FOR years the standard biography of Lord Macaulay has been that written by his nephew Sir G. O. Trevelyan. Professor Richmond Croom Beatty of Vanderbilt University has written a definitive study of Macaulay after extensive scholarly examination of the eleven-volume Journal in the library of Trinity College, in addition to material more easily accessible.

This book is an important contribution to the field of English biography, particularly because it presents Macaulay in relation to his age—and not as an individual different from his contemporaries.

Thomas Babington Macaulay, at the incredible age of four, was a prodigious and sincere reader; he was to acquire the substitute title “Babbie-tongue” at Trinity College for his vitriolic and incessant oratorial championship of middle class causes; he was known to have memorized Paradise Lost, Pilgrim’s Progress, and the Holy Bible. This photographic mental ability by no means is evidence that he was a greater thinker, for in reality he was less than a Whig politician whose contributions to the Edinburgh Review were intensely biased—as much in idolatry of Milton as they were contemptuous of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Restoration Drama.

The son of slavery’s opponent, Zachary Macaulay, and protege of Hannah More, Lord Macaulay was twice member of the House of Commons, leader of the passage of the Reform Bill, and author of the five volume History of England From the Accession of James Second, one of the most distinguished pieces of historical writing and his most important work.

Professor Beatty has accomplished the one feat so difficult in scholarly writing—this portrayal is both historically accurate and readable even for those outside this field of interest. A clearer understanding of the Whig party, nineteenth Century “liberalism,” the idea behind Macaulay’s reactions to the literary great among his contemporaries, and his everyday life from personal anecdotes are to be found in this well annotated and indexed volume.

MARGARET E. REDDING.

Choral reading

Marguerite Smith, ’35ex, of Tulsa, is author of a new book called Wings to Fly, published by the Expression Company, Boston. It is a handbook of choral reading for the teacher of English.