and continuity, as far as might be,—to set them forth in the least disadvantageous manner which the circumstances would permit,—was a delicate and perplexing task; and the Editor is painfully sensible that he could bring few qualifications for the undertaking, but such as were involved in a many years' intercourse with the author himself, a patient study of his writings, a reverential admiration of his genius, and an affectionate desire to help in extending its beneficial influence.

The contents of these volumes are drawn from a portion only of the manuscripts entrusted to the Editor: the remainder of the collection, which, under favourable circumstances, he hopes may hereafter see the light, is at least of equal value with what is now presented to the reader as a sample. In perusing the following pages, the reader will, in a few instances, meet with disquisitions of a transcendental character, which, as a general rule, have been avoided: the truth is, that they were sometimes found so indissolubly intertwined with the more popular matter which preceded and followed, as to make separation impracticable. There are very many to whom no apology will be necessary in this respect; and the Editor only adverts to it for the purpose of obviating, as far as may be, the possible complaint of the more general reader. But there is another point to which, taught by past experience, he attaches more importance, and as to which, therefore, he ventures to put in a more express
and particular caution. In many of the books and papers, which have been used in the compilation of these volumes, passages from other writers, noted down by Mr. Coleridge as in some way remarkable, were mixed up with his own comments on such passages, or with his reflections on other subjects, in a manner very embarrassing to the eye of a third person undertaking to select the original matter, after the lapse of several years. The Editor need not say that he has not knowingly admitted any thing that was not genuine, without an express declaration as in Vol. I. p. 1; and in another instance, Vol. II. p. 379, he has intimated his own suspicion; but, besides these, it is possible that some cases of mistake in this respect may have occurred. There may be one or two passages—they cannot well be more—printed in these volumes, which belong to other writers; and if such there be, the Editor can only plead in excuse, that the work has been prepared by him amidst many distractions, and hope that, in this instance at least, no ungenerous use will be made of such a circumstance to the disadvantage of the author, and that persons of greater reading or more retentive memories than the Editor, who may discover any such passages, will do him the favour to communicate the fact.

To those who have been kind enough to communicate books and manuscripts for the purpose of the present publication, the Editor and, through him, Mr. Coleridge's executor return their grateful thanks. In most cases a specific acknowledgment has been made. But, above and independently of all others, it is to Mr. and Mrs.

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1 The Editor is here speaking of his note to the Fall of Robespierre, published in the former Vol. i. of the Literary Remains, shewing that the second and third acts were by Mr. Southey.

2 This reference is to his remark on an extract from Crashaw's Hymn to the name of Jesus, printed in Vol. ii. of the Lit. Rem. as first published.
Preface

Gillman, and to Mr. Green himself, that the public are indebted for the preservation and use of the principal part of the contents of these volumes. The claims of those respected individuals on the gratitude of the friends and admirers of Coleridge and his works are already well known, and in due season those claims will receive additional confirmation.

With these remarks, sincerely conscious of his own inadequate execution of the task assigned to him, yet confident withal of the general worth of the contents of the following pages—the Editor commits the reliques of a great man to the indulgent consideration of the Public.

Lincoln’s Inn,
August 11, 1836.