

## MEN OF THE DAY. No. 92.

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THE RIGHT REV. JOHN WILLIAM COLENZO, D.D., BISHOP OF NATAL.

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THE Anglican form of Christianity was originally presented to mankind as an attempt to popularise the Christian religion. It appealed from the established ecclesiastical authority to the intelligence of the Church at large, and undertook to open up to reasonable examination the whole of those dogmas, doctrines, and evidences of the faith which had hitherto been reserved as mysteries only to be understood and dealt with by ecclesiastical experts. But having now acquired a strong position and valuable temporalities, the Anglican hierarchy has in its turn taken up the ground of deprecating any discussion affecting its authority; and in its turn pursues with relentless animosity all those who would give effect to the very principles on which it was first founded. Thus it is that it has become possible for men like Bishop Colenso to find themselves condemned and persecuted for showing that it is still possible to purify the Anglican doctrine from certain errors, and for supposing that it is still allowable to appeal to the reasoning faculties in demonstrating that such errors really exist.

Born sixty years ago of a good and poor Cornish family, young Colenso found himself the son of a mineral agent for the Duchy of Cornwall, and at an early age was called upon to support his father, who through speculation had lost the little property he had possessed. Sent then as a sizar to Cambridge by the help of some aid from his grandfather, he applied himself so perseveringly to work, and especially to mathematics, that he graduated as Second Wrangler and Smith's prizeman and became a fellow of his college of St. John's. At twenty-four Harrow took him as mathematical tutor, but he had scarcely been there four years when losing all he possessed in a fire, and finding the school much depressed and losing in reputation under Dr. Wordsworth, he left it and returned to St. John's as tutor of the college. Marrying however at two-and-thirty he accepted the college living of Fornsett St. Mary, and set himself so thoroughly to do his parish work that he won the affection not only of his parishioners but of the whole county of Norfolk. At this time he published his Algebra and Arithmetic, and being pressed by debt, sold the copyright of the latter work to a firm of publishers to whom it has proved a fortune. In 1854, however, some new bishoprics having been created in South Africa, he was pressed by Dr. Gray, afterwards his most bitter enemy, to accept that of Natal. He did so, went out to the colony, and set himself to master the native language, which he did in a very thorough manner. But he was too active-minded a man to run the ordinary course. Soon he stupefied the Archbishop of Canterbury by writing a letter in which he suggested that a savage already married to several wives should not upon conversion be required to abandon all but one. This was regarded as being very terrible, but more was to come. One day Bishop Colenso met William the Zulu, who by putting to him questions he could not answer and would not evade, first led him critically to examine the Bible. The result was that in 1862 he returned to England and published a work demonstrating that some of the books of the Old Testament could neither be historically true in their details nor the work of the author to whom they were popularly attributed. Then arose a great storm. It was solemnly declared that these ideas of the Pentateuch were not new; and as nobody could show that they were not true, the work was condemned by both Houses of Convocation and an organised attempt was made to suppress it by buying up all the attainable copies. Bishop Colenso was called by many hard names; and since it was found that he could not be refuted, it was resolved that he should be prayed for in the next world and ruined in this. There were used towards him not only hard words and hard measures but occult forces of so pervading a kind that one of the bishops who knew and