JOHN DONNE, SOMETIME DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S: A.D. 1621-1631

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John Donne, sometime dean of St. Paul's: A.D. 1621-1631 by Augustus Jessopp

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AUGUSTUS JESSOPP

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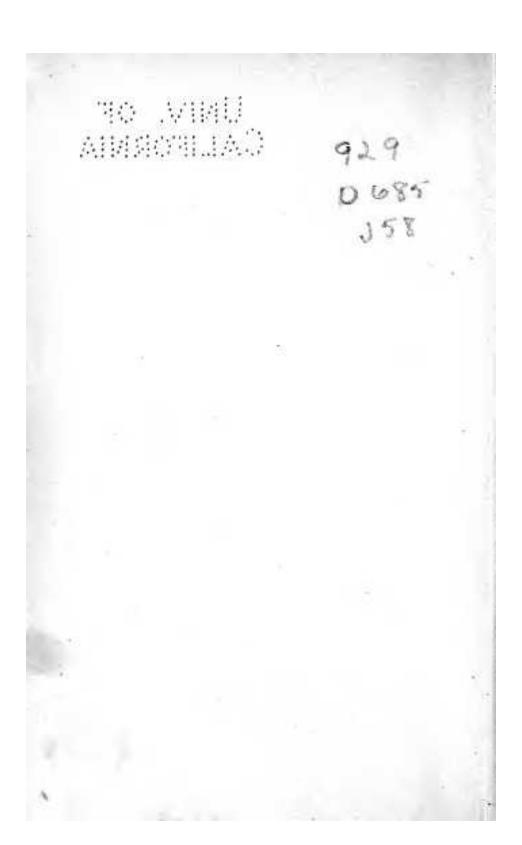
A.D. 1621-1631

BY.

AUGUSTUS JESSOPP, D.D.

WITH TWO FORTRAITS

METHUEN & CO. 36 ESSEX STREET, W.C. LONDON 1897



TO

MY GIFTED AND MUCH VALUED FRIEND

HENRY WILLETT

I OFFER THIS LITTLE VOLUME

A TRIBUTE OF LOYALTY AND

HIGH REGARD

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PREFACE

IT is fifty years since, as an undergraduate at Cambridge, I projected and began to make collections for a complete edition of the works of Dr. Donne.

In those days there was a great revival of the study of our seventeenth-century divinity, the result of the great Oxford Movement. Young men were told that the great teachers of that period were the safest and the wisest guides to follow. Certainly we knew none better. The Textual Criticism of the New Testament was then in its infancy, and the New Theology was not yet born.

Perhaps it was just as well that publishers shrank from embarking in so ambitious a venture as I had contemplated; and soon circumstances intervened which took from me "the dream of doing and the other dream of done."

In 1855, however, I issued a reprint of Donne's little-known *Essays in Divinity*, with a brief account of the author's life. The critics said that the volume was absurdly overloaded with foolish notes and an unnecessary display of learning. I think the critics were right. When young men are in the happy

PREFACE

twenties, they are apt to "show off," especially if they are solitary students; and I confess that to this day, when I have occasion to look into the small pages of that little bantling of mine, I feel as Mr. Pendennis felt when recurring to one of his early reviews —nothing astonished him so much as the erudition which he found he had amassed in his first attempts in criticism.

Since those days I have never quite given up my old interest in the life and works of Dr. Donne. The design of publishing a complete edition has long since been abandoned; but the hope of issuing the life and letters of the great Dean I still clung to, till the conviction forced itself upon me that there was one who was better qualified for such a task than I could ever hope to be.

I have never been able to feel much enthusiasm for Donne as a poet; and it is as a poet that Donne's fame has chiefly come down to us. Who was I that I should undertake to deal with the life of the man whose poetry I had not the power of appreciating at its worth? There must be some deficiency, some obliquity, in my own mind. It was only slowly and reluctantly that I was brought to see that such a work as I had hoped to do, only Mr. Edmund Gosse was fitted to undertake. There is no man in England who has written so exquisitely on Donne as he, or shown such subtile sympathy with his poetic genius. It is to him, accordingly, that I resign that delightful

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