

**ESSAYS IN  
LITERATURE  
AND ETHICS**

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Essays in literature and ethics by William Anderson O'Connor & William E. A. Axon

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**WILLIAM ANDERSON O'CONOR & WILLIAM E. A. AXON**

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LITERATURE  
AND ETHICS**





E. G. Thompson—

H. A. Colver.

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ESSAYS  
IN  
LITERATURE AND ETHICS.

BY THE LATE REV.  
WILLIAM ANDERSON O'CONNOR, B.A.,  
TRIN. COLL. DUBLIN.  
*Rector of SS. Simon and Jude, Manchester.*

EDITED,  
WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION,  
BY  
WILLIAM E. A. AXON.

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### In Memoriam.

'Mid rough-hewn stones, a polished shaft he stood ;  
His slender frame a cultured spirit shrined,  
Instinct with genius, vivid, thought-refined,  
And consecrated to the highest good.  
Rest in unrest he sought, found peace through strife ;  
And all the wealth of his fine nature spent  
To serve his generation ; well content  
If he might help it to a nobler life !  
We canonize Ambition ; build to Fame  
Proud monuments that Time's attrition brave :  
What have we for the men whose life-works crave  
An immortality of worth, not name ;  
No blot on their escutcheon ? Pauper dole !  
God sets them high upon his martyr-roll.

J. B. GREENWOOD.



## INTRODUCTION.

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THE following pages consist of selections from the literary remains of the late Rev. William Anderson O'Connor, and are fairly representative of his intellectual powers whilst not exhaustive of the material placed at the disposal of the editor. Should the present volume be received with favour, there are sufficient uncollected papers to form a second series. The volume owes its inception to the desire on the part of the members of the Manchester Literary Club and other admirers of Mr. O'Connor to have some permanent memorial of his powers as a critic. Most of the essays now republished were in the first instance read before the Club.

The editor's duties have been confined to the faithful reproduction of the text, and to the verifying, as far as possible, of the quotations. Some of the translations were, however, freshly executed by Mr. O'Connor for the essays in which

they are found. It remains only to give some brief account of the remarkable man to whose memory this book is dedicated.

William Anderson O'Connor (for so his name was spelled originally) was a native of Cork, and was born there in 1820. His family came from the county of Roscommon, where they were important for generations. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and took his B.A. degree in 1864. In a letter which appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* towards the close of 1885, Mr. O'Connor, in commenting upon Church matters, wrote :—

“When the clergy read of all the current taunts and insinuations about their ‘pay,’ I do not wonder that they turn away in silent and hopeless disgust from the whole subject. That disgust shall be overcome for once. Not one out of ten of us is ‘paid’ as the word is commonly understood. If we sought pay we should have gone to some other profession or business. All the early years of my life were given at a large pecuniary cost to the acquisition of knowledge assumed to be necessary for the discharge of a clergyman’s office. I have never put the matter to myself as I now put it, but I now do ask, Can it be said that I have been paid for my work as a clergyman by having received £100 a year for the greater part of my clerical life? I remember well the countings of the cost with which I entered the Church. It was a giving up of the world, a surrender of its wealth and its prizes, and of the honours that might be won at the Bar

or in the Army, with the sole understanding that I was to be freed from the anxieties of a secular calling, and maintained out of the Church's endowments, while I strove to do my Master's work. I speak of myself and allude to my motives simply because I am thus able to give a description that applies—I never uttered sincerer words than those I am now uttering—a hundred-fold more fitly to thousands and thousands of clergymen than it does to me. There are multitudes of clergymen to whom taking orders is equivalent to entering a monastery so far as seclusion from the sunny walks of life is concerned. No institution can be found that contains so many able and learned men, strong enough to move to the front rank in any worldly profession, and carry off the prizes, as may be found in the Church of England engaged in labours all their lives that might be called obscure and contemptible if they were not undergone in the service of One who washed His disciples' feet, and bade them to do to others what He had done to them. We are not paid or remunerated. We are merely supported out of endowments given to the Church for this very purpose by men who reflected that St. Paul worked with his own hands rather than be dependent on the offerings of those to whom he preached."

That this was emphatically true of Mr. O'Connor there can be no doubt.

His first appointment was that of lecturer on Latin at St. Aidan's College, Birkenhead; but in 1853 he was ordained by the Bishop of Chester, and became curate of St. Nicholas's Church, Liverpool, and afterwards of St. Thomas's, Liver-