PREFACE.

The papers composing the following volume are what they profess to be "Mental Exercises," mostly written several years ago, when the author was very young, for mere amusement during leisure hours, and without any view to publication. Those on the "Intellect and the Emotions"—the "Law of Conscience," and "Geology and Atheism" were written in 1837;—those on "The Aristocracy and Education," and "Some branches of Knowledge," in 1838;—those on "Milton," "Poetry and Insanity," and "Poetry and Civilization," in 1840;—that on the "Origin of Evil," in 1841, and those on "Macaulay's Characteristics," "Lord Bacon," and "The Theory of Human Perfectibility," in 1846. They have, of course, been re-written for the press. Four of them appeared in a popular periodical publication three years ago.

The author is aware that some of the subjects are not of a very popular nature, and in danger of being rejected by many readers who prefer lighter and less exacting materials for thought; but as he, himself, preferred for study, subjects either little hackneyed, or, if possible, wholly original, the discussions in several of the papers were a labour of love. Those on "Poetry and Insanity," and "Poetry and Civilization," were wholly new. Those on "Geology and Atheism,"—the "Origin of Evil," and the "Theory
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of Human Perfectibility' had seldom been popularly discussed. The paper on "Macaulay's Characteristics," was written previous to the publication of his "History," and before any lengthened analysis of his characteristics had been drawn,—whilst the subject of the paper on "Lord Bacon" had not commanded much public attention.

If it should be said that the author, as a Working Man, should have confined himself to subjects more within the scope of his powers, he has only to answer, that every mind possesses some distinct tendency or bent, and that in attempting to discuss such questions, he followed his own inclinations, and for his own pleasure. Without requesting any person to read the book from beginning to end, he would merely request those who do take it up, not to throw it down again, simply because, as the title denotes, the contents are the "Mental Exercises of a Working Man;" but to dip into it—to read, at least, some portions of it, and then endeavour to judge whether the writer was justified in bringing his mind to bear upon subjects requiring much and varied learning and discrimination, and a depth of sagacity to which he can lay no claim. The book with all its faults, and its merits, if it possess any, is his own; and in bringing it before the public he would merely say, that he neither deprecates censure nor court's applause, though he may bend submissively to the one, and smile upon the other, when dictated by a clear discrimination and a due regard to truth.

Bradford, July, 1854.