

PREFACE.

THE present volume concludes the series which I have called 'Short Studies on Great Subjects.' The topics discussed are not, indeed, all great, and some are insignificant; but I selected the title on account of the unity of purpose which is present throughout. The Essays have been written at intervals, as occasion or my own general work suggested, during the last thirty years, and they contain my thoughts, cast in various forms, on the problems with which the present generation has been perplexed. We have lived through a period of change—change spiritual, change moral, social, and political. The foundations of our most serious convictions have been broken up; and the disintegration of opinion is so rapid that wise men and foolish are equally ignorant where the close of this waning century will